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“More People Than Materials or Techniques:”

The Community-Based Public Art of c.j. fleury

by

Kimberly Lulashnyk, B.A. (Honours), M.A. English

A thesis submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

School of Canadian Studies

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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“More People Than Materials or Techniques:”

The Community-Based Public Art of c.j. fleury

submitted by Kimberly Lulashnyk, Hons. B.A., M.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Co-Supervisor

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Ottawa, Ontario

September 1999

Abstract

This thesis introduces the work of visual artist c.j. fleury (1956 -) into the critical discourse on contemporary community-based public art in Canada. It is argued that a study of fleury's work provides a framework to examine the strategies of community-based public art practices as described by new genre public art theory. Four main principles of new genre public art theory are highlighted in the discussion of fleury's work: the artist's use of experimental materials; the positioning of her practice in non-traditional locations; the foregrounding of political and ideological information in the works themselves; and, her collaborative, participatory model of audience engagement. This thesis also introduces fleury's concept of *workshopping community* which is a well-developed theorization and application of the collaborative and public aspects of community-based public art. The concept of *workshopping community* heightens the understanding of new genre public art theory by introducing new vocabulary into the discourse.

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Thank you first to c.j.: your skills, enthusiasm, kindness and generosity helped me to realize this project. You invited me into your home and shared with me the many wonders of art, its value and social significance. It was an important personal milestone to work in a conversational manner with an individual who is making change for the better in my family's world. You are a marvelous gift. Thank you next to Stuart and Troy: with their patience, perseverance, support, and trips with the toddler to fast food joints and train stores, I managed not only to finish my program but to also have a personal life. I love you both. Stu: thank you especially for the time you took to edit and partner me through the whole process. To my friends Sue and Marcia who were there with me for the first one and who, surprisingly, didn't abandon me on this second one. Sue: you actually read the whole thing! Thank you to Katherine and Natalie — "The Advisors" — for their immense combined wisdom as well as their belief and support for my project. To my father, the photographer, editor, and sounding board. Finally, to my wonderful children: Hudson who was born into the beginning of the program and to Avery, our daughter who was born two nights before the scheduled defense of this thesis.

Preface

This thesis could have not been completed without the open participation of c.j. fleury. fleury not only provided materials from her private files and insights into her experiences of community-based public art, she engaged in an interactive dialogue with the author on issues relevant to this study. fleury also contributed editorial comments on all the drafts of the thesis and was open to various general conversations pertinent to the topic of community-based public art. As such, it is the author's experience that in the writing of this thesis, one of the fundamental strategies of community-based public art practices — collaboration — was implemented. The collaborative dialogue between the author and fleury was an important part of the writing of this thesis and is consistent with the core ideas presented in this work.

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Carol Becker	<p>"Herbert Marcuse and the Subversive Potential of Art." <i>The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility</i>. Ed. Carol Becker. New York: Routledge, 1994: 113-129.</p> <p><i>The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility</i>. New York: Routledge, 1994.</p>	<p><i>Marcuse</i></p> <p><i>Imagination</i></p>
Rosalyn Deutsche	<p>"Excerpt from Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy." <i>Art in Public Places: A Vancouver Casebook</i>. VAG Document III. Ed. Judith Mastai. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1993: 27-34.</p> <p>"Public Art and Its Uses." <i>Critical Issues in Public Art</i>. Harriet Senie and Sally Webster, eds. New York: Harper Collins, 1992: 158-170.</p>	<p><i>Excerpt</i></p> <p><i>Public</i></p>
Mary Jane Jacob	"An Unfashionable Audience." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed., Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 50-59.	<i>Audience</i>

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Book or Article</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
	"Outside the Loop." <i>Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago Curated by Mary Jane Jacob</i> . Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 50-61.	<i>Loop</i>
Suzanne Lacy	"Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed., Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 171-188.	<i>Debated</i>
	"Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys: Introduction." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed., Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 19-49.	<i>Pilgrimages</i>
Lucy R. Lippard	"Looking Around: Where We Are, Where We Could Be." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed. Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 114-130.	<i>Looking</i>
	<i>The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Feminist Essays on Art</i> . New York: The New Press, 1995.	<i>Pink</i>
W.J.T. Mitchell	<i>Art and the Public Sphere</i> . Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990.	<i>Art</i>
	"Utopia and Critique." <i>Art and the Public Sphere</i> . Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990: 1-5.	<i>Utopia</i>

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Book or Article</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
Patricia C. Phillips	"Public Constructions." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed., Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 60-71.	<i>Constructions</i>
	"Peggy Diggs: Private Acts and Public Art." <i>But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism</i> . Ed. Nina Felshin. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 283-308.	<i>Diggs</i>
	"Temporality and Public Art." <i>Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy</i> . Eds. Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster. New York: Iconeditions, 1992: 295-304.	<i>Temporality</i>
Arlene Raven	<i>Art in the Public Interest</i> . Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism, No. 32. Series Ed. Donald B. Kuspit. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989.	<i>Art</i>
	<i>Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern</i> . No. 10. Contemporary American Art Critics. Series Ed. Donald Kuspit. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988.	<i>Crossing</i>
	"Word of Honor." <i>Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art</i> . Ed., Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 161-170.	<i>Word</i>
Dot Tuer	"Is It Still Privileged Art?: The Politics of Class and Collaboration in the Art Practice of Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge." <i>But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism</i> . Nina Felshin, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 195-220.	<i>Privileged</i>

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Book or Article</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
Dot Tuer (cont'd)	“Parables of Community and Culture for a New World (Order).” <i>Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions</i> . Daina Augaitis, Lorne Falk, Sylvie Gilbert and Mary Anne Moser, Eds. Banff: Banff Centre Press, 1995: 1-22.	<i>Parables</i>

Introduction

. . . the use of exhibition locations outside the museum has been motivated not only by a practical need for space, but also by the meaning that such places convey and contribute to the work of art, the freedom they allow for innovation, the potential they offer for public accessibility, and the psychic space they afford artists and audiences.

(Jacob Loop 50)

There is a picture of artist c.j. fleury standing in front of a crater on the lawn of the Municipal Workshops in Ottawa, Ontario (fig. 1). Two workmen stand beside a heavy circular metal grid held up by hooks and belts. The ground is cross-hatched with re-bar, earth, and two-by-four planks. fleury is conversing with a man in one corner of the photo. She is wearing sunglasses, a white shirt, black denim jeans and a pair of leather workman's gloves. She could be an engineer, a contractor, or a project manager. She is none and yet all of those things. In this photograph, she is an artist focused upon the installation of her sculpture, *Mechanics of Gauging a Trade*. The workmen are from the Municipal Workshops who had collaborated on the project during the artist's public art residency for the previous nine months. Together the workers and the artist stand and wait over the hole that will soon be filled with the thing they all worked hard to make: art for a public site.

When I look at this simple image. I gaze into a fixed, intimate moment that describes the complexity of public artmaking. I see an artist working outside a traditional art venue, an artist socially engaged with others in a collaborative assembly of an art object, and finally, I see an artist involved in an activity that seems to have more to do with action and community than with the making of art. These moments capture the essence of a new form of public art, one that is community-based, outside museum practice, and one that emphasizes the relationship between an artist and the audience with whom and for whom the work is created. This new form of community-based public art, often referred to as "new genre public art," provides an opportunity to discuss contemporary issues relating to community, audience, and the role of art itself, in informative and important ways.

In "*More People Than Materials or Techniques: The Community-Based Public Art of c.j. fleury*," I argue that c.j. fleury is a significant community-based public artist whose practice can be understood in the context of new genre public art theory. A study of fleury's work not only provides a framework to examine the forms of community-based public art practices as described by new genre public art theory, but illustrates how her concept of *workshopping community* is a particularly well-developed theorization and application of the collaborative and public aspects of making community-based public art. I believe that the concept of *workshopping community*, in turn, expands the new genre public art theoretical discourse.

There are four distinct principles of new genre public art theory that I discuss in

this thesis: the employment of alternative, experimental art materials and forms; the location of art projects and objects in non-traditional sites; the integration of political and ideological content and contexts as visible components of the art project and object; and, the engagement of a participatory audience in a collaborative art venture. These four principles provide the foundation for the understanding of new genre public art theory and can be identified in fleury's community-based public art practice. fleury's concept of *workshopping community*, I show, adds to the distinctiveness of new genre public art theory in two manners: first, fleury argues that the *community is a material for art*; and second, she believes that an artist involved in community-based public art projects must consider himself or herself as *a member of the community*. As fleury explains: "I have developed this term, *workshopping community*, that i believe must come from my association with contemporary theatre through Vivienne Laxdal. The term describes this kind of examining — or comparative analysis — of the meaning and function of community (ties), their processes and relations" (email May 31, 1999). The concept and practice of *workshopping community* describes new strategies of engagement in community-based art. Fundamental to fleury's practice and use of *workshopping community*, these two concepts — that community is a material for art and that artists are members of the community — make a valuable contribution to the research of new genre public art.

This study is divided into three sections. The first section documents fleury's artistic development and traces the process by which she came to be a community-based

public artist. In this section, I discuss four significant artistic experiences that influenced fleury during her early development as a visual artist: the Seed Drawings, the *Circle Cycle*, the Shields series, and *The Women's Monument Against Violence*, fleury's first public art commission.

The second section deals specifically with the history and principles of new genre public art theory. I introduce the chapter with a discussion of fleury's *Flower Petal Mandala Project* which is used to provide a context and a backdrop to my review of new genre public art theory. The chapter will also introduce fleury's concept of *workshopping community*, which, I argue, expands the discourse of community-based public art making and new genre public art theory. The chapter will conclude with an examination of fleury's *The Racist Forest*.

The final section of this paper looks at one specific site for community-based public art in which fleury worked extensively: the workplace. Partnerships between art and the workplace are unusual even in new genre public art theory; thus, a study of fleury's projects in this area offers a more complete understanding of community-based art practices. In this chapter, I will consider fleury's work as an artist-in-residence at the Consolidated Buildings and Equipment Facility (or the Municipal Garages) in Ottawa and her six-month project with the Ottawa and District Labour Council.

New genre public art theory suggests that, in the past three decades, a new form of art in the public sphere emerged that challenged the definitions of art and its institutions. New genre public art theorists are intrigued as to why art has demanded spaces that

extend beyond the museum into places where art had not been recognized before. Three recent works in new genre public art criticism, for instance, indicate a significant critical interest in community art practices and art in the public sphere. Arlene Raven's *Art in the Public Interest* (1989) explains that public art with community-based principles is inclusive and builds new relationships with a large participatory audience in the "real world." Suzi Gablik's *The Reenchantment of Art* (1991) calls for a new kind of art which intends to heal, to care for and to encourage dialogue between communities and institutions of art. And Suzanne Lacy's edited collection *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995) suggests that community-based art, which deals with current and controversial issues, be considered a new field of contemporary art. In these texts, it is argued that art practices, positioned outside the traditional museum venue, are new popular forms that "move fluidly among criticism, theory, art making, and activism" (Raven *Word* 163). The readings further suggest that a new style of public artist — activist, critical and intelligent — is creating innovative projects with a wide audience in diverse communities. The challenge of these texts is to trace and explain the shift to community-based public art practices. The critical context set in these texts is called "new genre public art" theory.

fleury's art practice moves fluidly between art-making, theory and activism. Her work is included in collections at the Canada Council Art Bank, the City of Ottawa, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ottawa and District Labour Council and Trent University. She designed the 1996

Olympic pin for the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport, a UN Decade of the Woman poster, and the Women's Solidarity Poster for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Her work has been written up in journals such as *Sculpture* and *Vis-a-vis* and she is the subject of *Making Art Work*, a documentary of her Public Art residency at the Municipal Workshops in Ottawa. She has received several awards and grants, worked on diverse commissions, and shown her work in solo and group exhibitions, including an internet gallery. fleury is personable, full of energy and intensity. She is articulate, bilingual, committed, involved, and her art, reflective of the artist's vision, is challenging, passionate and intelligent.

Challenging, passionate and intelligent, fleury's work helps to break down stereotypes that create divisions between people and empower those uncomfortable in museums to see the richness of culture in their community. The collaborative aspects of fleury's projects allow individuals to become cultural producers who have a say in matters that are relevant to their experience. fleury's community-based public art projects charge culture with an active quality, reinforcing the idea that culture is not a neutral concept. Her work also demands more community representation in the arts. With the community at the centre of the art-making process, the art-object becomes secondary to the process itself. fleury's focus on the process of making art collaboratively changes the patterns of economic thinking; it gives legitimacy to the process of making art rather than the consumption of a commodity or good. Expanding links of communication whether through specific projects or the application of *workshopping community*, fleury builds

bridges between a variety of non-traditional community partners, finds avenues to discuss the notions of community, contributes to a belief that art is an active component in society that has the ability to reach large numbers of the public in stimulating and positive ways, and adds to the study of new genres of community and public art with her own innovative approach to art.

Chapter One

c.j. fleury Located

Introduction

Essentially i am more interested in people than i am in materials or techniques; but even though the experience of working with one group can inform the next process with the next group of people, you can't always reduce these experiences to short overviews.

(fleury, Interview March 22, 1998)

More interested in people than materials or techniques, c.j. fleury is a significant community-based artist. fleury's community-based art work falls within the boundaries of new genre public art theory: she employs alternative, experimental art forms, locates her projects outside museum practice in non-traditional locations, foregrounds political and ideological content and contexts, and engages with a collaborative, participatory audience. How fleury came to be the significant community-based artist that she is today is the focus of this section. This chapter will trace fleury's development from her early art experiences to the point where new genre public art principles can be identified in her practice.

