

Dup-boug-a-dad

An exhibition of video installation

By

Aislinn Zaria Thomas

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including my required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Dup-boug-a-dad is a video installation that is curious about different ways of being in the world. Its form and content address the body and some of the many ways of being bodied. In parts intervention, documentary, document, performance and music video, it features David Gunn, a friend of mine who has a physical and intellectual disability.

David loves cheerleading. Living in rural Nova Scotia, as he does, his main access to the sport is through YouTube. The footage in *Dup-boug-a-dad* was taken when David visited Kitchener-Waterloo and practiced with the University of Waterloo cheerleading teams in 2015.

David loves to sing. Being deaf, as he is, he sings in his own language. The song in *Dup-boug-a-dad* is, at least in part, about lifting a cheerleader up with one arm. He sang it while “hearing” his voice for the first time that we know of. This was made possible by his standing on a vibrotactile platform that vibrated in response to the sounds he made, translating his voice into a felt, tactile sensation. Two of these platforms and a vibrotactile bench are present in the gallery space.

My artistic practice is quite varied in nature, so although I am exhibiting just one work in my MFA thesis show I wanted to write supporting documentation that spoke to the life and sustainability of a wide-ranging practice as a whole. As a result, the first section of this support document, *How to Be In the World?* touches on many of the concerns that currently inform my approach to art and life by grappling with title’s question. It’s written in a declarative (though not definitive) voice, and operates as a manifesto of sorts. I see it as both a record of my present stance and an aspirational text.

While the concerns in *How to Be In the World?* have undoubtedly shaped my thesis exhibition in both obvious and subtle ways, the second section of this support document speaks more directly to, and about, this work. *Dup-boug-a-dad: Process & Description* and *Installation* describe the piece itself, its making, and the specifics of its life in the gallery.

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Terry O'Neil headed up the camera crew and helped with many aspects of the video. Thank you for sharing your mad skills! Alongside many other contributions, he, Tara Cooper, and Lois Andison also provided computers that allowed me to transition to using screens again. Nathan Stretch at The Commons Studio generously assisted me in producing an early version of the audio, and John Hauber Productions provided Audio Description services.

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Rod and Peggy Thomas lovingly stayed away when asked to (due to my need for lots of rest). They also generously provided vehicular support, spare rooms, and three years worth of omega-3 fatty acids (in the form of walnuts), as well as other sundry items.

Finally, I'd like to express my deep appreciation for David Shumaker. David, some years ago we embarked on an adventure that has offered some significant and unexpected challenges of late. Your steadfast support has been absolutely indispensable. Thank you for continuing to show up with all of your creativity, humour, pragmatism, faith, silly dancing, and hard work. My gratitude is unquantifiable. I am honoured to share this journey with you, my friend.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Images	viii
How to Be In the World? Some thoughts from here	I
<i>Dup-boug-a-dad:</i>	
Process & Description	20
Installation	28
Works Cited	30
Appendix A	37
Appendix B	39
Appendix C	40

LIST OF IMAGES

1. Maggie Groat, *Trying to Hold the Moon* (2009). Action documented by photography (maggiegroat.com). 3
2. Aislinn Thomas, *A stack of pancakes to hold up the ceiling* (2015). Photo documentation. 4
3. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers) 1/3* (2010). Photo documentation. 6
4. Aislinn Thomas, *Note # 6: The World* (2010). 8.5 x 11" Poster for a public postering project in Guelph and Toronto, Ontario. 7
5. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers) 2/3* (2010). Photo documentation. 8
6. Theaster Gates, *Bank Bond* (2013). Marble. Edition of 100. 6 1/8 x 8 5/8 x 13/16 in ("Next Stop"). 9
7. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers) 3/3* (2010). Photo documentation. 10
8. Mammalian Diving Reflex, *Haircuts by Children* (2007). Performance ("Haircuts"). 15
9. Corinthian House at L'Arche Cape Breton. 20
10. David being assisted in lifting a cheerleader. Video still from *Dup-boug-a-dad*. 24
11. David singing and "hearing" at the VibraFusionLab. 26
12. *Dup-boug-a-dad* installation view. 27
13. *Dup-boug-a-dad*: view of the wall upon entering the gallery. 28
14. *Dup-boug-a-dad* installation view. 28

Art is the site of intolerable research, the laboratory of odd ideas, of sensual and intuitive study, and of production that exceeds the boundaries of conventional disciplines, protocols and imaginaries. [...] In the making and appreciation of art there is a space of difference, even resistance, where people can find refuge from the ideas that otherwise rule them.

-David Garneau

HOW TO
BE IN
THE
WORLD?

SOME THOUGHTS FROM HERE

I am preoccupied with the question of how to be in the world—how to engage with our surroundings, our experiences, our interactions with other beings and things. Of course, all this is in the context of a complex inheritance that includes fossil fueled capitalism, settler colonialism, a status-obsessed culture, institutionalized oppression and growing inequality.¹ As well as more basic inheritances like the fact that we are unique and unpredictable bodies that interact with other bodies that will all someday die (if they were living to begin with) or otherwise change.

BE AWARE OF DEATH; TAP INTO URGENCY.

My grandfather used to say “you’re a long time dead.”² This served as justification for his spending habits and some of his more questionable choices. I use it here to highlight the fact that there is an urgency to this task of being in the world.

Donna Haraway, feminist scholar and more, talks about the productivity of urgency versus the stultifying nature of crisis (260). There is something appealing/sexy about the apocalypse and its inevitability that we latch onto and aestheticize. Think zombie movies—zombie anything.³ Urgency is more messy and grounded in the complexities of the present.⁴ Responses to it can be compelling, though often less slick and more challenging.

Sequestering water is not sexy (to some people).

I call it our grey water system—a series of buckets in our bathroom and kitchen, now with an assertive patina of soap scum. My dad calls it sequestering water (as in, “Are you sequestering water, Aislinn?” Tone: accusatory). He’s an SUV-driving, climate change agnostic who was baffled (and slightly horrified) when he discovered the buckets about a year ago.

They say that the wars of the future will be fought over water. Still, the floods and droughts of the present make strange our easy relationship with it. I, for one, appreciate that my labour makes visible my water use, that it brings my consumption and privilege into awareness. (Please know that the grey water system was not born of guilt. Urgency can be inhabited playfully.)

1 Martha Kenney uses the term “difficult legacies” (Haraway 255) to describe the dynamics we’ve inherited. Her observation has helped me put words to my own.

2 He himself has only been dead for 9 years so far, but all other signs point to the accuracy of this statement.

3 Should you be interested, Wikipedia provides a list of zombie films (“List of Zombie Films”), although films aren’t the only place zombies appear, of course. They have a starring role in the work of artist Jillian MacDonald, for example.

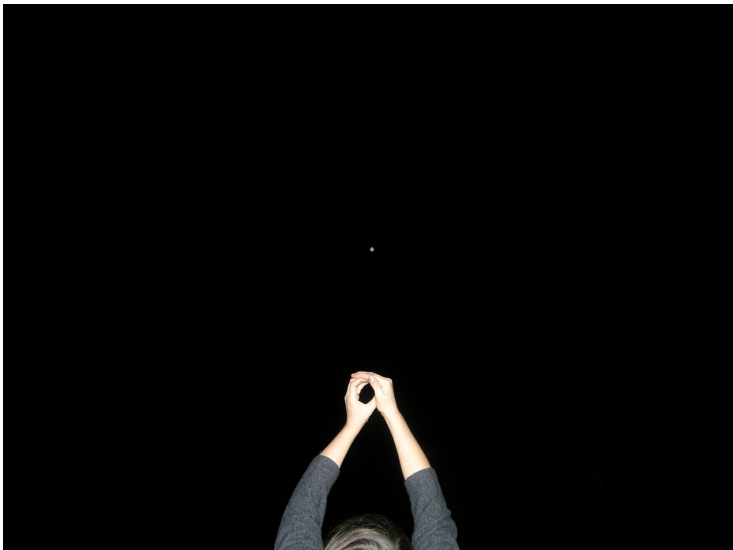
4 Many people are engaging with complexities and taking urgent action. Idle No More and The Transition Movement are notable examples (see “Transition Network,” “Idle No More” and “Groundwork for Change”). Artist Leah Decter’s participatory project (*official denial*) *trade value in progress* (2010, ongoing) is an artistic response to urgent realities: Decter stitched together several iconic Hudson Bay Company wool blankets and on them machine-embroidered the words, “We also have no history of colonialism,” a quote from then Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper. Decter invites participants to record their responses to Harper’s statement in a book, and to choose a previous participant’s response to sew onto the blanket. This process initiates discussion, reflection and action around Canada’s colonial past and present, the blanket serving as both catalyst and trace. The piece was exhibited at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission National Event in Winnipeg in 2010 and continues to grow (Decter).

