

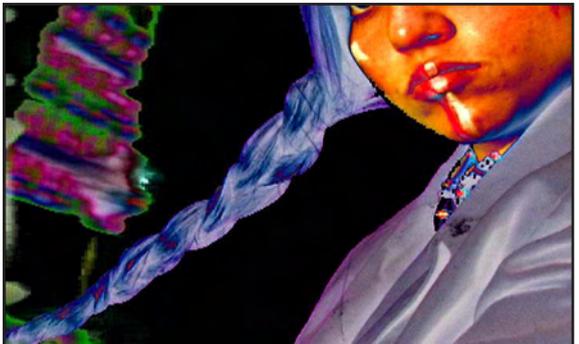
Dominique Rey



Selling Venus

Converge

Cherie Stocken



ALTERNATOR
gallery for contemporary art

Hall of Mirrors

Sigrid Dahle

He's the client and she's the service provider. The paying customer's always right – she knows that and so does he. That's why he's here, after all.

She's done her research. Her life and her livelihood depend on it, and her kids' lives too. The stakes are high. So it comes as no surprise that she's become an expert. At giving him. What he wants. To see. At dancing him. When he wants her. To move. At dressing him. What he wants her. To wear. At speaking him. What he wants her. To say.

Him.

Nothing more and nothing less.

Which is to say that she's a social scientist of sorts, a master of male heterosexual desire. Her method: Trial and error. Her criteria for evaluating her research findings: income earned while remaining fully in control (she's still alive, after all, and though she may be scarred, she's certainly not disfigured.)

You and I – the art audience – are clients of another kind. Like all artists' models and research subjects, she's the service provider. The customer with the cultural and intellectual capital holds the cards – she knows that and so do we. But she's done her research. Her self-respect and identity are on the line, after all. So it comes as no surprise that she may choose to perform what she suspects that we want to see, hear and believe. About her. About other(ed) women. About how she looks at herself and interprets what she sees.

Which is to say that it's she, the service provider, who's actually holding up a mirror. At us. To look at ourselves. A mirror in which we, the art audience – client-spectators of yet another kind – are confronted by our own desires and assumptions, as reflected through her eyes.

What we get is nothing more and nothing less.

Sigrid Dahle lives, thinks, writes and curates in Winnipeg.

Converge

Stephen Foster

I had the pleasure of working with Cherie Stocken as a BFA student at UBC Okanagan while she completed her degree. During the course of her studies Stocken's work has transformed and matured. Her investigations into cultural identity and representation have led her to a complicated territory of myth and stereotype.

Her work is most striking when it uses simple performative gestures combined with clever super-imposition and computer-generated effects, both in video and photography. The use of strong symbolic references underlines clear political content in her work. The videos *The Knot Between* and *A Fine Line* both implicate a decidedly post-colonial perspective that proposes closure for a cultural legacy of colonial oppression.

The audience viewing Stocken's work is compelled to empathize with the characters she portrays and, as a result, the work has an emotive quality that is visceral in nature. In *The Weave*, a video and performance piece, we are obliged to consider the work as a representation of the often-violent clashes between Indigenous cultures and Western European colonial practice, but this image of conflict is confounded by its stylized video mediation and by Stocken, as performer, blending and reconciling opposing cultural traditions into her own person. The result is an image of resistance and struggle, not of failure and hopelessness.

Although the characters in her videos tend to be somewhat generic and iconic, they have symbolic references that defy the cliché. There are moments where the obvious connotations become personal and allow the audience access to an intimate understanding of the character. The audience anticipates that these representations are biographical in nature and as such we are challenged to consider Stocken's personal context. It is important for the viewer to understand that the person represented on the screen is a young aboriginal woman and that image is complicated by a mixed heritage that resists the stereotypical portrayal of indigeniety. Biographical details are merged with historical references to present a portrait of post-colonial society for young aboriginals. Yet the work also has relevance for a more general audience with emotive and formal qualities that inspire as much as they haunt the imagination.

Stephen Foster is a media-based and video artist whose work addresses issues of identity politics. He is an associate professor in the Department of Creative Studies at UBC Okanagan.

Dominique Rey

Dominique Rey has an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College in New York and a BFA from the University of Manitoba (including a summer studying at Yale University). She has held solo exhibitions at Plug In ICA (Winnipeg), Le Centre Clark (Montreal) and Michael Gibson Gallery (London, Ont.). Her work has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Winnipeg Arts Council, the Manitoba Arts Council and was made in part with support from the National Film Board of Canada's Filmmaker Assistance Program.

Cherie Stocken

Cherie Stocken has a BFA from UBC Okanagan. She has a certificate in Fine Arts from the Art Instruction School in Minneapolis, Minn., and is a graduate of the Media Intensive Program at the Galiano Film School. Stocken has exhibited in group exhibitions at the Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Arusha Centre (Calgary) and UBC Okanagan. Her videos have been screened at the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival (Ontario), the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre (Kelowna), the University of Oklahoma and the Red Carpet Film Festival (Vernon).

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Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art
#103-421 Cawston Ave.
(Rotary Centre for the Arts)
Kelowna, BC V1Y 6Z1

t: 250-868-2298
f: 250-868-2896
e: alternator@telus.net
w: www.alternatorgallery.com

Hours: Tues - Sat noon - 5pm

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