The chapter will begin with a brief biography of the artist followed by an examination of the path that led to fleury's successful community-based art practice.

fleury's artistic history is non-traditional in that her first career was that of a figure skater. fleury eventually left figure skating and enrolled in formal fine art courses, but abandoned her university training early in order to obey her own interests. Four significant art experiences will be considered in this analysis of fleury's artistic development: the Seed Drawings series; the *Circle Cycle*, an alternative skating performance; the Shields series; and one of fleury's first public commissions, *The Women's Monument Against Violence*. These experiences are the significant preliminary stages to both fleury's development as an active community-based artist and to the formation of fleury's concept *workshopping community*.¹

fleury Under Construction

Claude Johanne Fleury was born in 1956 in Pembroke, Ontario, the last of four children. fleury's father, Claude Fleury (b. 1917) was an army paymaster and her mother, Geraldine (Gagnon) Fleury (b. 1925), worked in the home raising the four Fleury children and involving herself in several extra-curricular projects. As a result of her father's military career, fleury's family lived in several locations: Paris, Quebec City, and Montreal. Wherever they lived, art was always a part of the Fleury home life. fleury explains: "My brother was always practicing guitar, my sister drawing clothes. i knew it

¹The stages of fleury's artistic development are roughly chronological; however, there are periods when one project overlaps with another. Concurrent, not only consecutive, fleury's Seed Drawings period occurred from 1981-88; the *Circle Cycle* was performed in 1983; the Shields series was effected from 1985-92; and *The Women's Monument Against Violence* completed in 1992.

was “something” about the Fleurys” (email n.d.).² fleury’s aunt, her father’s sister, Estelle Fleury, was a professional artist, although fleury explains that she was not a part of her life. What influenced fleury greatly, however, was the fact that her family was interested in fine art. As a child fleury can remember touching the brush strokes in the “real” paintings that her parents kept in the home. She explains: “i am influenced by the fact that we grew up with real paintings in our house. i knew it because the you could touch the brushstrokes. I knew my father's sister was a painter but she was not part of my life. She did give us some nudes and a hunt scene on paper and my mother had neat stuff under the glass on our coffee table” (email n.d.). The two nudes given to fleury’s family by her aunt — one a full-body image, seated, in blues and greys and the other an upper torso, seated, holding a cage, in dusty rose and peaches — were displayed in the family’s livingroom. fleury can remember the paintings’ installation when she was nine years old (1965). These works were thick with paint, organic and rough with a gritty texture. fleury was interested in the colour, construction, and sensation of the strokes, and found that the female figures in the paintings which, according to fleury, were representational but not-figurative, were also very appealing. Also displayed in the house was a nineteenth-century painting of a Victorian woman holding a fan, a portrait of her mother in riding clothes with a riding crop and family dog, and a variety of other post-Group of Seven, Québécois landscape paintings. fleury also remembers that her mother purchased

²Mark Fleury is a professional musician who continues to perform while teaching music full-time in Wakefield, Quebec. fleury’s sister, Danielle, is a set dresser in film and television in Toronto. fleury’s brother Robert Fleury pursued a career in business.

a Cubist painting of a still life, rich in colour and pattern, from a family connection. It was fleury's mother who was primarily interested in the display of art for the home. fleury explains, however, that her mother did not collect art for the "names" but had a personal preference for what family and family acquaintances painted and what she deemed "fashionable" (Interview Aug. 4, 1999).³

fleury recalls discovering an artist's sketchbook in the piano seat of her childhood home which contained three or four pages of drawings. Fascinated by the artwork, fleury studied the sketches in great length. fleury writes: "In my teens i found one of my mother's sketch books under the piano seat. It had only a few worked pages. She, as always, was very concerned with perfectionism and control. i poured over the three or four pages a lot" (email n.d.).⁴ fleury was intrigued by her mother's "mark-making" and imagined her mother's hand tentatively sketching or "laying" the impression onto the paper to form a line that eventually turned into an image. fleury's mother did not sketch on a regular basis but the few works that fleury discovered were important because she

³fleury explains that her mother was experimental. She recalls a time that her mother, instead of wearing the straw hats that other women wore at the time, would sew on tasteful plastic fruits for alternative decoration. fleury, from early in her life, was conscious of her mother's alternative tastes in fashion and art (Interview Aug. 3, 1999).

⁴fleury's mother had made sketches of an Asian statue that was in the house. The sketches were self-motivated and made out of interest. fleury's mother also gave her informal colouring lessons as a child, suggesting ways to improve upon a crayon drawing by adding darker lines to create shadow and depth.

recognized that art was in her house and that it was made by the people closest to her.⁵

As a child and young woman, fleury was always making things like tissue paper flowers or greeting cards. fleury writes: i can't remember not doing art" (email n.d.).⁶ Her first formal arts training, however, occurred when she attended watercolour classes in her teen years. fleury lived in Lake Placid from ages sixteen to twenty-two after finishing high school and trained in competitive figure skating. While in Lake Placid, under her mother's encouragement, fleury enrolled in watercolour classes (fig. 2). It was in these weekly sessions that fleury met her first mentor Robert Whitney. *American Watercolour Society*. Whitney, whose wife was a former figure skater, took an interest in fleury and her work. She visited with Whitney in his studio and was shown painting, sketching, and more commercial work and became involved in discussions relating to the art industry and ideas of art and art-making. Whitney felt that if fleury wished to continue her study

⁵Music was also part of the Fleury household. Claude Fleury, who played many instruments, had what fleury explains was an "aborted music career" (Interview Aug. 3, 1999): in his early years, he played in various bands that would perform live on radio. fleury's father's sister was a professional opera singer and his mother and aunt were both skilled in the sewing trade. fleury's grandmother was a milliner and her great-aunt, on her mother's side, was a couturier.

⁶fleury writes: "When i was in elementary school i would make these incredible paper flowers. i only ever made enough money to buy more supplies . . . but i was so turned on . . . riding my bike to get those supplies and touching the coloured tissue papers. i could just stand there for some time staring at the colours and how they affected each other. And the lady in the store would keep asking me if she could help me and i would just stand there . . . and think about how the whole range of colours and how i could spend my few dollars at fifteen-cents-a-sheet and ride home without wrinkling them. And later, watercolour greeting cards on beautiful English stationery. i would spend, \$8 on the cream card set and then work for a couple of hours on each card and practically give them away and then do it all over on the next set" (email n.d.).

in painting, she should receive basic drawing training. Following Whitney's advice, fleury enrolled in evening drawing classes at the newly-built Lake Placid Centre for Music, Drama and Art with instructor Harry Bartnick with whom she studied for two years (fig. 3).

fleury's early watercolours (figs. 4, 5) were studies in the technique of landscape painting (Interview Aug. 3, 1999). She painted images from the local area and was awarded a commission from the organizers of the Junior World Cross-Country Ski Championships. fleury admits that she became quite proficient at watercolour landscapes but that she was not interested at the time in painting. She explains that "it just took off on its own" (Interview Aug. 4, 1999). fleury became engaged, however, in watercolour collages which she would create by tearing out images and text from magazines and work over with watercolour and creative framing (fig. 5).⁷

The encouragement fleury's mother gave her to attend watercolour classes was indicative of her family's concern to promote education and creativity in the home; however, the kinds of educational and creative outlets consistent with what fleury describes as the "accepting" but "proper" values her mother espoused at the time. Consequently, the style and content of fleury's early watercolours were a matter of pleasure and surprise, especially for her mother. "My mother's way of complimenting my abilities," explains fleury, "was to tell me i 'painted like a man.' We used to have

⁷These watercolour collages were purchased by a collector and resold in the New York City area.

screaming matches in my early teens. She would shriek that ‘she would make a lady out of me, no matter what!’ And i would firmly yell back: ‘Oh no you won’t!’ To me ‘ladies’ played bridge and were ‘high-heeled-stay-at-homes’ doomed for depression. cj was how i signed my early watercolours (1973) so that no one would be able to tell what gender i was” (email n.d.). The feminine roles that fleury associated with “ladies” she found both distasteful and restrictive and she constructed ways, such as masking her gender through the use of the initials, c.j., to frustrate her development toward the traditional femininity that her mother, and by extension, society, threatened to impose upon her. fleury’s reaction to her mother’s “compliment” — that she “painted like a man” — was a precursor to what was to become a pronounced commitment to feminism and gender equity. Even in her early artistic experience, fleury preferred feminist and alternative constructions of identity rather than conventional roles. fleury’s individuality, feminism, and preference for the alternative also foreshadow her later negotiations of important community issues in her artistic commitments.

fleury the Figure Skater

I think a lot of my work — not just spatially — is very grounded in my choreographical background . . . in my study of centering and balance and movement and emotion.

(fleury email n.d.)

fleury began her professional life, not as an artist, but as a figure skater. fleury writes: “i . . . was seduced by the ability to lean and race through the wind expressing

myself to all this wonderful music” (email n.d.).⁸ fleury explains that she “had [a career set] in figure skating and also the mentors. It was all laid out for me . . .” (Interview March 22, 1998). In 1978, after six years as a competitive figure skater and coach, fleury joined Ice Capades for one year. It was during this year-long tour with Ice Capades that her name, “c.j.” was first used publically and it was here that her need for artistic expression in form other than skating became manifest. fleury writes: “c.j. was how i signed my early watercolours . . . But i didn’t get called that in public till the year i toured with Ice Capades. i was a new anorexic, trying to run to full time art school, trying to run away from the competitive figure skating world, trying to recover from the briefest of failed marriages [1977: 1½ years] by doing something ‘on the road.’ Touring with them was the run-away-to-join-the-circus icon in my life. There were three JoAnnes at that hollow August rink in Bakersfield. The director just asked me what my initials were and TOLD me that i would be c.j.” (email March 23, 1998). It was after that informative year with Ice Capades that fleury decided to make a break from her profession as a figure skater and move into the visual arts.

fleury took away from the skating world hard-learned lessons of discipline and focus and was well-trained in the principles of movement, choreography, and emotion. fleury’s interest in feminism and feminist writing was also kindled at this time. fleury

⁸fleury further elaborates on the decision to move from painting to skating: “i must have been feeling ‘artsy’ then but never thought of myself as one [an artist] because i had started skating . . . To this day the smell of arenas makes my stomach nervous and my heart race” (email n.d.).

writes: "Ice Capades is owned by MGM. There's a very Hollywood 'showgirl' mentality that permeates the scene — tits-and-ass and lots of 'queens.' . . . Among other things, i was the understudy for the Australian Champion who had the stereotypical sexy number. It is interesting because in that year of sex-symbol-dom was my discovery of feminism. A colleague, a 'California-girl' . . . was reading *My Mother, My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity*.⁹ i borrowed it and discovered the bibliography . . . the path was discovered at twenty-three [years old]. The revealing was laboured" (email n.d.). fleury admits that at the time that she discovered that her own thoughts and feelings were articulated in feminism she was playing in her most "feminized" role. It was through this juxtaposition of identities that fleury saw that the figure skating world could not provide for her what she believed art could. Despite the pressures and frustrations with the show business of figure skating, fleury continued to sketch and paint throughout the tour. The knowledge and discipline gathered from her experiences with competitive athletics, professional show business, and her readings in feminism led fleury through the first stages of a conceptual art practice that was to eventually take hold in the community arts.

When Ice Capades ended in 1979, fleury, now divorced and recovering from anorexia, applied and was accepted into art school in Portland, Oregon. After two short weeks,¹⁰ fleury returned home to Montreal where she enrolled in the fall session of Fine

⁹Nancy Friday, *My Mother My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity*. New York: Delacorte P, 1977.

¹⁰fleury found that the United States was not the place for her to live.

Arts at Concordia University (1979). She attended a studio class, an art history course, and a course in choreography with Elizabeth Langley; at the same time, she was coaching figure skating. By December of 1979, fleury, exhausted by the strain of two full-time commitments, left Concordia and finished out the skating year with her students.

In February of 1980, fleury, still skating, coaching, and painting, participated in an alternative skating production choreographed by Anne Shelter (International Choreographer and Movement Coach from Hamilton, Ontario) for the Winterlude in Ottawa, Ontario. Through the guidance of Shelter and the passion of the other skaters from Montreal with whom she performed, fleury was re-energized by the artistic potential she believed skating could offer her. Her work with Shelter would set the stage for fleury's later resolution between her skating interests and her art interests in a exhibition entitled the *Circle Cycle* that was performed at the same carnival — Winterlude in Ottawa — only three years later. However, it was during this performance with Shelter that she fell in love with Ottawa and met her future second husband. fleury shortly moved to Ottawa and enrolled in the fine arts program at the University of Ottawa where she studied for three terms where she was influenced by the teachings and feminist principles of Dr. Jennifer Dickson.

In 1981 fleury made one of the most difficult decisions in her artistic career. In lieu of pursuing her studies in fine arts at the University of Ottawa, she took what monies were left from coaching figure skating, withdrew from university, and rented a studio at the corner of Somerset and O'Connor in Ottawa. Although fleury was interested in the

study of art, she felt that, at this specific time, her personal experiences and the art training she had already received outweighed what Fine Art school offered.

Consequently, fleury rented the studio for a full year where she felt she could begin her committed practice as an artist. She sketched and painted, studying the interiors of seeded fruits. At the same time, she read feminist texts and worked through her personal struggles and interest in the body.¹¹ The combination of her feminist readings, personal explorations and the prolonged study of cores and centres cultivated in what fleury calls the Seed Drawings.

The Seed Drawings¹²

In 1981, at age 25, fleury began the first important phase of her visual art career: the Seed Drawings. Personal and intimate, the Seed Drawings were representative of the new artist's journey: peeling back the skins of various fruits, fleury began a metaphorical voyage of personal discovery through a passage of skin and flesh to the seeds of her making. The seeds she discovered buried inside she charted. The Seed Drawings, done with graphite on paper, were maps to an interiority and directed fleury's course for seven

¹¹The book which galvanized fleury's explorations in the Seed Drawings was *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman* by Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove.