BE WILLING TO FAIL.

The Romantic Conceptualists (think conceptualism with heart) are/were all about failure.⁵ Exploring Rom Con with an academic lens, Jan Verwoert describes the main node of connection between historical Romanticism and Conceptualism as the “practice of producing potentialities” (174). This strategy involves “destroying the impression that things can only be the way that they are now” (Verwoert 172)—a valuable project as necessary in our time as any other. And failure is a useful tool. It points to potentialities, and succeeds in both channeling and conjuring affect. Jon Sasaki’s *Ladder Climb*⁶ and Maggie Groat’s *Trying to Hold the Moon*⁷ both wholeheartedly attempt the impossible (and, of course, fail). In doing so, they invoke what I think of as “the bittersweet.” Strangely, bittersweet is one of the few oxymoronic compound words in the English language. In bittersweet two opposites co-habit and create a poignancy, contradiction and friction that seems to be at the heart of most things. A professor/friend/artist/mentor once said to me “dare to say something real.” I think of bittersweet as being this real thing that there is to say.

USE ART AS REMINDER AND PERMISSION (NOT UNLIKE DEATH).

Permission. Permission to disappoint my parents, and most likely the economy, and my alma mater, and the (North) American Dream, and Mr. Bird (who thought I should be a chemist). Permission to say something that *might* be real.



1. Maggie Groat, *Trying to Hold the Moon* (2009). Action documented by photography (maggiegroat.com).

5 Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975), for example, was a Dutch-born artist who is known for bringing romantic themes and approaches to his conceptual practice (Heiser). His film, *I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1971) is a stationary close-up of the artist crying that “leaves us with the disturbing feeling that we are witnessing an expression of inconsolable sorrow” that we will never know the source of (Heiser). Many contemporary artists work in the legacy of historical Romantic Conceptualism (see below).

6 In his video, *Ladder Climb* (2006), Sasaki repeatedly attempts to climb a freestanding ladder and repeatedly fails. His earnest effort is recorded in front of the “Better Living” building on the Canadian National Exhibition grounds.

7 *Trying to Hold the Moon* (2009) (Image 1) is a photo document of Groat’s attempt to cup the full moon in her hands. From the point of view of the camera/viewer, the moon is far from Groat’s reach, but we can imagine that from the artist’s own perspective the moon is perfectly situated within the circle of her hands. Equally compelling, though less visually so, is her piece *Trying to Give the Moon Back to Itself* (2009). This action is documented by a pair of framed legal documents: the first is an Assignment of Land Claim that acknowledges Groat’s ownership of a tract of lunar real estate (one acre that she purchased online from the Lunar Republic Society); the second is a legal Gift Deed that formalizes the artist’s gift of this tract of land to The Moon.



2. *A stack of pancakes to hold up the ceiling* (2015). Photo documentation.

I once heard someone say that art is a way of thinking. I believe this to be true. But art is also a way of doing. It offers a reminder and permission to break with routine and normative cultural scripts—what the philosopher Jean Vanier aptly terms the “tyranny of the normal” (“The Gospel”). So here’s another list: art can urge one to defy neoliberal expectations; to do something superfluous, excessive, odd or experimental; to make 200 pancakes and stack 199 of them to the ceiling;⁸ to mail old love letters back in time;⁹ to lie

8 My partner asked me if I made *A stack of pancakes to hold up the ceiling* (2015, Image 2) because the ceiling fell in two years prior. I said no, although his question reminded me of the fact of that occurrence. So perhaps that is the reason.

The pancakes were vegan (flax seeds being a cheaper [and more ethical?] binding agent than eggs) and local (because, although it was more expensive, the local flour was in the bin beside the cheaper non-local flour and I couldn’t pretend that I hadn’t seen it). The recipe was for extra fluffy pancakes (for obvious reasons—see Appendix A). Our apartment smelled very good until the pancakes dried up and shrank away from the ceiling. When I composted them I discovered that the pancakes had become colourful with mold in the places where they were pressed together and still moist.

9 I’m still working on this one.

down on the ground each day on the way to work;¹⁰ to imitate other things in an attempt to better understand them (Images 3, 5 & 7); or to make large papier maché rock disguises for rocks that can be used by other bodies, too¹¹...

INHABIT CONTRADICTIONS, PRACTICE FLEXIBILITY.

Back to failure: I don't know about you, but I've said plenty of hurtful things; I've bought cheap paper of unknown origin instead of searching for recycled paper or an alternative to paper; I have no idea what to do with the plastic that accumulates despite my best efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle (the latter of which, by the way, is not what we've been led to believe it is¹²); I work with digital technologies to create things that appear to take up very little space in the world—they don't pile up under my bed and off-gas toxic chemicals like my paintings did—but they have an incredibly significant physicality and environmental impact that is largely hidden from my view.¹³ (Has it always been so difficult to be a decent person?) The impossible task of living a life of integrity and the inconsistencies that ensue may find their way into the content of the work.

For my sanity, I try to practice flexibility (sometimes); I acknowledge the contradictions I inhabit, and see if any can budge;¹⁴ I give up, and surrender, and let go, and am unattached to the outcome, and am open to the emergence of new realities and all of that...stuff.

LEVERAGE THE GALLERY.

Often my work not only comes from but is situated in "the everyday": in a café, my apartment, on a telephone pole (Image 4), a forest trail, or a blog. This work can be ephemeral and quiet. It does not loudly proclaim its status as "art," being as it is without the frame of a gallery or institution. And there is a freedom in working this way. I am beginning to think, however, that perhaps the gallery is okay, if for no other reason than to practice flexibility (see above). There are other reasons, though, including being part of a larger conversation, and developing an income stream (she says hopefully). I think of artists who want new potentialities and leverage problematic actualities to get there. Theaster Gates, for example, calls himself a hustler (Colapinto 30). He is unapologetic about selling refuse for big bucks to fund

10 *Lie down on the ground, look up at the sky and think of Helen Johnson* (2014). Performance and installation with audio, screen printed wallpaper, screen printed devices for viewing the sky, grass and maintenance. <<https://vimeo.com/106002186>>

11 *Rock disguises for rocks, humans and other bodies* (2014). Tempera, flour, water, and salvaged newspaper and newsprint.

Actions others have taken with the "permission" of art include: seeing if sleeping with comfort food would provide comfort (Diane Borsato, *Sleeping with Cake*, 1999. Discreet performance and photographs); and capturing the ephemeral beauty of breath, condensed (Gabriel Orozco, *Breath on Piano*, 1993. C-print, 16x20 in).

