

have spread the cultivation of the fruit crop from the South Pacific to South America and the Caribbean.

The stone bananas lead me from global trends in food production to a more local association. The banana pile is readily available for comparison to the work of influential Vancouver artist Gathie Falk, whose ceramic fruit-pyramid sculptures on plinths were shown this past December as part of her exhibitions at both the Equinox Gallery and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Falk shares Piasta's attraction to the phenomenology of nature, albeit a domesticated nature, which, like Piasta, she mimics, but otherwise leaves largely uninterpreted in her sculptural work.

Since graduating from the Umeå Academy of Fine Arts mfa program, Piasta has focused her practice on investigations into our subjective relationship with the natural world, which includes an enduring susceptibility to the sublime. She traces this back to walks through groves of old-growth Sequoias and journeys through the Rocky Mountains.<sup>4</sup>

Falk, who is also known for her paper maché sculptures of clothing and textiles, is also conjured in Piasta's inclusion of a jean jacket coated with and hardened by a magnetic medium. *Magnetic Jean Jacket* (2015) maintains the directional folds of the original textile and also references the drapery in Piasta's marbled prints. The denim object, culturally transformed into a symbol of blue-collar labour and youthful rebellion, is now, through its newly magnetized state, able to beckon and act upon passing objects. And, more importantly, it can now categorize people and things in its vicinity – if only as magnetic, or non-magnetic. Piasta empowers *Jacket* by using magnification as a process of again deferring to the nature of objects. A nail and other small metal objects are stuck to one of its sleeves in a careless fashion, reminding the viewer that *Jacket* is situated comfortably alongside the marbled prints as intersections of alchemy, myth and chance.

More invisible threads travel from Piasta's work through Vancouver's local cultural histories. *Acoustic Panel with Fringe* (2015) is a black textile mounted on a large, square stretcher in a manner reminiscent of monochrome painting. Upon closer inspection, the viewer finds this work is comprised of a grid of smaller squares stitched together from cotton wool that has been hand-loomed by Piasta. The textile conceals sound-absorbing insulation. Her textile is an acoustic work, acting upon the space and subtly transforming viewers' and visitors' aural interactions. I can't help but appreciate the spatial responsivity of Piasta's work in relation to the World Soundscape Project, which emerged out of Vancouver's Simon Fraser University sound studies programs in the late 1960s. That project's founders and participants recorded and archived the sounds of natural and urban objects and environments to preserve the sonic histories of place.

Ultimately, Piasta's exhibition allows her objects to stake their claim as instigators and anything but coincidental counterparts to the unfolding of process, relationship, form and narrative.

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## **A Putting Down of Roots: 40 Years of CV2** Gallery 1C03, Winnipeg Sept. 17 — Nov. 14, 2015 by *jeanne randolph*

“This collection of work by artists who use text... is not so much an ode to [Dorothy] Livesay [1909–1996, one of the founders of *Contemporary Verse 2*, or “CV2”]... as it is an attempt at understanding the forces that we all deal with when trying to create something, anything, that might stand the test of time,” writes Kegan McFadden in his curatorial essay. The artworks in this exhibition accompany display cases of poignant as well as piquant artifacts and correspondence from the archives of CV2, a feminist poetry magazine. The curatorial essay is a traditional mode in which to interpret an exhibition; here, Kegan and Clarise Foster also interpret the history of this valiant literary magazine by means of the artworks accompanying the magazine's archives.

Forty years after its first issue, CV2 letters aflame with indignation, or with panic, are all too resonant, especially when their crises are the same ones that artist-run centres have not as yet perfectly resolved: favouritism; veering from their original ideals; pressure from outsiders who don't understand. The artworks in Gallery 1C03 allude to myriad forces, psychological and social, that beset any cultural endeavour, grand or offhand, the moment it is manifest. The moment something is made, will it have an audience? If it even gets that far, how long will it matter? Erdem Taşdelen's *A Morsel* (2012), a plateful of life-size porcelain madeleines, evokes Proust's immortal book, of course, and in doing so proclaims an undeniable feature of longevity: is there some form of audience who cares to remember something, anything? For that matter, does present society give a care about stuff that's getting old?