¹²Most of fleury's Seed Drawings were exhibited and sold during a show at Claire Wallacks (1984) entitled *Seeds to the Third Wave* (see figs. 7, 8, 9). One of a series of three Seed Drawings was purchased by the Canada Council Art Bank (see fig. 10). One Drawing was exchanged with another artist for art.

years.¹³ fleury's studied and engaged period of drawing and observation during this series led her to an important personal discovery. In her explorations of interiors, fleury began to question how human potential, like the buried seeds in her art, is encased in similar pulpy and fleshy zones.

Executed during the years 1981 to 1988, the Seed Drawings were detailed and involved. fleury approached the series as a meticulous and prolonged analysis of the construction of centres, seeds, and cores. fleury's seed drawings were rendered on paper and the study of each centre was captured in magnified proportions from a variety of angles, cross-sections and elevations; for fleury, these pencil and watercolour paintings became conceptual landscapes, the products of a penetrating and engaged study of an object.

fleury had three major shows in conjunction with the Seed Drawings series: her first exhibition called "Centering" was at Galerie 101 (Fourth Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario) in 1981-1982¹⁴; then, *Seeds to the Third Wave* held at the MacKenzie Gallery, Trent

¹³While throughout her teens and into adulthood fleury devoted the majority of her artistic development and education to skating, she continued to paint in watercolours up until the time she left figure skating and began the Seed Drawings. The final watercolour works on which fleury focused were, in fact, early versions of the seed period. fleury has sold all her early watercolours; however, the artist has a collection of slides documenting her watercolour work (figs. 11, 12).

¹⁴"Centering" is a figure skating term that has to do with centering a spinning motion before the movement can be taken into a faster rotation. The two dominant constructs of the show which were also part of the MacKenzie Gallery and Wallack's Gallery exhibitions, included the intimate centres of seeded fruits and "seed bags" (fig. 13). The centres of the cut fruits and the seed bags were the artist's comment on menstrual and body issues. The show was a success in that most of the sketches were

University in Peterborough, Ontario, January 31 - February 18, 1984; and, at Wallacks Art Editions, Ottawa, Ontario March 1 - 22, 1984. In fleury's published artist's statement for the show at Wallacks, she wrote: "encased in deep protective structures, sheltered by pulpy bufferzones, these seeds are presented as a metaphor for human potential" (Seeds file n.d.).¹⁵

The dominant reactions to the Seed Drawings, however, were not responsive to fleury's interest in the larger issue of human potential, but instead focused on the sexual appeal and iconography of the images. Nancy Baele's review of the Galerie 101 show in the *Ottawa Citizen* stated that "fecundity is the central theme of Joanne [sic. Johanne] Fleury's exhibition" (April 22, 1982, 62). Indeed, the construction of the seeded interiors are evocative of biological female sexual anatomy which hint at the metaphors of forbidden fruit and flesh.¹⁶ While fleury argues that such analysis, which categorizes

sold. fleury was invited into Artfemme at the Status of Women curated by Dickson.

¹⁵fleury's statement continues: "These sensual studies of halved fruits and intricate seed chambers have opened my vision on so many levels, I can be nothing but thankful for the energies and people that fueled them" (Seeds file n.d.).

¹⁶There is a significant historical context in fleury's seed imagery as representing feminine sexuality and a large body of feminist analysis and art showings. An early essay, Maryse Holder's, "Another Cuntree: At Last, a Mainstream Female Art Movement" cites numerous artists, from Georgia O'Keeffe to Louise Bourgeois to female students' work at various art schools to fashion the argument that a raised consciousness within women's art was part of a feminist effort to make connections between culture and social and human experience. Maria Tippet's last chapter, called "The Feminist Revolution in Art," in *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*, also argues that the feminist movement in art made it possible for women artists to explore male and female sexuality, a subject that had always been the domain of male painters.

these images as sexual iconography are possible readings. Yet, to overemphasize the sexuality of the art, fleury feels, dismisses the many other important readings the pieces provide. fleury writes: “the visceral nature of the seed drawings really threatened people. i was labouring sixty and seventy hours on academic studies of apple cores. To my husband, and a number of the public, i was portraying cunts. . . . Those topographies of encased potential were so fascinating to me at the time. Husband #2 hated them . . . i must have realized the marriage was doomed when he kept asking me when i would do some real art, why did i have to do these ‘silly’ drawings. For a couple of years i would draw for eight hours in a row, exploring the fleshy convolutions, the tenuous threads that held segments together, the transition from pulp to skin. all the while lost in classical music and floating in some cerebral place. i conclude i must be thinking about how humans’ potential was hidden under fleshy buffer zones. So many questions were revealed to me” (email n.d.).¹⁷

¹⁷Baele’s review claimed that the few flower seeds works that were included in fleury’s Seed Drawings show at Galerie 101 were idioms in recent feminist artwork and cited Judy Chicago’s vagina-flower plates made for Chicago’s *Dinner Party*. As Baele explains, fleury’s work was not “derivative” like Chicago’s but “highly personal” (April 22, 1982, 62). Other responses fleury recalls receiving likened her flower drawings and watercolours to the work of Georgia O’Keeffe. The one review that she celebrates was written by Ian McLachlan (Trent University, 1984): “There is a way that something soft and lush is changed into sharpness by the point of a pencil. Is that distortion? No, it’s a way of establishing contradictions out of old patriarchies. There are no more surfaces. no skins any longer. So what we start to find, going beneath the King’s, the Emperor’s clothes, is a new world in which soft grows into hard, in which texture becomes line, in which feeling becomes form. None of this is finally shaped, because there is no finality, only the process by which looking at surfaces gradually becomes the rendering of depths that no pencil can probe. We, outside, are left with definition and questioning . . .” (Seeds file n.d.).

The Seed Drawings initiated fleury's interest in human potential as a meaningful aesthetic metaphor. She began to question the role of the artist in society and the responsibility the artist had in society to contribute to human potential. To fleury, the potential in each human being was hidden and in need of revelation: accordingly, she began to direct her questions and her practice on that course. After the Seed Drawings series, fleury fashioned her role as an artist to construct an approach which could illuminate the artistic potential of the human experience.

The Circle Cycle

In the early 1980s, despite her commitment to working as a professional artist, fleury felt as if she had no closure on her figure skating career and constantly considered to what choreographical end her skating might have taken her. She resolved her skating issue with a performance that sprang directly from and in tandem with the questions formed during the Seed Drawings: questions about the role of the artist and the discovery of human potential. She called the performance the *Circle Cycle*.

Choreographed and performed in 1983, the *Circle Cycle* (fig. 14), a fourteen-minute alternative skating performance, was put together in conjunction with the SAW Art Gallery for Winterlude, a three-week winter festival in Ottawa. The performance was filmed by a team of graduating students at Algonquin College broadcasting department and then restaged in 1984 at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario in conjunction with the MacKenzie Gallery (Jan. 31 - Feb. 18, 1984). The recital was presented to

promote the showing of a selection of fleury's Seed Drawings at the Gallery. The *Circle Cycle* was a performance that fleury choreographed with the intent to enact a dialogue between classical and experimental modes of movement. fleury explains that the piece was "inspired by ideas from Elizabeth Langley (then Dean of the Dance Department at Concordia University) about the idea that life passing through the artist is like light passing through a prism" (email May 31, 1999). Michael Bussière (Carleton University) composed the track for fleury's performance which incorporated the top ten classical scores used in figure skating performances interposed against Bussière's own electronic, experimental music.

In the performance, fleury constructed an "eight" with a large scribe. The eight "is the most basic exercise for all figure skaters. It constantly challenges the skater to develop edge control and perfect balance. Novices through world class competitors trace circles endlessly in pursuit of the flawless eight" (Circle file, n.d.). At the centre where the two circles met/crossed was fleury's one prop — a "prism" — which, from Langley's quote, represented the "tangent point where the artist balances precariously. Just as light passing through a prism yields colour, so, life experience passing through an artist yields expression" (Circle file, n.d.). As fleury skated through the two opposing circles — classical and experimental — a voice-over by Ron Sweetman narrated a passage from a text that inspired fleury's approach to developing the performance. fleury selected a passage from Suzi Gablik's *Progress in Art* that Sweetman read during the piece: "the whole process of development, according to Piaget, starting out with perception and

culminating in intelligence, demonstrates that transformations continually increase in importance, as opposed to the original predominance of static perceptual forms” (Interview Aug. 4, 1999).¹⁸

The *Circle Cycle* was an important performance for fleury. She solely choreographed, self-performed and produced the piece. Utilizing the skills familiar to her, she experimented with a different art form — performance art. Further, she performed the piece through a non-traditional location for professional figure skaters — a parallel art gallery — and in a non-traditional site for artists — at a public winter festival. The *Circle Cycle* also signaled a significant shift in fleury’s interests. The *Circle Cycle*, as fleury stated, was primarily interested in the role of the artist herself. She affirmed through the choreography, production and exhibition of her performance piece that she was a committed artist but one who was interested in more than the figure skating world had to offer. fleury writes: “It was all laid out for me, but I couldn’t stay in skating — too many boundaries” (Interview March 22, 1998). fleury’s interests were in crossing boundaries and exploring alternative forms of expression that were not only closed for her in figure skating, but also as a fine artist working long hours alone in a studio without public contact.

Although fleury was already working as an artist, the public nature and the alternative performative form of the *Circle Cycle* acted as prism for the artist. fleury’s focus refracted in all directions away from skating and into new forms of creative

¹⁸Suzi Gablik, *Progress in Art*, New York: Rizzoli, 1977, p. 29.

expression. The next stage in fleury's artistic career was a period in which her private artwork and her public interests began to overlap.

The Shields¹⁹

During the years 1985 to 1992, fleury fashioned approximately forty Shields (figs. 15, 16, 17).²⁰ Quite different from her detailed and analytical drawings of tangible objects — the interiors of seeded fruits — fleury's shields were an exploration of ideology in two separate cycles: a Mythoslogos series and a series of fecund female-shaped "bodies."²¹ The Shields series continued the careful and prolonged object investigations which characterized the Seed Drawings period. However, with the Shields

¹⁹fleury has exhibited her Shields in a number of different shows — the last exhibition was *Femina et Divina* (1998) held at the University of Ottawa Art Gallery of the Antiquities. According to fleury, "of the early shields, one sold, the one on the cover of the feminist law text has been dismantled (see fig. 15), two hung on buildings, sent out to protect space (being devoured by time and weather), a few given to very tender recovering women and the female shaped shields have been sold or bartered, with the exception of a few that are with me now. They must become heirlooms and carry their own stories" (email July 27, 1999).

²⁰In this period of her life, fleury met her third husband (1985) had her son Cody (1988). fleury's prediction about the "doom" of her second marriage over the visceral nature of the Seed Drawings came true: "i ended up leaving my three story house in the Glebe one day after supper, with \$214 and my skates, a week or so before my show at Wallacks (1984)" (email n.d.).

²¹She writes: "my shields are born slowly and give a feeling totally different from my past work" (Shields file 1990). "Mythoslogos" combines the meanings of myth and logos: myth — "traditional story, legend serving to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of man (sic), custom, institution, religious rite, etc./theory/belief"; logos — "a word, reason, through of as constituting the controlling principle of the universe and as being manifested by speech" (fleury Shields file 1990).

series, fleury left the intensity of the drawn image for sculpture, mixed-media and theory. The works reflected her readings in feminism, science, philosophy and cultural theory. Further, during the Shields period, fleury attended two important workshops that centered her interests in community-based art: a spiritual retreat for women in therapy in the Muskokas and a Huichol yarn painting day-course in her village Wakefield presented by a Huichol shaman. These workshops stimulated fleury emotionally and intellectually and helped catalyze the knowledge and insights from her other artistic experiences to form the basis of *workshopping community*. For fleury, both Shield series were “sites of intense emotions or understandings about people or situations” (email July 27, 1999) which she began to articulate in new ways: she explored alternative materials; she probed feminine ideological constructions and consciousnesses and incorporated them openly in her work; and she began to contemplate art’s “inherent capacity to be communicative and compassionately responsive, or to be seen also as a process, rather than exclusively as fixed forms” (Gablik 60). While still benefitting from her disciplined work ethic, experimental proclivity, and training in movement and choreography, fleury now adapted her materials and critiques to address a larger audience and arrived at several visual and intellectual surprises that moved her forward into community-based art work.

Constructed from metals, textiles, hair, bone, stone, and a variety of other found, natural materials, the Shields represented a shift in fleury’s aesthetic — a move into the medium of sculpture. The woman-shaped shields (fig. 15), for instance, “speak of protector energy and a fecund sense of nurturing. They look like vestiges from another

time. They are made of . . . copper, brass, wood, hair, stones and hope” (fleury Shields file n.d.). fleury believed that sculpture, made with heterogeneous materials, allowed her more leverage to explore the questions that had interested her since the Seed Drawings: what was the hidden potential in human experience and what is the artist’s role in discovering and harnessing that potential? She writes: “Sometimes, in the wind, I hear the Earth Mother crying . . . She passes through my body the need to make, yet, another shield . . . I hammer away at them. . . in prayer . . . that society could hold up a shield to fortify that part of ourselves that cares for each other” (Shields file n.d.). Art critic Gloria Orenstein argues that in the late 70s, women artists began to explore the possibility that the Earth Mother or Goddess was a paradigm of a new feminist myth.²² Women artists, explains Orenstein, energized by a “new form of Goddess consciousness,” were able to repossess female visionary faculties through their work and move toward “corrective alternatives” which, it was believed, would repair the false dualities and dichotomies constructed by patriarchal systems of thought.