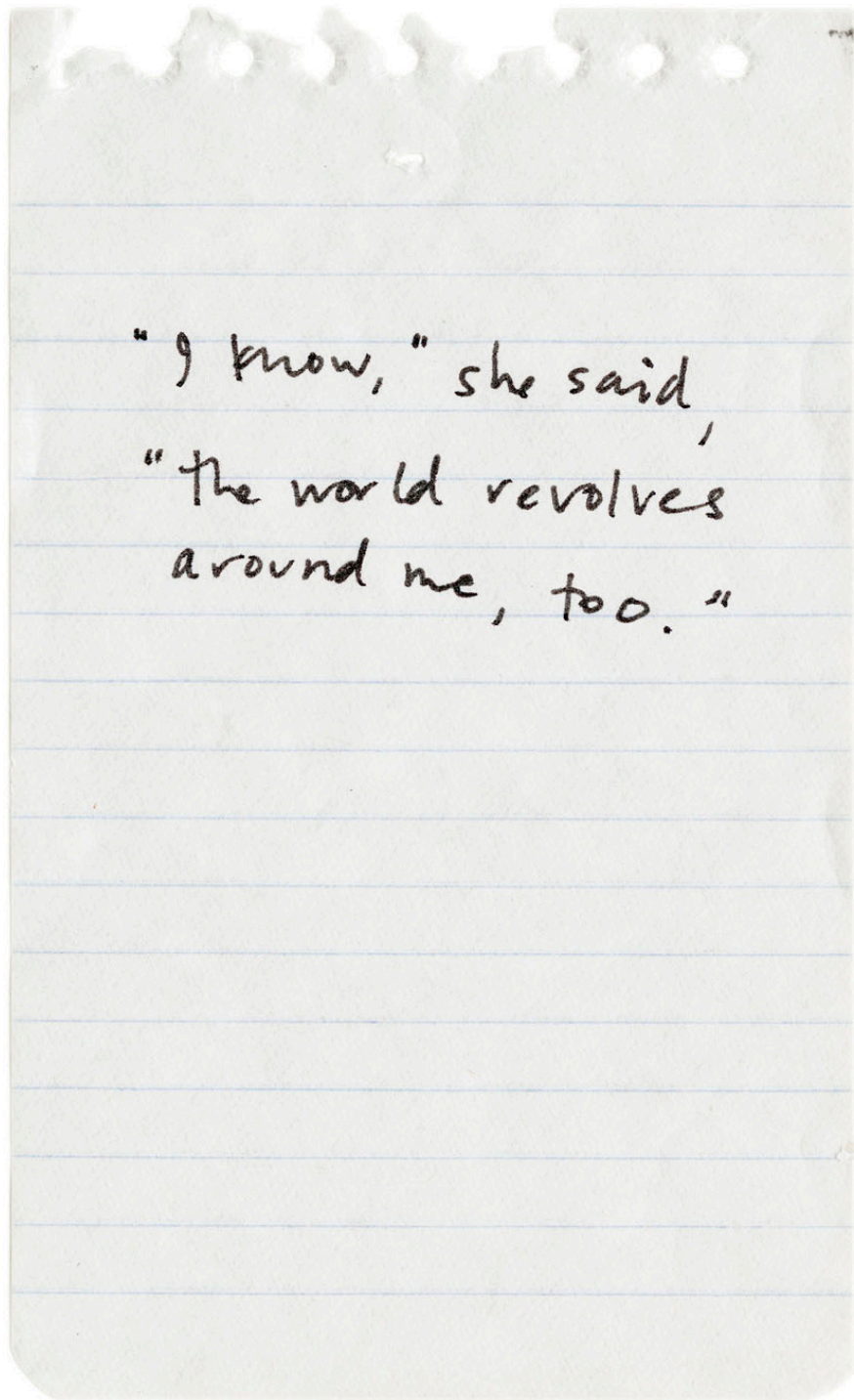
12 Adam Minter has done some compelling journalism on this subject (see "Plastic").

13 CBC Radio ("Sound the Cloud") and Miriam Diamond ("Life") grapple with the complexities of this issue. For information on the effects of our demand for electronics see "Where's the Harm."

14 It seems like cultivating awareness may be the very least I can do. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh describes this as "a basic kind of peace action," an alternative to simply looking the other way (108). He advises: "[w]hen we throw a plastic bag into the garbage, we know that it is different from a banana peel. It will take a long time to become a flower. 'Throwing a plastic bag into the garbage, I know I am throwing a plastic bag into the garbage'" (107-8).



3. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers) 1/3* (2010). Photo documentation.



4. Aislinn Thomas, *Note # 6: The World* (2010). 8.5 x 11" Poster from public postering projects in Guelph and Toronto, Ontario.



5. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers) 2/3* (2010). Photo documentation.



6. Theaster Gates, *Bank Bond* (2013). Marble. Edition of 100. 6 1/8 x 8 5/8 x 13/16 in (“Next Stop”).

his social enterprises.¹⁵ Artist and author Darren O’Donnell has coined the term “social impresario” to describe his tactic of doing good for selfish reasons (44).¹⁶ Both harness the status quo to make a status change.

AVOID LOOKING IN SHOP WINDOWS (& MIRRORS).

When I lived in the city I wanted a lot. Vision being selective, I saw what (it seemed like) everyone had and I wanted it for myself. My desire was enormous and enormously distracting. When I lived in the country all I wanted was a library and a vegetarian-friendly restaurant every once in a while. Now that I’m somewhere in between I try to seek out the periphery and interstices—including trails, side streets and alleyways—in order to avoid looking in shop windows too frequently, maintain a more expansive version of reality, minimize comparisons, and remember that “lifestyle” doesn’t have to be something(s) I buy.

Note to self on the subject of mirrors (and reflective surfaces in general): the metaphorical kind is best. Physical mirrors are neither reliable nor necessary.¹⁷ Avoid them, and know that you are not alone! Artist Margaux Williamson writes, “We don’t need mirrors anymore, or the sides of the old shiny buildings or the placid lake, to see what is good. [...]”

15 Many of Gates’ works are made from materials gathered from his urban renewal projects. For example, *Bank Bond* (2013, Image 6) is a series of 100 pieces of marble gleaned from the abandoned Stony Island State Savings Bank in Chicago’s South Side. Each was engraved to resemble a bank bond and sold for \$5000 to help fund the restoration of the building and the creation of what is now The Stony Island Arts Bank, described as: “a platform for site-specific contemporary art commissions and exhibi-

tions, a venue for artist and scholar residencies, and a home for [the] Rebuild [Foundation] archives and collections [established by Gates in 2010]” (“Stony Island”). John Colapinto writes of the project, “Selling urinal scraps to fund culture in a neglected ghetto is, Gates suggests, beating the art world at its own hustle” (30). Nicely done.

16 O’Donnell describes a social impresario as being part social worker (the “do-gooder”) and part opera impresario (the career-minded narcissist) (44).

17 After spending over 6 months unable to leave my apartment by myself, I got out of the habit of using mirrors. While I wouldn’t necessarily recommend it, I am pleased to report that leaving your home with food on your face or your shirt tucked into your underwear is humbling (in a good way), builds character and keeps it real.



7. Aislinn Thomas, *on being (sunflowers)* 3/3 (2010). Photo documentation.

We can use our bodies to feel what's happening. [...] Our bodies are smarter than our eyes" (Williamson 247). Please—trust your body.

CONSIDER ACCESS.

Who and what does this work make itself available to? Who and what does it exclude? What would my in-laws think?

It's important to assume intelligence on the part of viewers (à la Jacques Rancière¹⁸) while also creating points of access. Using narrative, honesty, humour, futility or failure, and the absurd can facilitate a way to enter into an artwork. I want to provide a certain amount of hospitality for the viewer without making things *too* comfortable.