Ben Cove's *Untitled (Wall Painting)* (2006) is a jumble of black letters painted all higgledy-piggledy on the wall near the floor. Easy to decipher, the sentence reads: “every thing is going to be al r ight.” This affirmation

is silently relevant to today's editors, writers, artists, gallerists and arts administrators. Unable to ensure our best audience, we acknowledge the psychological fortitude, the idealism, as McFadden wrote, "at least to keep going," that the CV2 poets must have felt, just as we believe, one more time, everything's OK. There was a point, as if I care to remember exactly, maybe in the 1990s, after a minor economic recession, when pop culture – including some ads – praised the idea of "surviving." It was obvious that the word referred to financial viability then, not what "surviving" means now. To "survive" then seemed to insinuate that ideals were fluff. "Surviving" implied acquiescence, job done, no more wishful thinking; it was "as good as it gets." Quite like what "It is what it is" means today, when, as anyone with ethics or imagination knows, it isn't. These are not inspired phrases. They seem to emerge in pop culture in times of economic insufficiency. The arts, however, in Canada, for sure, are always in a state of economic insufficiency. To concede "It is what it is" would virtually reduce all of us to working with crayons on construction paper.

*A Putting Down of Roots*, then, could be likened to looking in the window as you pass by, say, Del's Electric Motor Supply, on Princess Street here in Winnipeg. You see what kind of work is available, the potted *Dracaena* jamming itself desperately against the icy window; you see the scene inside. And you also see yourself reflected. Laurel Woodcock's metal *maquette* (2010) is constructed so that at the top of the piece the tops of the cut-out letters "on a clear day" are sliced away. This suggests "glass half-empty" imagery. The cut-out letters are entirely empty, while the top halves of the empty letters are doubly missing. Yet people in the arts know that "on a clear day we can see forever;" in fact, we have to, palpable emptiness be damned.

The first two lines of John Will's painting, *I Wrote a Poem* (2014), REGIONAL SEGREGATION/ERGO MEGALOMANIA, are speaking to "attitude." Artists are so often accused – even by each other – of having "big egos." This work suggests you have to know where to look for that. Yet there is not much public discussion of how a so-called big ego is actually the bravado of a species on the endangered list.

Including artworks in a creative archival project is characteristic of Kegan McFadden's other archive-based exhibition *Yesterday was Once Tomorrow (or, A Brick is a Tool)* at Plug-In in the spring of 2015. The investigation and presentation of artistic archival material can be a cautionary tale, a wake-up call, a concatenation of insights. Which projects of yesteryear would we not rejig to fit today's predicament? An archive's interpretation curated and vividly presented alerts us to the idiosyncrasies, assumptions and desires we take for granted in the present.

The "oldest" artwork in *The Putting Down of Roots* is a 1997 lithographic print by Laurence Weiner, *& Read*. It alludes to persistence and to continuity, yet not as mere compulsion. Weiner's piece presents *w r i t e n* in the sand at the top and *w r i t e n* in the sand at the very bottom. It refers to poetry specifically but could just as well be referring to all the millions of individual art practices generally; we know what their fate could be, swept away by the tides of time or scattered beyond reach. But what keeps a work relevant, as the poem continues, "& read in the summer, & read in the fall, & read in the winter, & read in the spring?" Again, the audience, so precariously available, is crucial. And this, in turn, leads to the possibility that an audience could be small, obscure and powerless. Every artist and every arts group has to confront this question, "With what size of audience could you be satisfied?" Edgar Heap of Birds leads one from *nuance of sky words are open* (2012) to three other evocations of openness under the heavens, and then *indian still target obama bin laden geronimo* (2014). This challenge to hypocrisy and cowardice is more important than timidity about finances. Divya Mehra's bold work *The Bitch Blues* (2014) insists: she poses a problem because she keeps exposing a problem. Although there are many ways to read "she" – including as Dorothy Livesay herself, the co-founders of CV2, and feminists (especially in the 1970s) – "she" can also refer to the unabashed frankness and unruliness with which many visual and literary works ponder the cruelties of the day.

jeanne randolph's most recent book is *Out of Psychoanalysis: cto-criticism 2005–2015*.

I WROTE A POEM

REGIONAL SEGREGATION

ERGO MEGALOMANIA

BEGONE RELIGION

NEGOTIATE PEIGNOIR

REGROUP VEGITATION

John Will, *I Wrote a Poem*, 2014, from the EGO series, mixed media on paper, 55.88 cm x 76.2 cm. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JARVIS HALL FALL ART, CALGARY