For fleury, the Shields series represented an advancement in her art. The “ideology” shields that formed her Mythoslogos series, were, in fleury’s words, “a

²²Orenstein writes that “women artists, through transpersonal visionary experiences, are bringing to light energetic psychic forces, symbols, images, artifacts, and rituals whose configurations constitute the basic paradigm of a new feminist myth for our time” (Orenstein 71). For other contexts and arguments on the reconstruction of the Earth Mother or Goddess in feminist fine art see Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, Joanna Frueh, eds. *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*; Jeanne Broude and Mary E. Garrard, ed. *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*; Whitney Chadwick, *Women Art and Society*.

symbol for the ‘new warriors’ (fig. 17). They are armour for moral battles. They ‘call’ to those with parallel belief systems and stand in celebration of safety, creed and hope. I wish that everyone could have, or make, their own . . . a shield to protect their ideological environment, a shield of affirmation” (Shields file n.d.). The Mythoslogos and the woman-shaped Shields together acted as “corrective alternatives” not only to repair the patriarchal relationships that she felt left her confined and limited in her personal life, but also to advance her vision of a more inclusive human experience. fleury writes: “I am but one of a burgeoning movement of Goddess-centred creators sensing heavy social responsibility, addressing concerns well beyond the art circuit. With these collective efforts, there are hopes of improving the social structure and redefining the myths and language that shape our internal belief systems and fuel our day to day attitudes and activities” (fleury Shield file 1990).²³ fleury’s need to reflect and enact the “social responsibility of art beyond the art circuit” was indicative of a shift toward a community-minded, socially-responsible practice that was evolving in her approach to art work.

As the Shields series unfolded over the seven years of study and creation, fleury was invited to participate in a weekend *Stillpoint Retreat* (1991) in Gravenhurst where her Shields would be part of a healing experience for women in therapy for prolonged

²³In her article Orenstein (article: 1978) names thirteen women artists approximately five years previous to fleury (Shields series: 1985-92) whose work includes manifestations of the Goddess archetype in their work: some of the thirteen include Mary Beth Edelson, Carolee Schneemann, Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, Betye Saar and Hannah Kay.

sexual, physical and ritualistic violence inflicted upon them.²⁴ It was after this workshop that fleury first began to focus her art on external, social concerns. fleury, who was positioned as a teacher of art, saw her work perform differently than she had in her studio, in the gallery system, and in her relationships with other artists. Following her deeply personal experience in the Muskokas, fleury began to see her art as a catalyst for a process that was collaborative and participatory where her role, both as artist and teacher, was subordinate to the project of art-making as healing process, spiritual discovery and personal improvement. The participants collaborated with fleury to determine the results of their own projects and fleury, in turn, learned from the women a collaborative methodology that positioned the artist as a member of the community and co-collaborator. The fact that her art could be used in an effective, spiritual and healing manner that was non-hierarchical and participatory had a profound effect on fleury. She began to collate a series of questions that would direct her later work: what was the role and responsibility of the artist in society: what social or political issues could art confront; how does working in a collaborative model change the parameters of art itself, improving upon it? In the shield-making workshops fleury witnessed the way art could focus and empower women to find ways to discuss and evaluate their personal experiences. fleury saw that her art was charged with activity, that it was not a neutral concept. fleury considered that if her art could touch this particular community of vibrant

²⁴The leaders of the weekend called the workshop a “spiritual retreat for women in therapy” and according to fleury, it was the women who revealed their own truths. fleury and participants made shields in several sessions (email July 27, 1999).

and healing women, who were not familiar with fine art and cultural discourse. then, by extension, large numbers of the public could also be affected in stimulating and positive ways. Following this workshop in the Muskokas, fleury made it a goal that her art become a meeting place for dialogue on issues of relevance to herself and her community. Her aesthetic became charged with an active quality that was rooted in her feminism and that had both the ability and the responsibility to engage with individuals and communities.

Also, while working on the Shield series, fleury attended a day-long workshop in her village Wakefield, Quebec that made a significant impact on her future creative vision. It moved her to look for ways to talk about her practice as one who could engage (and be engaged by) a community around an art project. She writes: "a Huichol shaman who was staying in Wakefield for the summer offered (through his translator, Hope MacLean, University of Ottawa, Anthropology) a day course in traditional Huichol yarn painting (coloured wool pressed into beeswax covered boards). His translator told him that two of us were artists. What reverberated in my conscience after that was how he couldn't quite 'get' the meaning of the word 'artist.' [He explained that] in his village, his language, there was no word 'artist' . . . that EVERYBODY created, that everybody — young and old — made things, these yarn paintings and more . . . and that to make these symbolic and beautiful objects was a regular part of daily life that was simply expected and respected by all. It made an indelible mark on my consciousness to hear this . . . and has coloured the way i look at and participate in art-making" (email Feb. 3, 1999). The

workshop with the Shaman highlighted two conceptual changes in fleury's approach to art: fleury saw that it was imperative to consider herself not as an individual artist separate from a community but as a member of a complex and organic group. fleury also came to believe that a community was not simply a social or political organization, but that it was a creative, imaginative entity.

The sculptural beginnings manifested in the Shields series were later to be improved upon as fleury's sculptural interests progressed and the scale of the works themselves grew. Consequently, fleury's new sculptural experience made her eligible to compete for various public art commissions in Ontario and Quebec. It was her early experiences with public assignments that would quickly direct fleury's interest in community-based artwork and advance one of her most important contributions to the study of public art practices in Canada: that the community itself is a material for art.

The Shields series and the workshopping experiences, out of which developed fleury's approach to art as a social practice, gave the impetus to the artist to become involved in public art-making events. fleury felt it was time to test her belief that "creativity was certainly not the sole domain of arts practitioners" (email Feb.3, 1999). fleury began to compete for public art commissions in Ontario and Quebec or self-initiated community projects that she conducted without formal organization or funding in her community. fleury made it her goal to explore the question she set before her: "What can happen when an artist works in an open way with the public, when the creative phases are shared openly . . . ?" (email Feb. 3, 1999). One of fleury's answers to this

question became her first major public commission: *The Women's Monument Against Violence*. And it is to the *Monument* and subsequent projects like it, that fleury's new form of community-based public art turned.

The Women's Monument Against Violence

fleury maintains that community-based art uses feminist principles and strategies in its deployment; that, in fact, community art is feminist-based. She explains: "I consider all the work I do very feminist because of the honesty, the non-top-down approach and the view to multiplicity" (Interview March 22, 1998). Art critic Suzi Gablik contextualizes fleury's belief that community art is, in fact, feminist art. Gablik, in *The Reenchantment of Art*, writes that "to see our interdependence and interconnectedness is the feminine perspective that has been missing, not only in our scientific thinking and policy-making, but in our aesthetic philosophy as well" (Gablik 176). Gablik calls for an integrated relationship between the masculine and the feminine in a model of inclusiveness that fleury herself seeks. Both fleury and Gablik would agree that interdependence and interconnectedness — feminine principles — are important components in the practice of art and a need for arts' realignment in terms of inclusiveness and connectedness is imperative. fleury's work from the Seed Drawings to the Shields series facilitated her exploration of feminine principles and it was the *Women's Monument* that played them out.

In 1992, fleury developed a relationship with Mary Faught, a landscape architect

that resulted in an artistic partnership.²⁵ Under the name of “Agents of Gaia,” fleury and Faught were awarded the commission to construct a monument by a group of women known as The Women’s Monument Committee. fleury and Faught worked closely with the Committee to develop the “Enclave” as it stands now in Minto Park, Ottawa, Ontario. In fleury’s view, the *Women’s Monument* (fig. 18) was “a really important project” (Interview November 12, 1998): it was the first time that fleury worked in collaboration with another artist, the first time she worked in stone, and her first public commission. fleury explains: “We [Mary and I] both grew a lot learning from each other. learning from Eleanor [Eleanor Milne, the “Dominion’s Sculptor,” who helped fleury and Faught with the selection of the monument’s stone materials], learning from the system. It was a great project to do; but for me, the most important thing was that it got up and it got in that park” (Interview November 12, 1998).

The idea for the *Monument* began with a spiral. It was designed for community participation and interaction and was intended to lead audiences through a spiral garden to a massive woman-shaped stone.²⁶ Inscribed on the stone, in English and in French, were the words (from the Monument Committee) and designs that fleury (for non-French

²⁵The Agents of Gaia dissolved in 1994.

²⁶The spiral garden had to be modified in the final version in order to make the site accessible to wheelchairs and to accommodate large numbers of people around the monument. fleury explains: “when we [Mary and I] came up with the idea in the beginning there was a spiral and there was a spiral into it and you would enter the space . . . but we had to do another version. That is why the Monument at present looks just like the end of the spiral — the last curl — because the space had to be accessible by a wheelchair” (Interview November 12, 1998).

or English literate) fashioned in her studio. The text on the *Monument* reads (fig. 19): “To honour and to grieve all women abused and murdered by men. Envision a world without violence where women are respected and free.” The forms on the monument, a spiral, moons, waves, women walking were workings of “ancient feminine symbols of continuity, renewal, cycles, passage and hope” (*Monument* file n.d.). The artists explain that “these signs from Women’s heritage are engraved here to represent all women, all ages, and all races. The visual design on the stone and on the Earth focuses on the positive ideas of renewal, and the empowering forces that can grow after intolerable acts are committed towards our sisters, mothers and daughters. The symbols, like the rock, will stand for generations and speak of a time where women and children are respected and thriving” (*Monument* file n.d.). Called the “Enclave” the *Monument* was a site of action and memory and was intended to serve as a rallying point and a healing place (fig. 20).

The *Monument* is placed in a heritage district in an inner-city park. The park is located in downtown Ottawa. The idea for a spiral path leading to the main stone was intended to create a safe, comfortable environment that would lead to a familiar feminine symbol represented with a stable rock, protective and strong. Along the spiral, sharp stones like stalagmites jut out from the ground suggesting that terror is always present in the lives of women in our society. On the face of each stalagmitic crag is the name of a local woman who was murdered by a man (fig. 21). The *Monument* acts partly as a memorial invested with the memory of violence as represented by the cutting stones and

the deceased women's names. However, the massive stone monument, set in the centre, and largely outscaling the smaller stones, is the symbol for hope and peace. The park itself becomes charged with new meaning with the presence of the *Monument*: it is a site for grieving and loss and, at the same time, a place of hope, enlightenment, safety and action.

In its location close to but separate from the Law Courts and Parliament Hill tucked into Minto Park on Ottawa's busy Elgin Street, the *Monument* comments on the need for women to continuously monitor and react to the two fundamental institutions which are sites of patriarchal power and privilege. Rallying outside the civic sites of power, the term "enclave" suggests "a turning point towards an improved future" (*Monument* file n.d.). The *Monument's* presence is a reminder that the struggle to prevent violence in society must involve the continuous negotiation between governments and organizations to maintain interest in and funding for important social services such as rape crisis centres, shelters and comprehensive educational programs dealing with the issue of violence against women. Further, its location reflects on the need to seek further judicial means to work toward a violence-free society. Consistent with new genre public art theory, fleury and Faught's piece was intended to transform both a public space and public opinion in order to work toward preventing violence against women. New genre public art writer David H. Fisher explains: "From the perspective of advocates of new genre public art the primary justified purposes to be served by public space and the works or performances in it are transformative. These include the mutual recognition of

constitutive difference and reconciliation or healing the wounds caused to individuals, communities, and society” (Fisher 50).

The transformative strength of fleury’s and Faught’s *Monument*, however, lies in the engagement the public art piece has with its audience. Already collaborative, fleury and Faught shared a new art-making experience by working together. fleury explains: “It was the first time i’ve worked with a landscape architect before and Mary [Faught] had taken some sculpture courses but she really hadn’t been doing much art” (Interview November 12, 1998). The two women worked closely with the funding committee and made connections with other feminist and women’s groups to research and inform themselves of the nature of violence against women in Canada. However, the success of the piece is in the service that it continues to provide for the community. The *Monument* is the meeting and resting place for marches planned by numerous women’s groups on issues of women’s rights and human rights: the *Take Back the Night* march in Ottawa departs from the *Monument* and on December 6th of every year a vigil for the fourteen women murdered in the Montreal Massacre (fig. 22) is held at the site. Further, the monument continually renews itself as violence continues against women in the local area. For every woman murdered, a new stone bearing her name is erected and placed in the park. fleury explains that she and Faught are contacted by The Women’s Monument Committee when the necessary fund-raising has been completed and it is their responsibility to see that the stone is cut and engraved and placed into the fold of the *Monument*. Similar to the *Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt*, in which a new panel is

added to commemorate an individual who has died of AIDS,²⁷ the *Monument* is the kind of self-renewing, collaborative, community-based art project to which fleury's practice was to subsequently turn. For fleury, the first experience of working in a collaborative manner on a public art project, realized many of the questions that had arisen in her earlier work; the *Monument* was another form of a shield "that society could hold up . . . to fortify that part of ourselves that cares for each other" (fleury Shield file n.d.).

fleury's *Monument* is an important piece not only for the women's community in Ottawa and surrounding area, but for the development of the artist's creative aesthetic. Now more interested in people than materials or techniques, fleury began to acquire a vocabulary that would project her into community-based art events: "I don't want only to make something . . . in general I want to start the discussion before the thing is made and I want the making of the thing — the 'OBJECT' — to be something that just came out through the relation. The conversation made plastic one day" (fleury Interview November 12, 1998). fleury's projects would lead her to develop an idea she calls *workshopping community* to which much of her community-based art would be channeled.