Also, what senses does this work privilege? What kind of body does it assume? You may be familiar with the curatorial projects of Amanda Cachia. She brings a critical lens to the normative assumptions we make about embodiment. After hearing her speak I have been learning more about the practice of providing translations of artworks to make them accessible through multiple sensory pathways ("Crippling Cyberspace"). For example, when Audio Description is included in a gallery, people who are not sighted are able to experience visual work through sound. Audio Description scripts provided in printed form allow those who are deaf to access sound through vision.¹⁹ This brings us to the topic of disability. I selfishly want to be in a world that has an expanded definition of what constitutes "normal" human experience; where particular embodiments, ways of being in and feeling the world that are statistically less likely are just as valid as any other; where diversity and difference are both matter-of-fact and to be expected; and where every person's contribution to their community is valued.

Recently I was introduced to the term "temporarily abled."²⁰ In tracing its tracks to its origins I found a perhaps more accurate term for those of us without named disabilities: "contingently abled" (Marks 18). Until he went through a painful weaning process, my partner was contingently *disabled* by a terrible headache on the rare occasions that he neglected to have his morning coffee. All joking aside—this terminology points to the contextual nature of ability and disability. We are made and unmade by our contexts.

18 In *The Emancipated Spectator*, French philosopher Jaques Rancière argues that every viewer is capable of understanding an artwork (10). More than that, there is no singular "correct" interpretation or hierarchy of interpretations. Each viewer can and must be trusted to glean their own, equally valid, meaning from an artwork (13).

19 Audio Description is essentially an act of translation between the senses, translating visual information into aural information. Creating alternatives to exclusively ocular experience is not only an issue of accessibility (providing people with visual impairments to participate fully in a visual experience) but offers an alternative point of reference for sighted bodies as well (Snyder 1,2).

20 It was Colin J. Campbell (a doctoral candidate in the Graduate Programme of Social and Political Thought at York University) who introduced this term to me in a conversation we had in June of 2014.

RELATE.

Isn't this what it's all about?

Let's pick up on this thread of context. Did you know that you, dear reader, are a "person-context"? This term is used by the French collective Tiqqun. Summarizing their standpoint, Colin J. Campbell writes: "we are learning to see every unique person as not only in a context but as a manifestation of that context" (58). This seems like a *just* way to understand our lives. The New Materialist philosopher Jane Bennett offers the term "distributive agency" to describe the contingent nature of, well, everything (Bennett 31). We are each a part of complex assemblages—comprised of things that we can and things that we cannot easily detect—that are host to interactions and influences of staggering complexity.²¹

RELATE WITH THINGS.

New Materialists are all about de-centering the human, leveling the hierarchy that exists with humans at the top and everything else below. It's important to acknowledge that they by no means lay exclusive claim to this line of thinking. The work of Robin Wall Kimmerer and other Indigenous scholars, activists and artists describes the deep respect Indigenous philosophies have for the life present in most things.²² This is reflected in traditional languages, rituals, and values. The way we conceive of the world around us has significant implications for our relationship with it. It's Bennett's contention "that the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies" (Bennett ix).

Of course, given our inability to photosynthesize, there is no getting away from our need to consume the world around us on a regular and frequent basis (Kimmerer 176-7). How can we do so responsibly? This is a question Kimmerer thinks and feels through in *Braiding Sweetgrass*. She suggests that it is not enough to simply express gratitude for what we are given, although the cultivation of gratitude is important (189). To be truly responsible human beings we must go further: we must enter into relationships of reciprocity with the non-human

21 Karen Barad, a physicist and philosopher, offers the theoretical framework of "agential realism" (Barad 132-85) to understand and describe the entangled nature of our world and universe, and of "matter and meaning" (Barad 3). Given that agential realism is grounded in quantum physics, I won't be able to do it justice here, but I want to make note of this related concept that draws on observable phenomena (as well as critical theory and philosophy).

22 I am grateful to artist Gwen MacGregor for first bringing my attention to the ways in which New Materialism obscures Indigenous philosophies that it should be in conversation with (MacGregor).

lives and systems that support us, including what you and I may think of as inanimate—soil, water, and rock, for example (189-190).²³ Both Indigenous philosophies and New Materialism point to the possibility that the world is more than it seems, which it most likely is. People like myself are called to be open to radically different worldviews. This may initially require a kind of “willed naiveté” (Johnstone 15) that can be used as a strategy, a tool to cultivate humility, respect for, and engagement with non-human creatures and things. When we take, which we so often do, we can take only what is freely given, see to it “that our purpose be worthy” and offer our own gifts to the world in the same spirit that it offers up its gifts to us: abundantly, generously, without question, without ceasing (Kimmerer 187; 38).²⁴

Follow the work—let it take the lead.

Can an artwork be a gift to the world? Regardless, like any other object/thing/creature/stuff, an artwork has an efficacy. It can make things happen. Like you and me, it is both an active agent and entirely dependent; both completely connected to and totally influential on its context. I want to try to treat it that way; un-tether it, follow its logic for a while and see where it goes.

RELATE WITH THINGS THAT ARE OTHER HUMANS.

Kimmerer and Bennett’s acknowledgment of the liveliness and agency of inanimate stuff (like omega-3 fatty acids, rocks, and aluminum cans) has the potential to topple hierarchies within human society. Specifically, New Materialism has implications for those with profound intellectual disabilities. Agency, for Bennett, is separate from intention (31-2). People and things have impact in the world quite apart from intent and the cognitive prowess it requires.

Vulnerability is weakness, and both can be reclaimed.

Those without named disabilities that may or may not be chugging along just fine *need* to be in relationship with the most vulnerable in our society, including those with disabilities (Greig 142; Vanier “Why the strong”). “Only by doing so,” writes scholar Jason Reimer Greig, “can the misrecognized identity of [the

23 Indeed, ideas of liveliness are built into language itself, and one language’s object may be another’s subject (Kimmerer 54-6). Kimmerer discusses how Potawatomi, the language of her ancestors, acknowledges the life inherent in many things. The Potawatomi “grammar of animacy” addresses places, rocks, fire, songs, stories and more as subjects (55-6).

24 For more on the question of how to consume wisely, Appendix B includes an outline of the teaching of “The Honorable Harvest” offered by Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

marginalized] as “anomalous others” be shattered, and the hyper-individualism of late modern society be exposed as an illusion” (142). We can benefit from being reminded of our vulnerability through our relationships—it calls us into humility, grows our compassion for self and other, and validates our need for support.

Here’s a beef of mine: So often those trying to promote and normalize vulnerability describe it as “strength” (see, for example, Brown 33). While I agree it can be courageous (and certainly counter-cultural) to be openly vulnerable in our society, vulnerability by definition is all about being weak...and what is wrong with that? I am curious about this even deeper aversion—our distaste of weakness—and how *it* can be challenged.

I should situate myself. I am a nondisabled²⁵ person who cares about this stuff because I am a friend to several people with intellectual disabilities, and in turn have been embraced as a friend. Sadly, it is not very common for a nondisabled person to be friends with someone with an intellectual disability (Greig 131-2). The support network of a person with an intellectual disability is often exclusively made up of family and paid professionals,²⁶ and our narrow understanding of friendship is in part responsible for this phenomenon. Mutual respect and equality are markers of healthy relationships. Unfortunately, it is easy to rely on a “tit for tat” model of equality instead of understanding that each member of a relationship gives what she is happy and able to give while being open to receiving the other’s offering, regardless of how these offerings stack up against each other (Greig 131-3).

Meaning is made in relation.

I’d like to try to extend this model of mutual relationship to artistic practice: each contributor giving according to his/her/its desire and ability. More and more I am trying to see inanimate materials as collaborators and co-conspirators, and perhaps even co-initiators. Still, I frequently work with people. At times the work takes form as a social event or interaction. Art historian and critic Claire Bishop states that the most successful participatory works “attempt to think the aesthetic and the social/political together, rather than subsuming both within the ethical” (“The Social” 181). I am in agreement, although, clearly, being in just relationships is important. How can one use relational encounters as artistic material without instrumentalizing individuals? In navigating this rather uncertain terrain I take direction from Darren O’Donnell’s

25 In 2014 I had a life-altering experience when my head came into forceful contact with the pavement I was riding my bike on. As a result, I am healing from a mild traumatic brain injury, which I currently think of as a temporary disability. “Contingently abled” resonates all the more strongly for me at this juncture.

My co-ordinates:
white
settler
middle-class
straight
partnered
30-something
nondisabled /
contingently abled
highly sensitive
cisgender
woman

26 While there is a role for professional support, disability rights activists have struggled to change the conversation from one about “*care and protection to rights and equality* for people with disabilities” (McBryde qtd. in Dolmage and Hobgood 559, emphasis in source). The risk here, of course, is denying the material reality of the body’s need for care (Dolmage and Hobgood 562). Professors Jay Dolmage and Allison P. Hobgood examine the work of feminist scholars who re-frame care, recognizing its valuable role in all of our lives, while also calling for rights and equality. Dolmage and Hobgood suggest “*caring from* as [a] liberating disability politic. Caring from disability means locating disability in all bodies, including our own, while respecting just how profoundly different this variation makes us from one another”



8. Mammalian Diving Reflex, *Haircuts by Children* (2007). Performance (“Haircuts”).

concept of “the Social Impresario” (mentioned earlier) and “Social Acupuncture,” which intervenes into the social body in order to redirect the flow of power, if only temporarily (47-9). O’Donnell’s well-known *Haircuts by Children* is exactly what it sounds like and, as you can imagine, shifts the balance of power in a very visible and effective way for those involved.²⁷

GET COMFORTABLE WITH DISCOMFORT.

“Lean into discomfort” may be an annoying self-help truism, but discomfort can be productive. It’s understood that contemporary art may challenge a viewer, and, while provocation isn’t a valuable goal in and of itself, I don’t believe in avoiding difficult issues in order to provide a comfortable experience.²⁸ More and more I am thinking that everyone in a situation (in art, in life) needs to be willing to experience discomfort (to survive, to grow, to be in relationship) and when I put artwork into the world (especially when taking risks) I will be acquainted with the discomfort that comes from unanticipated and unfavorable interpretations of that work. There is a connection between the degree of discomfort experienced on each side of a relational equation. If a work is uncomfortable for a viewer, they may or may not choose to “lean in.” I need to be prepared to receive that discomfort myself, whether it be in the form of critique, accusation, or misunderstanding. Advice to self: Transform controversy into conversation. Grow a thick skin, or better yet,

(564-5). They go further, adding that “disability is a generative and productive resource that should be encouraged to flourish” (565). Here disability is defined broadly to include the imperfection, vulnerability, partiality, and need for care that we all experience to varying degrees (without denying the unequal distribution of opportunity, privilege and discrimination that comes with it in our societies). In their view disability and care needn’t be medicalized and isolating, but can be seen instead as connective and at the very core of human relationships, creativity and diversity. Professor Rosemarie Garland-Thompson writes eloquently about this:

Our collective cultural consciousness emphatically denies the knowledge of vulnerability, contingency and mortality. Disability insists otherwise [and] is perhaps the essential characteristic of being human. The body is dynamic, constantly interactive with history and environment. We evolve into disability. Our bodies need care; we all need assistance to live. An equality model of feminist theory sometimes prizes individualistic autonomy as the key to women’s liberation. A feminist disability theory, however, suggests that we are better off learning to individually and collectively accommodate bodily limits and evolutions than trying to eliminate or deny them (qtd. in Dolmage 140).

²⁷ The website of Darren O’Donnell’s theatre company, Mammalian Diving Reflex, describes *Haircuts by Children*

embrace your thin skin and experience intensity of feeling as a political act. Be a sensational body.

TRY OTHER LANGUAGES.

Being in a meaningful relationship with another person or thing through such a body requires a willingness to try to speak another language (which may or may not involve words).²⁹ Of course, this is both a metaphor and an impossible task. But like the most meaningful acts of translation in which both languages are altered (even as they fail to communicate perfectly) (Benjamin 256), the attempt to know, speak, be other in order to connect with, reach, honour and respect an other is a generative and transformative act. I say this with the knowledge that the proposition of truly understanding another is a harmful one. Yet we try. Scholar Peggy Phelan addresses this paradox at the heart of relationships. She argues that we should not expect to be understood or to understand, but that it's imperative to continue to engage with others (which I would define broadly). She writes, "*It is in the attempt to walk and live on the rickety bridge between self and other—and not the attempt to arrive at one side or the other—that we discover real hope*" (qtd. in Ellsworth 161, emphasis in source).

I've been known to argue that hope can be passive and stultifying—a way to distance ourselves from reality. But hope as an active stance, a propelling motion, is different; and it seems like the kind of energy and sustenance that the world needs. That rickety bridge and the willingness to hang out there (however briefly, however imperfectly) offers a framework for meaningful engagement. Combine this with as much humility and gratitude one can muster, a commitment to reciprocity, a conviction that the world is more than it seems, and a willingness to show up and be in this body as it attempts and fails...and this begins to seem like something worth living by and living for. And I may as well try.

After all, you're a long time dead.

(2007) (Image 8) as "a performance about trust, children's rights, generosity and vanity" ("Company History"). Children are trained by hairdressers and are paid by Mammalian Diving Reflex to offer free haircuts to the public.

28 I say this with the awareness that I have been accused in the past of making work that is "too nice." I am a generalist, however, and so different works operate differently...especially when the work is allowed to take the lead (see "Follow the work" p. 13, above)

29 I began thinking about this while living at L'Arche Cape Breton, a community for people with and without intellectual disabilities. Communicating with people with whom you share no language accentuates this task we perform in any mutual relationship. I am grateful to my partner David Shumaker for his articulation of this concept.

To expand on the topic of disability and communication, it's interesting to note that language (like disability and embodiment more generally) is characterized by its limitations, partiality and failure to perform perfectly (Dolmage 106-9). Jay Dolmage notes that language and disability are both prosthetic by nature (108) and argues that by recognizing this disability can be acknowledged as productive and constitutive of culture and society (117, 124).

D U P -

B O U G -

A -

D A D

P R O C E S S &
D E S C R I P T I O N ,
I N S T A L L A T I O N

PROCESS & DESCRIPTION

Where does an artwork begin? Given what we know about the distributed nature of agency we could, of course, choose any point in space and time and trace a path to any other (Barad ix). Because a starting point has to be chosen, and because I find myself lacking ingenuity, I will resort to a relatively linear narrative, beginning with an encounter between philosopher Jean Vanier and his father. Please know, however, that the ice on the Bra d'Or Lake, a young couple's trip to India, or any one of numerous cups of tea all had just as much to do with the creation of this MFA thesis exhibition as any other fact or possibility, past, present or future.

Jean Vanier tells a story about seeking his father's permission to join the British navy when he was just thirteen years old. After Vanier told his father why he felt he must take this path, his father responded by saying "I trust you. If that's what you want, that's what you must do" (*From Brokenness* 36). Vanier describes this response as "the greatest gift that he could ever have given me" (*From Brokenness* 36). His father's words not only encouraged him to pursue his dream, but reflected to him that he was trustworthy, and that he could therefore trust himself. Years later, after leaving the navy, his path continued to be shaped by this conversation. Having experienced the power of having his dignity revealed to him through the affirming presence of another, and through a series of chance encounters, he chose his life's work: a path of simply (and not-so-simply) committing himself to mutual relationships with people with (and without) intellectual disabilities. Vanier does not for a moment pretend that this is easy. He sees and acknowledges the violence in his own body-heart-mind, the conflict, selfishness and brokenness. Yet he continues to show up and meet all of the joy and pain of relationship, of community, of being human.