²⁷The organizing committee out of San Francisco, California states in its website that over 78,000 names currently compose the Quilt (1998). <http://www.aidsquilt.org>. See also Paul Margolies and Anthony Turney, *Always Remember: A Selection of Panels Created by and for International Fashion Designers*, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Conclusion

The path that led to the beginning of fleury's community-based art practice began early in her life with an interest in art and social issues. From her first career as a figure skater, fleury learned the principles of movement, emotion and choreography which she later put to use to direct, perform and produce her own performance art piece called *The Circle Cycle*. When fleury closed the door on figure skating in 1983 to pursue her second career as a visual artist, she worked on feminist imagery. The Shields series followed chronologically from the Seed Drawings series which led fleury toward public art.²⁸ *The Women's Monument Against Violence* was the first important public piece that reflected fleury's transformation into an active community-based artist.

fleury explains that one of the most valuable tools in her community-based public art work is a word: respect. In fact, the small casing of her name and her use of a lowercase "i" in correspondence speaks to her need to visit all aspects of her artistic and personal life with respect. fleury writes: "the lowercase is admiration for the shapes of the letters and more recently, i admit, my disdain for the big EGO" (email n.d.). It is with respect that she engages with her favorite topic: human potential. For fleury, both respect and humility in art and self is the journey to fulfillment and, in particular, the richness she has felt as a public artist doing community-based projects. The artist, for fleury, is part of the creative and perceptive processes in society, not an individual who

²⁸During this time as well, fleury's work on a community mural project through the Canadian Association for Advancement of Women in Sport, began to interest her in public art.

provides definitive answers to problems in the social design. An artist, humble, respectful, and attentive to the subject or object of study and creation, is the model of the community cultural worker that fleury has developed and adopted. As such, fleury is interested more in interrogating the processes involved in making art than the reception of the finished product; she consistently confirms that she is interested in people not products. However, while fleury does not reject the artwork nor her role as an artist, maintaining that it is her role as facilitator in the artistic experience and the assemblage of the final object that centres the process, she is clear that neither the object nor the artist determines the process. As fleury explains, “I think the community artist is going to move away from a certain kind of recognition that has been traditionally guarded and that's why some people would not want to see changes in the perceived role of the artist — the recognition part. I'm really glad we are having this discussion but I am not interested in recognition now. I think the art is getting smaller and smaller and because of that, it's just becoming interesting” (Interview March 22/98).

Chapter Two

New Genre Public Art and c.j. fleury's *Workshopping Community*

Introduction

What i feel works (worked) about the process is that diverse people experience the trust and 'chance taking' of building a unique — yet universal — symbol together in an open situation that reintegrates the creative experience back into everyday life.

(fleury [On the *Flower Petal Mandala Project*] March 30, 1998)

The reintegration of the creative experience back into everyday life is what fleury sees as the purpose of her community-based public art. For fleury, however, it is neither the artist who is responsible to return art to its social context, nor is it the art's role to demonstrate its likeness to everyday life. It is the process that matters to fleury. It is the process involving chance-taking, trust and collaboration with a diversity of people that designs and ritualizes the reintegration of the creative experience into the life of the community. For fleury, it is not only important that a community-based art project benefit the community, it is imperative that the community gives rise to the art project and catalyzes the creative energy that already exists within it. fleury believes that the creative experience is the everyday life of a community and it is her role as an artist to facilitate the constant re-expression of that life through art. This is the foundation of

workshopping community, a term coined by fleury to describe her community-based public art practice and a term which characterizes her style of new genre public art.

fleury's work exists as part of a long tradition of community and public arts. The dominant critical structure that has been employed to contextualize community-based public art projects such as fleury's is called new genre public art theory. This chapter's intent is to discuss the central features of new genre public art and show how this critical tradition can provide a context in which to study fleury's community-based public art projects.

New genre public art is an interesting study in itself. Suzanne Lacy's 1995 publication of *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* is currently one of the primary academic texts which outlines the central features of the genre. Lacy's text identifies four principle characteristics that are said to describe new genre public art: alternative forms and materials of the art object; non-traditional locations; foregrounded political and ideological information; and engagement with a collaborative and participatory audience. These four principles will be examined in detail in this chapter. I argue that fleury's community-based public art experiences are characteristic of and consistent with the four principles of new genre public art theory. I also argue that fleury's concept *workshopping community*, a strongly developed sense of engagement with a collaborative and participatory audience, is a point from which we may begin to better understand her work. While falling into the framework of new genre public art broadly described, I argue that the concept of *workshopping community* adds to the

vocabulary of the new genre public art discourse. The argument opens with a discussion of new genre public art theory followed by a description of the principles of fleury's *workshopping community*. The chapter begins, however, with fleury's dream community project — the *Flower Petal Mandala Project* — and concludes with an analysis of fleury's collaborative work with Vivienne Laxdal called *The Racist Forest*.

Flower Petal Mandala Project (FPMP)²⁹

The *FPMP* (figs. 23-26) came to fleury, fully-formed, in a dream. She saw the mandala made from flower petals filling the main floor of the vacant fire hall in her village. The dream she calls a “gift,” a gift which she is prepared to share by producing a chapbook detailing the project which would be distributed for free to communities everywhere.³⁰ fleury explains: “The design of the *FPMP* was built on a foundation of years of inquiry, note-taking, experimentation, research, trials and errors. It was conceived in response to waking and sleeping wishes and questions about how to involve a community in a local, yet universal way, about how to offer a model for a no-cost, non-

²⁹A “mandala” is art in the Hindu and Buddhist tradition which is composed of any number of various designs that symbolize the universe — the design is usually circular in form. It is also a term used in psychology which describes a person's striving for the unity of the self.

³⁰fleury's idea for a chapbook containing the “recipe” for the *Flower Petal Mandala Project (FPMP)* is still unrealized; however, her project — and recipe — has already reached a wide audience. Called “An Inspiring Project for any Community” fleury's *FPMP* was included in the 1998 publication of the Ontario Arts Council's *Community Arts Workbook . . . another Vital Link*.

polluting, intergenerational activity that was freely given and experienced. It came in a dream. The project took a lifetime of thought, a full summer of growth and activism, and about five hours to complete” (email March 30, 1998).

fleury conceived of the project to support the struggle of the Wakefield Library to acquire an abandoned firehall to increase the size of their collection and public space.

fleury adds: “the *FPMP* was a subversive action intended to raise awareness of the potential a space (specifically, the recently vacated fire hall adjacent to the *biblio Wakefield*) can offer, when it is used in a creative and respectful manner. It was inspired by the freely given services of the volunteer library workers and the concept of energy and knowledge freely radiating outwards from a (sacred) center . . . hub of the village or self. In an effort to support a magnificent proposal that had been ignored by the town council . . . an ad-hoc group had prepared a most wonderful research/study/proposal to use the recently vacated room as a multi-purpose community room . . . i began questioning WHAT i could do to RAISE AWARENESS. After an unsuccessful attempt to start a letter-writing campaign i faced the idea of what the space could tell me, what the space could mean, what a temporary installation could be and HOW I COULD INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY????” (email March 30, 1998). The question fleury asks, what could she as an artist do to raise awareness about an important social issue and involve the community, brings together a variety of key issues important to the role of the new genre public artist. She integrated concepts relating to site, to activism and to community; she was at once an experimenter, a reporter, an analyst, and an activist as she

formed and guided the *FPMP*. Central to the experience was the art itself which channeled fleury's intentions to "raise awareness" to a issue of relevance to her community. In fleury's project, it was the art that became the site around which a public could gather and work together for change in a manner more effective than a letter-writing campaign. One of the keys to the success of the project was that it brought members of the public together, allowed for participation, interaction, discussion and creation.

fleury invited several members of the community into the planning and development stages of the project. She knew that there was a watercolourist in the village who specialized in painting mandalas and invited him, along with two other community members, into the initial planning and production stages of the art project. Apart from one instance of relational difficulty, the participation of a number of people on the mandala project, managed by fleury, invited more than simple authorship from the collaborators: they were charged with the responsibility of making a public art project.³¹ It was precisely the interaction from the collaborators, combined with the active audience who not only co-operated (or became oppositional) in the making of the *FPMP*, but who created the mandala based on their own interests and directions, that was the *art* to fleury. To fleury, the art of community-making is what was central to the art piece itself. fleury believes that all the processes, the activities and involvements requires that the

³¹The difficulty occurred during the process of the mandala's construction in which the mandala watercolourist desired to make future mandala projects profitable ventures.

community itself be considered in the totality of the artwork.

What emerged for fleury in the process of making the mandala was a new way of thinking about the purpose of art. After the *FPMP* it was evident to her that art could be made a centering point for political and social activism, dialogue and community decision-making. Art, fleury believed, could also invigorate a participatory audience to involve themselves in the activity of making changes in their world. Further, the mandala demonstrated that members of the audience were co-creators with the ability to make art that related to their own experience — a piece that was meant to draw attention to the possibility of an expansion of the library in the community. fleury learned that art could make a difference.

The *FPMP* is an example of community-based public art making that can be described using new genre public art criticism. It is a project that brought art out of the museum and into the world. As critic Michael Brenson notes: “every project builds a road or a bridge where there may not have been one before” (Brenson 33). New art relationships were formed and a larger audience was integrated into the larger cultural fabric of society. Public art like fleury’s *FPMP* is reaching out into non-traditional areas and charging culture with activity and accessibility; a charge which is changing art practices and definitions.

From the Outmoded to the New: New Genre Public Art Described

Unlike much of what has heretofore been called public art, new genre public art — visual art that uses both traditional and nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives — is based on engagement.

(Lacy *Pilgrimages* 19)

Public art has a long history in human record, perhaps dating as far back as ancient rock or cave paintings. In form and intention, the term “public art” today generally describes sculpture and installations that are accessible in public places. New genre public art, however, while predicated on public art concepts, bears little resemblance to the forms, locations, intentions, or political and ideological purposes of its antecedents.³²

New genre public art differentiates itself from the kind of public art that artist and critic Judith Baca calls *cannon-in-the-park* art. Baca, a self-identified new genre public artist, explains that “our common legacy in public art is derived from the ‘cannon-in-the-park’ impulse, which causes us to drag out the rusty cannons from past wars, polish them up, and place them in the park for children to crawl over at Sunday picnics. The purpose

³²Although new genre public art has enjoyed some critical acceptance, what indeed this new community-based public art form should be called is still a matter of debate. The language that will describe what kind of art this art actually is, has yet to have consensual acceptance: “new genre public art” by and large has enjoyed the most use in the nineties. Some critics call it activist art, others new genre public art, some new community art, and some more esoteric others use the term “prophetic aesthetics.” B. Ruby Rich’s reworking of Cornel West’s *Prophetic Fragments* uses this term in her essay “Present Ills and Future Dreams” to discuss the radical repositioning of art off the canvas, out of the frame, and into the realm of structural and institutional change.

was to evoke a time past in which ‘splendid triumphs’ and ‘struggles of our forefathers’ shifted the course of history. These expositions were meant to inspire an awe of our great nation’s power to assert its military will and prevail over enemies. . . . Never mind if for us as people of color they were not our forefathers, or even if the triumphs were often over our own people” (Baca 131). The public art to which Baca refers had a specific purpose to celebrate, memorialize, or to institutionalize an historic moment that was deemed relevant to a specific site, such as a monument dedicated to the Selkirk Settlers at the site where Lord Selkirk’s party first landed in Winnipeg, Manitoba; an individual, such as the statue of Samuel de Champlain on Nepean Point in Ottawa, Ontario; or the history of the nation as a whole, such as the cenotaphs that can be found in the centre of most rural towns or the installations and sculptures that are found upon the lawns of Parliament and Legislative Buildings throughout the country. These examples of public art, usually taking the form of sculpture or installations dropped down in public areas by invisible committees with a generalized notion of civic purpose or duty, is precisely what new genre public artists like Baca seek to contest.

New genre public art theory insists that a wider audience must be involved in the process of memorializing history, selecting what triumphs and struggles be celebrated, and creating awe-inspiring moments in art around community-determined issues. It changes the manner in which public art is defined in four principal areas: it radicalizes the physical forms traditionally associated with public art; it requires that the locations for art be extended; it demands that political and ideological subject matter be incorporated into

the art; and, perhaps most importantly, it charges an audience with activity, inviting participation in the art process on all levels. These four components, which provide a synopsis of new genre public art theory, will be examined in turn hereafter.

Lacy, in the introduction to *Mapping the Terrain*, explains that new genre public art is a “visual art that uses both traditional and nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives” (Lacy *Pilgrimages* 19). The media to which Lacy refers, both traditional and non-traditional, is a key element that distinguishes new genre public art from the statues, painted murals, cenotaphs or cannons that are identified with previous public art practices. These public attractions usually represented the personal methods, style and personality of the individual artist — within a range of methods, styles and approaches that were traditionally deemed acceptable for public art and its goals — and were meant for permanent display. As such, the material that was used involved substances such as metals, stone, or concrete, that had lasting qualities and that could withstand the elements in its position in outdoor environments. New genre public art forms, however, emphasize neither the permanence of a public art piece nor the authorship in the art object as a manifestation of a particular artist’s skill. Cultural critic Henri A. Giroux concurs: “new genre public artists emphasize public art that privileges community involvement rather than the traditional emphasis on individual authorship” (Giroux x). According to Giroux and other art scholars, it is more important to new genre public artists that the processes involved in the creation, construction, and display of the art piece(s) be highlighted than

the object be celebrated for its artistry. Consequently, the object's lasting qualities become a matter of little importance. The materials used in new genre public art works certainly may include durable, sustainable constructs, and they may recall the statue, mural or cannon; however, new genre public art practices do not rely as heavily on the form of the object as did earlier public art. In fact, the consideration in new genre public art theory is to push away from the object in order to spotlight the processes behind making the object.

By refocusing the art away from the art object itself, and reinvesting it in the processes behind the creation and installation of the object, the genre has flung open the doors to all kinds of experimental forms which can be traditional but also multidisciplinary, temporary, ephemeral, or infinite works-in-progress. Lacy explains, "not specifically painting, sculpture, or film, for example, new genre art might include combinations of different media. Installations, performance, conceptual art, and mixed-media art, for example, fall into the new genre category, a catchall term for experimentation in both form and content" (Lacy *Pilgrimages* 20). fleury's *FPMP*, for instance, involved a mandala constructed from dried flower petals placed on a large board where fleury had pencilled in the form. The making of the object involved several participants and took approximately five hours to complete after which one collaborator made a "flower angel" in the middle. When the project was finished, the art piece was thrown into the river that passed through the village.