On a cool spring day in May of 2009 I stood outside a small diner. Covered in pale blue siding with a sign announcing itself as "Vi's," the building was set between a modest mountain range and a glassy expanse of water. I had been dropped off, along with my oversized bag and disassembled bicycle, in front of Vi's, which also served as the bus stop for Whycocomagh, Nova Scotia. My body straightened each time I heard

the sound of an approaching vehicle, and sunk ever so slightly as, one by one, they each continued along the highway.

My ride was late. As my concern began to grow, a van pulled into the patchy parking lot, coming to a halt just meters away. All four doors opened and bodies tumbled out to greet me. They were a motley crew. Everybody spoke at once and I couldn't understand a word. A man stood extremely close to me, spit flying as he peppered me with questions at an incredible speed. A woman jumped up and down, exclaiming loudly and tugging at my impossibly heavy bag. A young man held a bunch of wildflowers that were apparently for someone else, and another man stood awkwardly by, evaluating the situation. Seconds later a woman about my age climbed out of the driver's seat and gracefully provided interpretation.

This was my introduction to L'Arche Cape Breton—an intentional community where people with and without intellectual disabilities create home together—and these were my new housemates for the next eight months.



9. Corinthian House at L'Arche Cape Breton, where I lived with David in 2009.

In 1964, Jean Vanier invited Philip and Raphael, two men with intellectual disabilities, to leave the asylum that housed them and to live with him. Unwittingly, L'Arche was born. It is now an international organization of 149 communities on five continents

(L'Arche). Vanier describes how most groups of people or communities "begin with the word": a verbal or written commitment, a contract, a cognitive decision ("On Being").¹ L'Arche, by contrast, begins with and is centred always on "the body" and encounters between bodies. Here the language is one of tenderness, respect and care expressed through the daily rituals of bathing and dressing, preparing and eating food, washing dishes, tying shoes, walking together, and keeping house. My first weeks at L'Arche were dizzying. The typical process of adjusting to any new role and place was complicated by my difficulty in understanding those around me. I had a hard time shedding my habitual modes of relating. All of my housemates did happen to speak, but my ear was slow in adjusting and my learning was hampered by our lack of shared history and context. It was some time before I was asked to help someone take a bath, some time before I was fully initiated in the language of the body.

The video fades from black to a close-up of blue foam blocks resting in a pile. Eventually the camera pans over the blocks, revealing several thick, red mats. We hear breathy sounds and a male voice speaking unfamiliar words. The image cuts to black and the sounds continue. Knapsacks, clothing, a pair of shoes, and a computer power cord lay haphazardly on yellow and blue flooring, mats stacked in the background. The camera pans over the scene and we catch a glimpse of the centre of the gymnasium space beyond another pile of mats, a springboard and other equipment.

Slowly I made sense of words, phrases, and gestures, of meaning both stated and implied. Over time my understanding continued to deepen; it was a process of revelation as we lived the rituals of each day and season with all of the mundane daily tasks, joyful celebrations, and tense conflicts.

Again the image cuts to black while the sounds continue. Some faint voices can be heard in the background as we see, from a high-angle view, groups of young adults in brightly-coloured athletic clothing practice cheerleading stunts on the gymnasium's blue sprung floor, mirrors lining the wall in the background.

One of my housemates, David, though vociferous, didn't speak any English that I could discern. We lived together a full two weeks before I learned that he was deaf and spoke

I While Vanier doesn't provide specific illustrations, I think of marriage as a familiar example.

own language—a fact that I attribute to a combination of my general confusion and David’s skill of reading bodies, and articulating himself through his own. It is hard not to like David. He is charming: exuberant, creative, full of energy, and disarmingly comfortable in his own skin. He has his own language of words and gestures and a very rich imaginative universe populated with characters both seen and unseen. This universe is integrated with “reality,” and communicated through his imaginative role-play, which he often invites others to participate in. We were once setting up for an event in a building down the lane and I was waiting for him to come help me carry the last of our boxes. Trying to figure out where he was, I peered out the window to discover he was taking a cigarette break—with an imaginary cigarette. I couldn’t think of a more brilliant delay tactic.

David is a fan of pop-culture in general and cheerleading specifically. Living in rural Cape Breton, as he does, his main access to cheerleading is YouTube (“human pyramid” being one of his preferred search terms). My impulse to bring together David (a man with a disability passionate about cheerleading) and cheerleading culture (with its focus on athleticism, idealized beauty, and performance) seemed like a natural response.

The tone of the voice changes and the unfamiliar words are now louder, staccato, and clear. The image cuts from black to a close up of a young man in a backwards baseball cap and blue sleeveless shirt viewed from behind. He shrugs his shoulder and nods his head. The words are rhythmic and repetitive, now accompanied by guitar and drum. The young man is with a group of young adults in the gymnasium. People in the group gesture while others practice a cheerleading routine in the background, their movements echoed in the mirrors in the distance. We cut to an image of the young man, arms outstretched, being held in a cheerleading stunt. We can see that he has Down Syndrome, a goatee, and a white heraldic-style logo on his shirt. He and the others smile. The image cuts to a low-angle view of a group of cheerleaders practicing a routine: a woman in a pink shirt waves and drops to a crouch while others tumble across the floor behind her.

In the fall of 2015 I contacted the coach of the University of Waterloo cheerleading team to see if he was open to working

with David and me. He was, and we began to make arrangements for David to come to Ontario in November.

It was delightful to host David. He and my partner (who is also named David, and whom I'll refer to as David S.) have been friends for over fifteen years. The three of us fit in lots of work and play: we made pizza, smoked imaginary cigarettes and talked on imaginary cell phones as we schlepped about town, threw people out the window and into jail, looked at snapshots, and took more. The Davids watched plenty of movies and enjoyed more than one beer together, we did an audio recording project at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus, made a large wall drawing, met friends at the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory, reviewed footage, attended a cheerleading competition, and joined the varsity and junior varsity cheerleading teams at their practices.²

The voice becomes even louder and stronger as the tempo increases. The image cuts from black to the goateed man moving quickly across the floor towards the centre of the gym, with some young women seated in front of balance beams in the background. The video cuts quickly to a number of young men and women tumbling across the blue floor, a Canadian flag visible on the wall in the background, while others crouch at the floor's edge. It cuts again to a close-up of a human pyramid formation, the goateed man and other young men creating the base. We see the legs and feet of another person in front of the human pyramid, and others behind, preparing to climb on top. The video cuts to a scene of a group practicing: a young woman in a pink shirt tumbles away from the camera and joins other women in a crouching position while a group of men and women on the left gesture upwards, and the mirror at the back of the room reflects the action. A body moves across the frame at close range and we cut briefly to the goateed man, who is performing a stunt: up in the air, he is flanked by, and holds hands with, two smiling young women.

The footage in *Dup-boug-a-dad* comes from the cheerleading practice we participated in.³ The teams took turns spending time with us in between practicing their routines. At the end of the evening, David joined them on the large floor for several stunts and their final cheer. As people were packing up to go,

2 I take the time to describe some of my getting to know David and the relationship David S. and I have with him for a few reasons. First, to ground the process of the making of this work in other processes that began long before its conception. Second, as part of an effort to celebrate and normalize non service-oriented relationships between people with and without disabilities. And third, to counter the stereotype that disability is isolating and limiting (Dolmage 43).

It is not my intention to focus on our friendship in order to validate David's presence in the work, or ameliorate any potential discomfort around my use of his image and voice, although it may do so. I believe the primary ethical consideration here is David's right to self-determination, and he has freely given his (exuberant) consent throughout this process.

3 I had the help of a crew including Terry O'Neill, Laura Arendoque, and Tani Omorogbe. (Please see Appendix 3 for the full credits.)



10. David being assisted in lifting a cheerleader. Video still from *Dup-boug-a-dad*.

David went upstairs to the viewing area where our gear was stored. When we joined him he re-enacted holding a cheerleader above him with one arm, a stunt he had learned earlier that evening.