There are multiple forms that new genre public art utilizes in its range and these

forms continue to grow and develop as innovative artists and communities create new ways of integrating art into their lives. Lucy Lippard in her article “Looking Around: Where We Are, Where We Could Be,” suggests several examples of the new forms that new genre public art has recently taken: performance and ritual that take place outside traditional art spaces; environmental art that intends awareness, improvement or reclamation; political art, direct and often didactic; works on public-access television or radio; or works that are in the form of actions, or chain actions, that appear simultaneously (through communities or across the country or globally) in order to link current issues of public concern (Lippard, *Looking*, 121-23). Other public art critics agree with Lippard’s connection between new forms of media and current issues of public concern. Dolores Hayden states succinctly: “**along with new media come new definitions of public**” (emphasis hers; Hayden 67). New genre public art has engaged with a variety of new media and has negotiated new definitions of public. New genre public art has found, however, that the public is plural and diverse — that there are many publics as opposed to a singular one. These new publics are found everywhere, and these new genre public artists are inventing ways to relocate public art projects into multiple communities, seeking new sites for dialogue and artistic integration.

The location for traditional public art was not debated in the manner that the issues of location, site and place involves new genre public art today. In past practice, it was common to expect that public art pieces which had been approved by a concealed committee or benefactor were parachuted onto a civic property and set in a permanent

manner. This approach to public art is referred to as “‘plunk art’ — art which has simply been enlarged and dropped on the site” (Lippard *Looking* 121). The intentions behind plunk art vary little. It was meant as a form of education, beautification or historicization. To many artists and viewers, however, the veiled processes behind plunk art were perceived as invasive, authoritarian and limiting. In addition, the traditional sites for public art were often in outdoor extensions of museums or governmental houses, rarely accessible to the general public; or public art was accessibly positioned but inappropriately placed. The locations for traditional public art were chosen based more on economic thinking than concern for the immediate audience. As Baca explained, the art in her neighbourhoods did not speak to the history of the people that lived there and was very often about the vanquishment or violation of those communities. New genre public art grew out of the kind of displeasure Baca describes.

Patricia Phillips, in her article “Public Constructions,” addresses the changing sentiment and states that “a growing number of artists and agencies believe that the responsibility of public artists is not to create permanent objects for presentation in traditionally accepted public places but, instead, to assist in the construction of a public” (Phillips *Constructions* 67). Location became a central issue as artists sought to reconstruct art that responded to a variety of publics. For instance, the “street” is often a site where art projects involve the homeless, kids, ethnic urban corridors. In Ottawa, a project coordinated by the City of Ottawa’s *Art in Public Places Program* involved teenagers living on the streets photographing their environment and their life experience.

Abandoned and forgotten public sites are considered and employed such as in fleury's *FPMP* in which a mandala was created in an abandoned firehall to draw attention to the possibility of the building's conversion. Art is brought to workplaces, to radio, to storefronts, parking lots, sidewalks, dumps. Traditional locations for public art are also used in new genre public art such as parks, plazas and governmental grounds but with the specific intention that intervene in or politicizes that site. For instance, in 1983, artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, in one of his 70 *Public Projections*, set a large outdoor slide projection on the South African War Memorial in Toronto as part of an exhibition at the Ydessa Gallery. Wodiczko has intervened on public architecture with images constructed with didactic political and ideological content between 1981 and 1992 in cities across the world in an attempt to call attention to a political or social issue relevant to the site. In Wodiczko's disruption of a public art piece, the public space and the object that inhabited it, were reinvested with new meaning.³³

Wodiczko's interventions on public monuments or architecture, along with projects such as fleury's in abandoned sites or in the workplace — wherever a community (geographical, ideological or imaginative) can be located — become reactivated repositories of cultural meaning. New genre public art theory argues that interventionalist public art projects not only make art but explore the political and

³³<http://web.mit.edu/mit-cavs/www/kwbio.html>: Krzysztof Wodiczko was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1943. He is a Canadian citizen and currently works in Cambridge, MA and New York, NY. Wodiczko's interest in public space and art has led him to develop several public intervention instruments such as the *Homeless Vehicle* (1988-9); *Poliscar* (1991); *Alien Staff* (1992 - 1997); and *Porte-Parole* (1994).

ideological questions relating to constructions of official public space and official public art. When art intervenes upon an existing public art piece, the meaning of those art works and the spaces they occupy is changed and issues involving the location and constructions of the “public” are accentuated. Viewing is no longer a matter of passive in/tolerance but an action charged with activity and wide applicability. Location is no longer a matter of ordinance but a critical element of the art itself. David Fisher writes: “whether an artwork merely occupies a site or expresses the sense of a place, *the act of placing or performing a work of creative expression in public space alters how that space is seen, and how audiences see the work; if sufficiently noticed and engaging, it may also alter the ways in which both artist and audience see themselves and their world*” (italics his: Fisher 44). Consequently, the intent of new genre public art projects is not to only create art for a public location, it is closer to what Fisher implies or what Phillips suggests, an important step toward the construction of a new public. As new genre public artists negotiate the construction of new publics, new questions were asked of art and community and changes in context of that art occurred.

The political and ideological frameworks which supported plunk art practices became the subjects for new genre public artists as they sought to re-place art in a variety of different contexts. The notion of a universal cultural symbol that informed traditional public art practices was challenged. For Wodiczko the “monument” is a political and ideological construct that masquerades itself as a benign cultural symbol. His interventions and didactic reconstructions placed, in this example, the South African War

Memorial, but more generally all monuments in question. It is not that Wodiczko would call for the demolition of all monuments in society; on the contrary. Wodiczko and artists interested in new genre public art practices, seek out and develop cultural symbols, but symbols fashioned on community terms. fleury's Mandala, for instance, a universal symbol, was the centre of her *FPMP* project; however, the intent of the symbol was not to fix meaning but to put the image into another context. The temporality of the piece — taking only five hours to make after which it was cast into the local river (three days after completion) — coupled with its ephemerality — there are slides in the artist's collection but the record or the object itself exists only in the memory of those who actively or tangentially participated — was a realized framework intended to lead away from the object and into the life of the community.³⁴

Artists and audiences concerned with numerous social issues foreground the political and ideological messages or experiences important to the art. New genre public art theory admits activist ideology into the realm of art-making, charging that art has a social responsibility to its community and nation. The didactic, political or ideological elements which always inform art objects, now in the foreground, underline multiple

³⁴The temporality of fleury's *FPMP* encapsulates Joseph Beuys's view of "art as life." Brenson adds that "if art is life, then there is really no beginning or end to it. There is no frame around it. Nothing about it is fixed. Art, like life, is chaos, then it comes together, then it dissolves again, then it comes together in a new manner, then it breaks apart . . ." (Brenson 31). *Workshopping community* re-articulates Brenson's reading of Beuys's sentiment; however, for fleury, community, is both like life *and* like art. Community is at once a fluid concept that forms and disbands and re-forms around the subject of art. In *workshopping community*, fleury blurs the boundaries further and adds yet another context with which to discuss art as fluid, complex, social and as art.

divisions within society. Many new genre public artists found a common ground rooted in ideological or political values through which communities could discuss important social questions. For instance, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, two Canadian artists who locate their aesthetic within the labour community, use their art to address political and ideological issues in society. Condé and Beveridge describe the importance of an oppositional politic within community-based art: “the real context within which we work as artists,” explain Condé and Beveridge in an introduction to their 1980 show, *Work in Progress*, “is that of an industrialized culture. . . . Culture is divided between dominant and oppositional modes. (which in some cases parallel the traditional oppositions), in which oppositional practice must account for both the content and the forms of mass production” (Condé *Work* n.p.). Condé and Beveridge have been committed to building an art practice which reflects the concerns of community politics with the Canadian labour movement — an oppositional site for traditional public art.³⁵ Condé and Beveridge argue that Canadian public art history, which includes the history of community-based art practices, cannot be understood without the inclusion of working

³⁵Condé and Beveridge have spent their careers making “the local art scene as well as trade unionism a conceptual space of cultural democratization” (Tuer *Privilege* 209). They were part of a group of artists who founded the Labour, Arts and Media Working Group (LAMWG) whose public function was to develop Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts, successfully held in Toronto since 1986. In 1984 the artists founded the now defunct Independent Artists Union and continue to be involved in various art and labour projects and organizations such as the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton, Ontario.

peoples' cultural past.³⁶ Specifically, Condé and Beveridge have been able to articulate why community artists, dissatisfied with limitations imposed by traditional art institutions, have sought to take art outside the museum and into creative partnerships with alternative communities. Condé and Beveridge explain that "a major consideration in developing a formal or community arts practice, particularly in the union movement, is the division of labour at the root of cultural production — the division of mental and manual labour. This division defines artwork as creative and manual work as drudgery. . . . The implication then becomes the rationalization for the exclusivity and elitism of the fine arts, leaving the rituals and expressions of working class life to be trivialized by the blatant mass marketing of popular culture" (Condé *Telling* 211). Condé and Beveridge have committed themselves to the repair of the divisions in cultural labour; an interesting projection of the principles of community-based public art.³⁷ The class-identified objects

³⁶For Condé and Beveridge, the history of working peoples is not merely an interesting part of Canadian history's whole. Historian Gregory Kealey explains that "Canadian workers have been central to Canadian historical development and that Canadian history cannot be understood without their inclusion" (Kealey 329). The history of Canada's labour movement "is a story of struggle" (Roberts 378) and has, up until after World War II been, as Rosemary Warskett identifies, insular, working toward goals of union solidarity and consciousness rather than for a broader conception of social solidarity (Warskett 111). Warskett argues that after World War II, the story of struggle widened so as to "allow the labour movement to move beyond a defensive type of solidarity, and to unite organically with other social forces pressing for radical change" (Warskett 111). Consistent with the ideas espoused by new genre public art theory, Condé and Beveridge see themselves as one social force with whom labour history may find a sympathetic partner.

³⁷Some of Condé and Beveridge's projects include *It's Still Privileged Art* (1976), a personal project which investigated the private lives of the artists in their struggle to make socially and politically responsible art; *Standing Up* (1981), a show which

the artists create are impressive artistically, but, like fleury's *FPMP*, it is the importance of the collaborative aspects of their practice that make the community-based representations significant. From the outset of any project, Condé and Beveridge are explicit that their "relationship to the union movement is based on our alliance across divisions of class and labour. It is based on shared beliefs and mutual interests but not shared experience" (Condé *Telling* 212). The work of Condé and Beveridge involves communication between and collaboration with their audience; it is the role of the union audience as the aesthetic centre that makes the artists' projects meaningful. The value of Condé and Beveridge's work with the union audience first defines the union as a community, a community with a vivid cultural past but with little exposure to institutionalized cultural resources or power.³⁸ The artists' work addresses the history and current issues of the workplace and in particular, the unionized workplace and demand that work should also be discussed as art; art is a context, for Condé and

specifically dealt with women and the labour movement: *No Immediate Threat* (1985-6), a narrative of the nuclear industry and its workers; *Pulp Fiction* (1993), a series documenting the Paperworkers Union in northern Ontario; and *Political Landscapes* (1998), which is comprised of five individual images depicting instances of resistance to the right wing government in Ontario. In each instance, the projects resulted in a series of photomontages which serve as narratives involving the union's history, the daily lives union members and their families, and/or the effect the social and economic pressures from outside have had on the individual worker and the union local. These works are meant to be easily reproduced to be used and reused for educational purposes and as one critic explains, "become conceptual counterparts to a capital that slips across borders with ease and infiltrates mass culture and consciousness" (Tuer *Privileged* 220).

³⁸Condé and Beveridge explain the union culture is primarily an oral one but a tradition in music (anthems and folk songs), visual regalia (insignias, shields, banners and placards), as well as some fragmentary photographic collections, are all evident.

Beveridge, that is part of the larger social and political condition of work in society.

Willing to “talk” politics or ideology, new genre public art practiced by artists such as Condé and Beveridge, Wodiczko and many others, mediates between dominant and oppositional modes in society. Unlike former public art principles, the politics of new genre practices suggest that an oppositional framework works to stabilize a community not to alienate it from its own past. For instance, fleury’s *FPMP* was a declared “subversive action intended to raise awareness of the potential of a space” (email March 30, 1998). Art positioned as oppositional, or subversive, like fleury’s mandala, Wodiczko’s projections, and Condé and Beveridge’s numerous projects with unions, empowers the community to ask questions about cultural constructs. It demonstrates how a new public art, no longer engorged with its own assumed universality, could act as an agent of social change. This move toward a socially-directed public art concept has a recent history.

One artist, in particular, may be considered responsible for the shift in political and ideological re-formations of public art. To Joseph Beuys, “everything was sculpture, everything was art, and every aspect of life could be approached creatively, with a sense of inventiveness and ritual” (Brenson 30). Brenson’s discussion of new community-based public art projects in the context of “Culture in Action,”³⁹ argued that Beuys — an artist, a politician, a teacher — was one of the first artists to articulate the importance of

³⁹“Culture in Action” was Sculpture Chicago’s innovative public art project set throughout the city (1992-1994). Eight projects were completed, facilitated by fourteen artists and their community partners.

art to society and its shamanic ability to act as a healer to a politically and ideologically divided world. Beuys engaged in audience-centered performances and actions with activist intentions to return art to the social contexts from which he felt it came. Beuys explains: "I am really convinced that humankind will not survive without having realized the social body, the social order, into an artwork" (Brenson 30).⁴⁰ Beuys, to a large degree, was responsible for advancing changes in the form, locations and contexts of public art.⁴¹

And as the form, the location and the political and ideological impetuses behind public art changed through the ideas of innovators such as Beuys, so too did the role the artist was to play in society. No longer politically neutral or ideologically opaque, the new genre public artist, like his or her art, was charged with activism. No longer masking political or ideological intent, artists were afforded a larger venue for the freedom of expression. According to Lacy, the new genre public artist should be considered as "an experiencer, a reporter, an analyst and as an activist" (Lacy *Debated* 173). In fact, as Lacy indicates, the artist no longer had *a* role to play but several simultaneous roles working in tandem; the multiple roles were necessary precisely because of the new

⁴⁰For criticism on Beuys see: Suzi Gablik *Has Modernism Failed*; Ann Temkin and Bernice Rose *Thinking is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys*; Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*.