The video cuts from black to the goateed man being held up in the air, arms outstretched and knees slightly bent. We see the heads and shoulders of a group of young men and women surrounding him, clapping. The goateed man reaches down towards a man in a yellow shirt, who in turn reaches up to him. The video cuts quickly to two clusters of people, each lifting a young woman in the air. The women put their arms up in unison with each other and the voice. Cut to the goateed man in the air with the two women, now viewed from the side. They let go of each other's hands and their bodies begin to descend. The video cuts back to the two clusters of people. The women they are holding up drop down slightly before being tossed into the air. The group in the foreground collapses as they catch the woman they tossed. The collapse repeats before cutting to black while the voice continues.

The following day we went to the VibraFusionLab in London, Ontario, an artist-run space specializing in vibrotactile technologies.⁴ Here, by standing on a platform fitted with surface

4 Vibrotactility “pertain[s] to, or involv[es] the perception of vibration through touch” (OED). Vibrotactile technologies can be used to translate between the senses: the natural vibrations made by sound can be amplified so that it can be experienced haptically. This technology has been incorporated into accessible designs to allow people who cannot hear to experience sound through an alternate sensory pathway.

transducers, David was able to “hear” his voice through his body as he sang into a microphone. In front of him was a computer monitor displaying the waveform of his voice, providing visual feedback. His first experiments were tentative, but over the course of a few hours David eventually sang with a power and energy we had never heard before. By this point it was a jam session—David Bobier, artist and founder of the VibraFusionLab, and Cailen Dye, musician and sound engineer, accompanied David on drum and guitar, and David S. and I took turns joining him on the platform. During one of his most spirited refrains, David once again re-enacted his impressive cheerleading stunt. It was a memorable way to spend the last day of his visit.

The voice pauses and in the silence the video cuts from black to a close up of a cluster of young men looking up. A man in the centre of the cluster holds the feet of a person in one hand above his head. The man behind him supports the person’s heels with one hand. Their arms waver slightly and we cut to another cluster of young men. The goateed man is in the centre, right arm stretched up, holding the feet of a person above his head. Five other hands also support the person’s legs and feet. The voice begins again as someone pumps their arm and another supports the goateed man’s bent arm below the elbow. The video cuts to a close up of the goateed man holding his right arm up against a beige background. He gestures to his right with his head in unison with the voice. We cut back to the gymnasium. The goateed man is talking with a young woman. He holds out his arm and they shake hands. We cut briefly to a large group. They stand in clusters and pivot to their left lifting their arms in the air. The video cuts to a young woman being held in the air. A pair of hands grips her ankles. The camera pans down slightly and we see the heads and outstretched arms of a group of young men around her feet. We cut again to a close-up of the goateed man and others holding a pair of feet above his head, and cut back to the woman in the air. Back to the goateed man, and with help he lowers the person’s feet to waist-height. The video cuts to a close-up of a huddle of people, their right arms placed inside the huddle, moving up and down. We cut to the goateed man, who fist bumps the young woman he’s talking to. The video cuts quickly to the goateed man in front of the beige background with his right arm above his head.



11. David (right) singing and “hearing” with David S. at the VibraFusionLab in London, Ontario.

Taking my cue from his gesture of lifting a cheerleader while singing, I brought together the cheerleading footage and the recording of David’s singing/hearing back in the studio. The audio I chose was a small selection of what we recorded, with segments from his initial experimenting; a kind of “warming up” period; and his energetic finale, which was so spirited that it begins to sound aggressive. During the editing process, I tried to be sensitive to the rhythm and kinetic quality of David’s voice at each of these stages, choosing clips that are more distant, slower, and longer when he is first testing out the microphone, progressing to more active close-ups, and faster cuts that correspond to (or at times contrast with) David’s confident words.

The voice continues to shout its repetitive, rhythmic words. The goateed man stands with his arm up, slightly bent, in front of a beige wall and gestures below him with his head. The video cuts to the gym where the goateed man, with help from others, holds

a person above his head. Yet another arm enters the frame to support the person's legs. Cut back to the goateed man in front of the beige wall. With his right arm above his head, he points towards the ground with his left hand.

Other considerations that informed the editing process included: an awareness of the affinities and differences between bodies; drawing attention to both graceful and less than graceful actions; including both performative and relational, polished and casual moments; and incorporating footage of David being supported, which I initially found myself censoring.⁵

Primarily I think of *Dup-boug-a-dad* as both a response and an experiment. I see the video sitting somewhere between intervention, document, documentary, performance and music video. In the context of the gallery, sculpture and installation also come into play. This, along with the scale of the projection, causes the experience of the work—and the viewer's engagement with the bodies in the work—to become a very physical one.

Back to a close up of the goateed man in the gym, his arm up in the air, and braced by another person's arm. Three others surround him with their arms stretched upwards. Cut to the goateed man in the beige room where he gestures up and then down with his left hand, his right still in the air. He then drops both arms and, looking up, throws them into the air and drops them again. His gaze remains towards the ceiling as he pauses briefly before taking a step to the right and dropping his entire body out of the frame, towards the floor. This last gesture corresponds with a final shout and the video cuts to black.

INSTALLATION

Dup-boug-a-dad takes its name from one of David's frequent refrains, and when entering the gallery the first thing one encounters is the sound of his voice. Amplified by two PA-style speakers at the back of the gallery, David's singing fills the otherwise sparse room and draws the viewer towards and behind a freestanding wall in the gallery space (Image 13). The video is projected in large cinematic format on the other side of this wall, filling the entire 16 x 9 foot surface. The installation

5 I was surprised to notice myself automatically cutting the footage of David receiving help performing cheerleading stunts. In a society that places a very high value on independence, David's comfort with asking for assistance and his matter-of-fact acknowledgment of his vulnerability is something we can learn from. He is not embarrassed about needing accommodations, nor should he be. Ultimately, I felt it important to include footage of David receiving help.

I've found it useful to examine this and other decisions through the lens of Jay Dolmage's "Disability Myth 'Test'" (inspired by the "Bechdel Test" that analyzes the representation of women in film) (48). One line of questioning to test for the presence of common disability myths, tropes, and stereotypes asks: "Is there a character with a disability in the film?"; "Is the character alive at the end of the film?"; and "If the character is alive, is she or he still disabled in the same way she or he was at the beginning of the film, or has this character been cured, has their condition been ameliorated or overcome, or has it deteriorated significantly?" (49). Another useful set of questions includes: "[D]o the characters with disabilities interact with nondisabled people?"; "In this interaction, do the nondisabled people do more than care for the people with disabilities? And do the characters with disabilities do more than explain their symptoms and impairments to the nondisabled characters?" (48-9).