⁴¹Brenson also suggests that an appropriate lineage for new genre public art practices which come from a history of socially-based community or interactive art practices include the Russian Constructivists, Beuys, the Situationists, Allan Kaprow, and Christo (Brenson 19).

relationship the artist had to his or her audience. The audience, for the new genre public artist, was to change. It was invited into the process of making art from the outset as a partner and co-creator. The purpose of the public artist was no longer to educate audiences but to facilitate a dialogue, centered around art, that would emphasize the cultural richness of a community.

The kinds of audience activity that traditional public art provoked involved either a casual spectator who developed individualized responses to the viewing of the object or, as Baca described, the climbing upon by children during Sunday picnics.⁴² New genre public art practices and theory, however, seek out new relationships with the viewing, or frolicking, public. According to art critic Mary Jane Jacob, “with the new public art, the traditional audience for art is changed in several significant ways: by being placed at the center of the art making, with their concerns and issues adopted as artistic subject matter: by reacting to the work, their critical viewpoint ultimately determining its artistic success, i.e., its *quality*; and by taking on a diversified and more active role” (Jacob *Audience* 58). This new public involvement, as Jacob describes, which is at the centre of the art-making process, is a collaborative model: it incorporates community concerns and issues,

⁴²Where I grew up — in a small town outside of Winnipeg — there was one public sculpture in one of our few official parks: a gigantic, wooden Red River Cart and, as children, we climbed all over it during holiday picnics or at the *Selkirk Fair and Rodeo*. The Red River Cart had a purpose. It was intended to call from the past a time which described best the opening of the west. We embraced the Cart as a fun and a colossal challenge, huge and powerful, but also, we understood it to be representative of us, our history — at least until the town painted “KEEP OFF” onto the cart itself. The “keep off” warning served to separate us from the experience of our past and made us observers instead of participants in our art.

absorbs and incorporates community reactions, and requires an active relationship between the art and itself. Unlike traditional public art, the collaborative approach to art-making “charges the construction of audience with activity rather than simple identity” (Lacy *Debated* 180).

New genre public art practices are based on a collaborative model with audience participation to be found during all stages of the art project.⁴³ The artist incorporates the audience into the process of the project from the outset, which redefines the role public art has played in society. According to Jacob, the audience-centered, collaborative model is important because it “reconnects culture and society, and recognizes that art is made for audiences, not for institutions of art: . . . it gives the work relevancy within the community, not in the usual public art sense of promoting art appreciation, but by offering the potential for this art to affect the lives of those in and outside of the community” (Jacob *Audiences* 54, 58). Jacob believes that artists who have adopted this model of interaction can “solve problems of social design in our urban environment — to show that the artist can contribute socially as well as visually to our culture” (Jacob *Loop* 56). fleury’s *FPMP*, for instance, was audience-centered and collaborative. The

⁴³Baca offers two models for collaborative approaches to new genre public art: “In some productions where you are going for the power of the image, you can get a large amount of input from the community before the actual making of the image, then you take control of the aesthetic. That’s one model. Another is a fully collaborative process in which you give the voice to the community and they make the image. Both of these processes are completely valid, but there’s very little room for the second because artists take such huge risks becoming associated with a process that might not end up as a beautiful object. The confusion is massive when you talk to people who are writing about it; whose art is it, the kids, the homeless, or yours?” (Baca in Lacy *Pilgrimages* 45).

origination of the idea rested with fleury but it was the audience that was to define all other aspects including the form, the materials, and the final location for the dismantled materials of the art object (the river). The art was made with the attempt to connect a social issue important to the community to the audience, demonstrating Jacob's argument that the artist can contribute socially to our world.

For fleury, however, the importance of her role as an artist was secondary to the role of the audience in the *FPMP*; the audience's role, fleury believed, was central to the art itself. The emphasis on the audience's participation in the process of making art, rather than on the completed art object, is the entry into fleury's idea of *workshopping community*. Where new genre public art theory the notion that the audience is central to the art work, even suggesting in passing that the audience is the art, fleury's *workshopping community* anticipates the possibility that the "art" is not the object but what happens in the making of it. *Workshopping community* is fleury's way to explain not only how the audience is central to the art work, but how the audience is the material, the location, the political and ideological force, and the art of the art itself.

Several critics have begun to admit the possibility that in new genre public art, audience engagement, indispensable to the making of an art work, is in fact the art of the work. Jacob states that "to understand this work is to recognize that process and all associated activities are central to, even art of, the art; this is not just a case of a final product or object to which all else is preliminary" (Jacob *Audience* 57). Lacy argues that "what exists in the space between the words public and art is an unknown relationship

between artist and audience, a relationship that may *itself* become the artwork” (emphasis hers; Lacy *Pilgrimages* 20). Phillips also proposes that “that work of the artist is art. In other words, the plans, preparations, and encounters with the community members are demonstrated, insistent gestures that form the final results. Art requires a new reading that accepts work — production — as the site of praxis and meaning” (Phillips *Constructions* 68). And finally, Lippard suggests that “to change the power relations inherent in the way art is now made and distributed, we need to continue to seek out new forms *buried in social energies not yet recognized as art*” (italics hers; Lippard *Looking* 126). fleury’s idea of *workshopping community* accepts that the social energies of a participatory audience to which Lippard refers is art; that work or production in Phillips’ terms is art; that the relationship between artist and audience in Lacy’s view, is art; and Jacob’s idea that the art is actually the process, is also art.

The implications of this repositioning of aesthetic value away from the object on to the process is summarized by Gablik in *The Reenchantment of Art*. In her discussion of Bradley McCallum’s collaborative project with the homeless in the United States, Gablik suggests that defining the collaboration as the aesthetic value of the art, “breaks the trance of economic thinking and legitimates another kind of motivation. There is nothing to buy, sell, display or promote. It offers our society a different image of itself that is not based on the conspicuous consumption of valuable goods or the inevitability of

self interest” (Gablik 175).⁴⁴ fleury’s intent in her community-based art projects, and as she stated in her *FPMP*, is “to offer a model for a no-cost, non-polluting, intergenerational activity that was freely given and experienced” (email n.d.). fleury would concur with Gablik that the image of society not based on consumption of goods, but the production of collaborations and relationships between people, is the ultimate “dream project.” A model of mutually determined interactions, offered by fleury in the *FPMP*, which has the potential to change the “self-interested” manner in which the object is exchanged to an object that is “freely given and experienced,” is one of the fundamental reasons new genre public art practices are important social and cultural studies.

Workshopping Community

... community is another material to work with and if I am working honestly in a community where the people recognize their wealth and their richness, then I feel workshopping community works. That's my attitude of community art.

(Interview March 22, 1998)

⁴⁴Bradley McCallum was in his first year at Yale in 1989 when he began *Park Bench Shelter: A Collaboration in Process* (1990). After several months of working with homeless individuals, McCallum met and began an involved collaboration with a woman to design a portable shelter for the park bench upon which she lived. The awning went through several design stages until he and his co-collaborator were satisfied with the product. McCallum explains: “if I were to ignore Jackie and leave the awning as it was, I would violate a trust that is essential to the collaboration: the potential for learning from one another is realized by honoring this trust and listening. With Jackie, it meant reworking the awning to satisfy both our intentions” (in Gablik 172).

fleury believes that, in her public art practice, the community is not simply the site from which to make art, or a site out of which an artist comes, or even a place in which an identifiable aesthetic can be located; rather, community itself is the *material for art*. “I was thinking of community as material to work,” explains fleury, “. . . as an artist would want to understand all the implications of a material that they had decided to work with . . . to commit themselves to” (email March 23, 1998). With this approach to art-making, fleury opens up dialogues that reinforce the mutual responsibilities necessary between artists and the communities in which they work, the very communities which are the work of art. fleury explains, “it [community] is another form of research. i am as much interested in finding out what community is as i am finding out what is the best way to weld something. i think it’s another material” (Interview March 22, 1998). If community is a *material*, then the working of this involves a challenge to what we understand as an art form and what we imagine community to be.

fleury’s idea and practice of *workshopping community* puts into action what new genre public art theory has only begun to anticipate. fleury gives a name to and highlights the processes involved in the production of a community-based artwork. Accentuating production, fleury’s *workshopping community* is a particularly well-developed theorization and application of the collaborative and public aspects of making community-based public art. As such, fleury provides important new variations to two of the four principles of new genre public art theory: first, she suggests that *community is a material for art* which contributes to the kinds of new forms new genre public art theory

promotes; and second, fleury insists that in *workshopping community* the artist is an audience member, a participatory *member of the community*. In the brief discussion which follows, fleury's contribution to the two areas of new genre public art theory will be evaluated. The discussion will conclude with an analysis of fleury's *The Racist Forest* (figs. 27-30).

fleury's notion of the community as material for art challenges the power relations inherent in the way art is made and distributed. Consistent with new genre public art theory, the basis of *workshopping community* is that projects are collaborative, involving an exchange of ideas through traditional and non-traditional partnerships. Within this model of collaboration, *workshopping community* demands that the process of art-making is based on dialogue, trust, consensus, and respect rather than traditional strategies of individual decision-making. There are decisions, certainly, that fleury must make as an artist or facilitator, but it is through collaboration and consensus that the opportunity to make decisions which are reflective of the community's desires and intentions is realized. For fleury, managing and meeting the desires and intentions of the community with whom she works begins a dialogue that has the potential to change the practice and placement of art. In most cases, the objects that evolve from collaborations and *workshopping community* are not meant for gallery display or private sale, but remain within an agreed site specific to the community, as property of that community, and as a recognition of the real conditions experienced by the people of that community. Or, as in the *FPMP* and *The Racist Forest* the ephemerality of the art — meant to be dismantled or

reconstituted in other forms — also changes the nature of the way art is produced and distributed. Artist Allan Kaprow explains: “Once art departs from traditional models and begins to merge into the everyday manifestations of society itself, artists not only cannot assume the authority of their ‘talent,’ they cannot claim that what takes place is valuable just because it is art. Indeed, in most cases they dare not say it is art at all” (Kaprow 158). In Kaprow’s assessment and in fleury’s practice the “art,” either in the possession of the community or dispersed into the “everyday manifestations of society itself,” then becomes a repository of cultural meaning and the artist a facilitator in the creative arrangement and integration of that meaning.

fleury’s concept of *workshopping community* also requires a reevaluation of the role of the artist in the making of art and her role as a facilitator in the construction of community. In new genre public art theory, the artist, politically informed and ideologically motivated, is charged with activity. According to Lacy, the new genre public artist, an experiencer, reporter, analyst, and activist, must adopt several simultaneous roles which are necessary for the new participatory relationship with his or her audience. Further to Lacy’s assessment of the new genre public artist’s role, fleury adds a feature that is central to her practice of *workshopping community*. fleury believes that the artist involved in a community-based public art project must both recognize herself and be recognized by the community as a *member of community*. fleury is conscious of her position as an artist and her artistic qualities. The imaginative or visionary aspects which she brings to her community work, for instance, are not only part

of her job description but necessary components of any community. To fleury, an artist, in a community is an “honest and satisfied worker trading technical and visionary skills” (Garage file n.d.). At the Garage, in the labour offices, working with other artists or in her geographical community, fleury foregrounds her presence as an artist sharing skills and knowledge and, in turn, she learns a new skill-set from her community partners.⁴⁵ By self-identifying as an artist and a community member, fleury engages in a self-conscious practice which allows her to successfully negotiate a variety of different communities, some even initially hostile to the idea of art, where she can enact her particular conceptual approach to art-making. The recognition of the artist as a community member not only radicalizes the practice artists may engage in, but challenges the essential notions upon which the role of the artist and the idea of community rests in contemporary culture.

fleury’s theory of *workshopping community*, as does new genre public art theory, requires a critical understanding of the idea of community itself. The term community is full of complications: it is at once a geographical unit, an ideological construct such as “the feminist community” or the “art community,” or an imagined space, in Benedict Anderson’s words. The discourse on “community” has a long heritage in criticism that

⁴⁵Condé and Beveridge make a distinction similar to fleury in their collaborative practices. Condé and Beveridge identify themselves as artists with a different set of skills than the union members with whom they collaborate. The artists explain in the context of the project: “When we first discussed the project with the women in the local, we spoke of a collective process, but it was made immediately apparent that we were artists with particular skills and concepts and that they, the women, were workers with their own skills and experiences. . . . Collaboration, therefore, was limited by a clearly perceived social division of labor. Collaboration existed in the determination of content while the form of the work was our responsibility” (Condé *Standing* 8).

extends beyond art history. Consequently, there are many diverse opinions and arguments forwarded in discussions involving the definition and nature of community itself. In community-based art and new genre public art theory, in particular, the idea of community is a consistently contested analytical terrain and, in the case of fleury's term *workshopping community*, additions to the vocabulary of the debate are always being made.

Dot Tuer concedes that, "community itself is a fractious term, evoked as much by conservative politicians and theorists to insist upon a return to 'family' values as it is by social and political activists seeking to challenge inherited structures of oppression. In such a context, the potential to negotiate heterogeneity within a conceptualization of community is as important as achieving consensus" (Tuer *Parables* 19). fleury's persistent work with the idea of community-based public art and her negotiations of the role of community in the making of art range from the imagined locations to the physical spaces in a complex negotiation between heterogeneity and consensus.