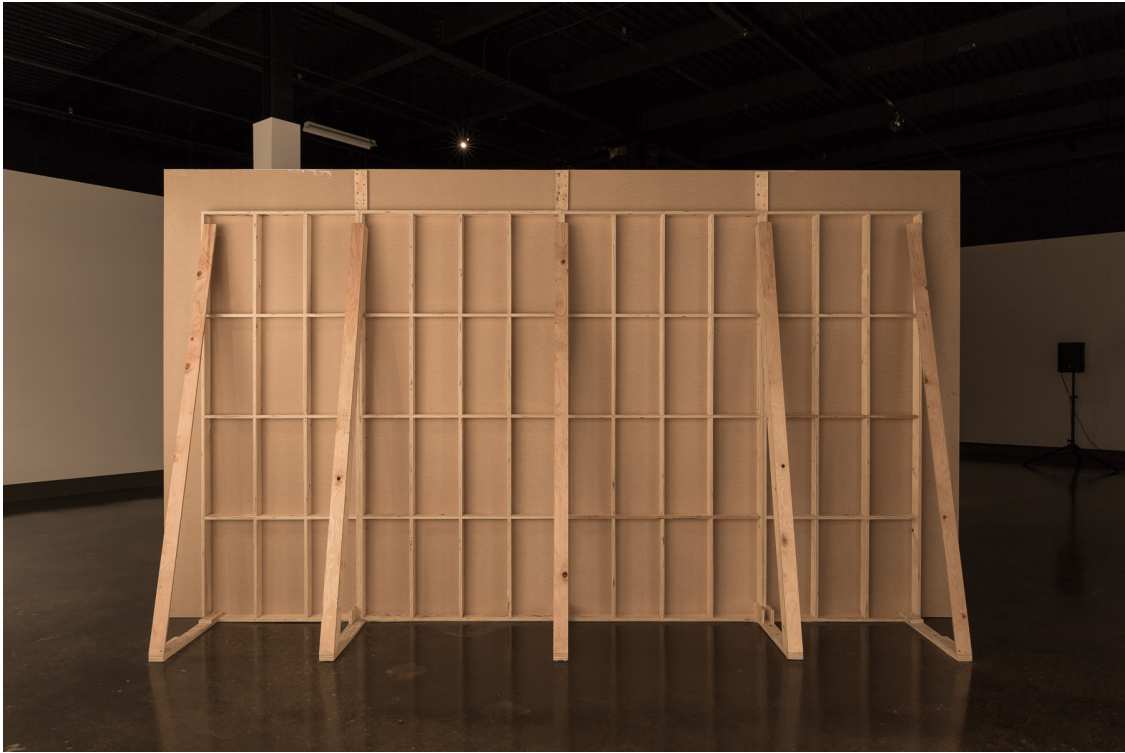
includes the VibraFusionLab's (36 x 36 x 7 in) vibrotactile platform that David used when recording the audio, as well as a second vibrotactile platform (also on loan from the VibraFusionLab) with a wheelchair ramp constructed for the exhibition, and a (72 x 18 x 18 in) vibrotactile bench (also constructed for the exhibition). These simple plywood affordances make it possible for David's voice to be not only heard, but also experienced haptically.⁶ Given the sparse installation, the platforms, bench, wall, and speakers are not only the main infrastructure and technology of the installation, but become sculptural objects, addressing the viewer in multiple ways—through their physicality in space, through sensation (ocular, aural and tactile), and through their relationship, encounters and interactions with other bodies.

As an artwork, *Dup-boug-a-dad* is curious about different ways of being in the world. It offers viewers the opportunity to encounter unique words and sensations that—like other words and sensations—both communicate clearly and not at all. As with any encounter, it asks of viewers that they be with their experience as it unfolds. It suggests that ambiguity and partiality are generative, that in spite of (or because of) this space of uncertainty, we continue to sense and make sense of what we see, feel and hear. And that this is something to celebrate.

6 For those who are interested, some contextual information about *Dup-boug-a-dad*, along with directions for accessing the Audio Description and the Audio Description script is available in a wall-mounted file holder in the exhibition space.



12. *Dup-boug-a-dad* installation view.



13. *Dup-boug-a-dad*: view of the wall upon entering the gallery.



14. *Dup-boug-a-dad* installation view.

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A P P E N -

D I C E S

APPENDIX A

FLUFFY, FLUFFY PANCAKES

Serves: 6-7 Pancakes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup All-Purpose Flour, sifted
- 2 tsp Baking Powder
- Pinch of Salt
- (2 tbsp White Sugar)
- ¾ cup plus 2 tbsp Milk
- 1 Large Egg, beaten *finy egg*
- (2 tbsp Unsalted Butter, melted) *omit*
- (1 tsp Pure Vanilla Extract *omit*)
- Canola Oil (or any other vegetable oil), for cooking

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder into a bowl and mix well.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the egg, milk, vanilla, and melted butter together. Be careful not to use hot, melted butter, as that may end up cooking your eggs!
3. Pour the wet ingredient mixture into the dry ingredients and stir till mostly incorporated. The batter should be thick and a little lumpy, but without any visible streaks of flour. If it is too thick to work with, add a little milk. Set the batter aside for 5-10 minutes.
4. Heat a heavy-bottomed, non-stick pan over a low-medium heat and coat it with oil. Use a ¼ cup measure to scoop and drop the batter into the pan so that you get evenly-sized pancakes.
5. Cook until the first side is golden brown, or until the top surface forms bubbles. Flip and repeat on the other side. Adjust heat accordingly. Serve while still hot.

www.chocolatesandchai.com/fluffy-fluffy-pancakes/

10 Common Pancake-Making Mistakes—and How to Avoid Them

1. baking soda should be less than 6 months old—or else it won't do its job, which is to increase the volume of the pancake when it hits the hot pan. For wet ingredients, we love buttermilk. Its acids react with the baking soda, giving your pancakes even more lift and imparting a subtle tang. If you only have milk at your disposal, add a squeeze of lemon to it before mixing into your dry ingredients—the acidity is important in balancing your pancakes' flavors.
2. Lumps are actually okay! Stir your batter until the dry and wet ingredients are *just* incorporated. That means mixing until the flour streaks have disappeared, but leaving the pesky lumps. If you over-mix, the gluten will develop from the flour in your batter, making your pancakes chewy instead of fluffy.
3. You can't make your batter the night before, or even an hour before you make your pancakes. It all goes back to those leavening agents: They start doing their job as soon as they come into contact with the wet ingredients, and will get less and less effective the longer you wait to ladle the batter into the pan. Griddling your pancakes right away will yield much lighter, fluffier pancakes.
4. if your pan is too thin, your pancakes will burn. The width is pretty important, too. You want there to be enough room to flip your pancakes without any messy business. (More on flipping later!)
5. when you're cooking your pancakes, use clarified butter (in which the milk solids have already been separated). Otherwise, use vegetable oil (really!) or regular butter, and wipe your pan off after every two batches or so.
6. Chocolate and berries will burn against the heat of the pan in the time it takes to cook your pancakes. If you absolutely MUST add mix-ins, first pour your batter into the pan, then add berries or chocolate chips. Bananas, however, will caramelize as the pancakes cook—so adding them is definitely a "do."
7. should flip when those bubbles pop and form holes that stay open on the surface of the pancake. If a bubble comes to the surface, pops, but is filled in by more pancake batter, hold off on flipping. Make sure your pancakes are hole-y!
8. Slide a thin spatula (we like to use fish spatulas) under your pancake, lift about three inches, and then briskly turn your wrist. Your pancake will land right where you picked it up, no smear in sight.
9. Treat your first few pancakes as a test batch. Use them to gauge the heat, practice your flipping method, and become aware of any hot or cold spots on the pan. If there are hot spots, don't be afraid to rotate the pan while you cook your 'cakes to get them all a gorgeous golden brown.

(10. use real maple syrup if/when you eat them)

adapted from www.bonappetit.com/test-kitchen/common-mistakes/article/pancakes-common-mistakes

APPENDIX B

The Honorable Harvest

In thinking through issues of consumption, sustainability and responsibility, Robin Wall Kimmerer describes the teaching of the Honorable Harvest. She writes:

The guidelines for the Honorable Harvest are not written down, or even consistently spoken of as a whole—they are reinforced in small acts of daily life. But if you were to list them, they might look something like this:

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.
Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life.
Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
Never take the first. Never take the last.
Take only what you need.
Take only that which is given.
Never take more than half. Leave some for others.
Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.
Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken.
Share.
Give thanks for what you have been given.
Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken.
Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever (Kimmerer 183).

APPENDIX C

DUP-BOUG-A-DAD: CREDITS

FEATURING

David Gunn

The University of Waterloo Varsity and Junior
Varsity Cheerleading Teams

VOICE

David Gunn

GUITAR

Cailen Dye

DRUM

David Bobier

AUDIO RECORDING

Cailen Dye at VibraFusionLab

LEAD CAMERA & COLOUR

Terry O'Neill

CAMERA 2

Laura Arendoque

CAMERA 3

Tani Omorogbe

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

David Shumaker