Anderson's analysis of community is that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (in Tuer *Parables* 4). If we accept Anderson's terms, we may be able to allow that community is, in fleury's terms, a material that we construct. The idea of community as a material that we construct requires "the agile readings of art and life" (Phillips *Constructions* 70). According to Jeff Kelley's reading of Wendell Berry, communities

need agile readings in life and art that can “preserve knowledge” because community, according to Berry, is “‘an order of memories’ in which ‘the essential wisdom accumulates in communities much as fertility builds in the soil’” (in Kelley 142). For fleury, the memories accumulated as soil (or seeds) in a community materialize through the creative intervention of an artistic process. As a result, the idea of community evolves into a concept that is radically transformative, a site for cultural commentary, and an organic-ization which showcases not one but several “contested, multiple identities, affiliations, and aims” (Fisher 47).

fleury’s practice signifies a broadly understood conceptualization of community and a use of many of its varied meanings. That community is an imagined space is evident in fleury’s view simply by its alignment with the imaginative processes of art. But fleury’s sense of community is also a real, lived experience as practiced through the complex collaborations and participations from audiences of all kinds. Whether it be in an industrial garage, or a Labour Council office, or an abandoned firehall, fleury’s practice of *workshopping community* accounts for the heterogeneity of the term. She recognizes the public to be a multiplicitious concept which is conditioned and contextualized by national and international forces but, at the same time, she is willing to engage the site through which she begins to build a coalition from which an understanding of *workshopping community* may emerge. fleury explains, “I think it [community] is everywhere. Community grows. Sometimes when you apply for these projects that talk about what an established community is, there are official Arts Council

definitions of community. If I sit on their jury, that's what I'll work with and add too, in order to exchange and support the process we are all there to uncover. But I really think community is an attitude. A very sharing attitude about sustenance. To me the primary environment is the psyche so you ask me what community is: it's psychological” (Interview March 22, 1998).

The sharing attitude that fleury believes constitutes community involves a multiplicity of perspectives and, occasionally, unevenness in that process of sharing. For fleury, however, it is the passage toward understanding that defines community. In the *FPMP* (figs. 23-26), for instance, fleury writes: "When i realized that the Mandala was such a universal symbol and that a local villager painted them, i acted out of fear of offending him, and invited him to join me on the project. i openly shared all the details of the dream, my fascination with community art and my intention to give the project freely. Later, to my dismay and great disbelief, we had quite a lengthy and difficult ordeal over authorship of the project. i was working on the planning issues before i invited him to be a part. There were a number of uncomfortable things for me to realize. . . Much arose from [his] ideas of making money with the flower petal mandala. . . . It is very important to me that the project is recognized as one that was DESIGNED and presented and INTENDED to be freely given” (email March 30, 1998). In fleury's experience, the mutual responsibilities in collaborative work are not always evenly conceded. She recognizes that communities themselves are not always willing to work with an artist and often have no interest or desire to come into contact with “art.” In

some cases, such as in the *FPMP*, it is one individual or a group of people that resist the process.

The negotiations between artist and community are complex and often difficult and the artist's navigation of the conflicts is an important critique. Knowing how to work with difference is a term of community itself as Lippard explains: "community doesn't mean understanding everything about everybody and resolving all the differences: it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve" (Lippard *Looking* 127). fleury concedes that the relational difficulties or instances of participatory resistance, which are not always pleasant or desirable are, however, necessary. She includes in her practice the space necessary for contradiction and resistance from which she works out progressive means to continue an artistic exchange. Conflict and resolution within a community is inevitable, fleury believes, and is as much a part of the art as the finished object itself. The Wakefield community, for instance, in its commitment to the *FPMP*, its creativity, and even its rivalry and confusion, was an integral element of the art itself. In the process of making the mandala, new ways understanding community emerged.⁴⁶ fleury writes: "community is permeable. I don't

⁴⁶Audre Lorde writes: "without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (in Rich 237). fleury, sympathetic with Lorde's idea that community is not a homogenizing term, that it is charged with energy, difference and the possibility of creative and social liberation, is aware that collaborative practices are fraught with problems relating to trust, ownership, and aesthetic tastes. However, fleury would agree with Jacob when the critic explains that these difficult relationships, through the process of exchange and dialogue, can reinvest public art with cultural meaning

think you can say 'community' without 'catalyst' or 'context:' it's a word that has hang'ers-on'ers. Community is a feeling. It is an attitude. I think it is attitude, a very sharing attitude. It is organic. To me the primary environment is the psyche. And to me community is emotional" (Interview March 22, 1998). fleury explains that in a community, art projects such as the mandala are realizable and necessary commitments. She encourages community involvement in art and art that involves the community: "a community or ANY group can do it on their own [make a community art project such as the *FPMP*]. The information was always meant to be as universal as the mandala. i am looking for a way to spread the fine energy of this community making" (email March 30, 1998).

I believe that fleury's community-based art practice, which is consistent with the main tenets of new genre public art theory and enhanced by her heightened understanding of audience and community described in the concept *workshopping community*, radicalizes the way art is made and distributed. It requires collaboration, partnerships, consensus-building and problem-solving skills. It also alters the art form itself, charging the artist to work with physical found materials and immaterial artifacts such as the story or language itself. fleury's theory behind *workshopping community* also changes perceptions in the role of the artist in society by returning her to complicated social contexts. Su Braden in her book *Artists and People* concurs that the "concern for the separation of art and artists from the rest of society, expressed by a growing concentration

(Jacob *Loop* 59).

on new ways of putting art and artists back into social contexts, may be seen as the stamp of this decade. In the course of this movement the language of art itself is being re-examined and the sterility of many of the art forms, so eagerly bought, sold and promoted during this century, is being exposed” (Braden 4).⁴⁷ The artist is then transformed from a once omnipotent seer to a community member; changed from a thinker, feeler or mental worker into a worker with material concerns. The artist who once was thought to passively gain her talents through gifts of grace, inspiration and vision from some other place far greater than humanity itself is better seen as an active agent, malleable and concerned, ready through practice, trial and error, to make her individual voice heard: “it is a fact in every community project that I do, the fear, the journey of not having total responsibility for the look, the resulting pieces being at times disjointed from previous work, ending up realizing that i want another two years to do it to a deeper level. It’s really very disappointing in many ways to accept that i simply can not move so quickly from one to the next project as if they were assignments on a to-do list. The spiral into and out of a community arts project consumes massive amounts of evaluative energy” (Interview March 22, 1998).

⁴⁷“Artists,” continues Braden, “are assumed by many people to have some kind of super-sensitive commentary to offer to the rest of society but more often than not they are so dominated by the values of that society and the values which that society places on ‘art’ that their commentary does little more than reflect a subconscious acceptance of the prevailing conditions. . . . We should not be surprised, therefore, that many of them found the experience of working outside the structures for which they had specifically trained has resulted in a great many difficulties and false starts” (Braden 7).

Conclusion

For Anti-Racism Day 1998 fleury and her co-collaborator, actor and playwright Vivienne Laxdal, installed *The Racist Forest* (figs. 27-30) in the village park of Wakefield, Quebec. Upon entering the park, the viewer was introduced to the piece by a statement-board strapped to a fence: "One tree several different species. . . What if trees were "speciesist?" "How silly," you say. We agree. One world. Many people. Several different races. What if people weren't racist? Artist c.j. fleury and writer Vivienne Laxdal invite you to explore the racist forest." The trees and bushes in the park were converted into "individuals" who held damaging and racist opinions of other large woody perennial plants equipped with trunks, branches and leaves of different kinds. It used carefully selected slogans which can be recognized as "jokes" that have racist content.⁴⁸ *The Racist Forest* was intended to inform, to entertain and to expose. It was intended to be shared by community members and to be the result of effort and inspiration between two artists.

The Racist Forest is another of fleury's community-based public art projects that can be contextualized using new genre public art theory. fleury selected inexpensive,

⁴⁸For instance, one large and established maple tree from Ontario "said:" "Manitoba maples go home!!" This story, displayed in a public place with an activist intent, makes explicit "the notion that art is 'public' based not only *where* it is, but on what it *does*. . . [*The Racist Forest*] encourages the development of active, engaged, and participatory citizens, a process which generally can occur only through the activism of an artist and the provocation of art" (Phillips *Diggs* 286). fleury and Laxdal were also interested in questioning the francophone-anglophone language debate to consider if the debate itself constituted racism.

non-permanent materials; she located her art in a non-traditional location of trees and bushes; she foregrounded racism as an imperative political and ideological problem which needed to be addressed; and she engaged in a collaboration to create and implement the art in a public location. fleury writes: “working with Vivienne was rewarding and up front and challenging and intelligent. We were fully two artists collaborating on all development, content, materials, placement, installation, publicity and the list goes on. . . .That was a true CO-llaboration” (email March 30, 1998). *The Racist Forest* was a temporal piece. It stayed up for only a short time before it was dismantled and then reassembled on Laxdal’s body for a performance art piece in which fleury participated at the Arts Court in Ottawa (*Five Raving Minutes*).⁴⁹

Consistent with new genre public art theory, fleury’s concept of *workshopping community* engages non-traditional, temporal materials in the construction of the art object. However, fleury added her particular notion of community to the project. In *The Racist Forest* community was defined in two manners: it included the interactions between the two artists and the response from the viewing audience that comprised the

⁴⁹Some critics may argue that the fact that such events as these should be called “art” is exactly what is awry with today’s artistic expressions. Some will even argue that artistic acts such as these lower the standards of art, celebrating the decline in artistic “skills” or “talent.” These sentiments reinforce the static definitions and standards which contribute to an elitism that this look at community art seeks to move. Jacob explains: “Some art critics have claimed that community interaction is at odds with quality artistic practice and challenged whether social issues are a proper domain for art. The community-based artist’s emphasis on process — events, education, dialogue — rather than object-driven concerns, and the political and social orientation of these public works are seen to override aesthetics” (Jacob *Loop* 57).

“community” material and it also involved a political issue — racism — as an ideological community itself.

For fleury working with Laxdal, was a form of art-making intrinsic to the overall expression of project. Further, fleury engaged in the collaboration as a member of the audience: “we were fully two artists collaborating.” In *The Racist Forest*, fleury renegotiated her role as a visual artist in the context of her work with Laxdal, an actor and playwright. As a co-collaborator, fleury discovered that the creative experience was not limited to visual artists, but that it involved all members of a community. It was the art that was created, expanded by its incorporation of two creative disciplines, that centered the experience of *The Racist Forest*.

fleury and Laxdal’s collaboration involved an ideological community. Constructed for anti-racism day, the material for art was, in fact, racism that exists in society today creating divisions between people and preventing equity in political, social and cultural representation. By selecting an ideological community pertinent to a large number of marginalized groups, fleury and Laxdal actively turned art into social intervention. The “speciest” trees brought the reality of racism to the community through a creative process. For fleury, it was the process of making *The Racist Forest*, the researching of racism on the net and the community listening that was the art.

As in the *FPMP*, fleury learned that it is the process involving chance-taking, trust and collaboration with a diversity of people —or with two people — that designs and ritualizes the reintegration of the creative experience into the life of the community. For

fleury, it is the community that gives rise to the creative energy that already exists within it, that is the community's experience of everyday life. For instance, racism, in *The Racist Forest* — an ideological “community” imbedded in fleury's larger geographical community and, by extension, the social world — can be confronted through the enactment of creative energies that can give rise to social change. This is the theory behind new genre public art practices and the foundation of *workshopping community*.

It matters that fleury's community-based public art work is discussed as new genre public art theory into which fleury's concept *workshopping community* is integrated as new vocabulary in the discourse because the image of society in which fleury is interested is not based on consumption of goods, but the production of collaborations and relationships between people. A model of mutually determined interactions offered by fleury in the *FPMP* and in *The Racist Forest* has the potential to change the “self-interested” manner in which the object is exchanged to an object that is “freely given and experienced.”

Chapter Three

fleury's Working Communities: The Workplace and New Genre Public Art Theory

Introduction

If this work stays grounded in the true research of community-minded people, the general populace may begin to feel that they, not just artists, are allowed to dream. I believe it is only with devotion and research into related social fields and a consideration of meaning and worth outside the gallery system that these program will thrive.
(Fleury ODLIC Final Report Sept. 29, 1997).

The mutually-determined artistic interactions of “community-minded people” that new genre public art theory espouses and fleury enacts are not consistent with marketplace values and the consumption of aesthetic goods. In fleury’s concept of *workshopping community* the art object of exchange is placed in a different context. For fleury, the material for art is the community and the process of making the art is the art; here there is no object to be exchanged, nothing to be bought or sold or bartered. What is valued is an intangible — it is interaction, communication and commitment to human potential that is hidden and buffered by many layers of consumerist debris. fleury writes: “I think it [community] is everywhere. Community grows” (Interview March 22, 1998). It is fleury’s intention, developed early in her career as a visual artist, to reveal, to grow.

and to scatter the seeds of community-building which, she believes, will form the basis for new relations defining human interaction.

The image of art in society in which fleury is interested, one based on the production of collaborations and relationships between people, is set in relief with artistic interventions in the workplace. The workplace represents a nexus where the issues relating to consumption and production merge; and it is here that new genre public art theories are put to the test.

While fleury identifies the workplace as a “community” and an important site for cultural interventions and community-based art projects, she does not consider herself a labour activist: “‘Labour activist’ is a term i don’t feel qualified for” (email March 23, 1998). However, her activism as an artist working with workplaces energizes labour communities in their struggle for self-representation and expression. fleury’s commitment to alternative artistic forms, her interest in the workplace as a location for art, her exploration of the political and ideological contexts of cultural and manual work, and her collaborative, participatory practice opens a discourse about community-based art and extrapolates this discourse into new conceptual terrains consistent with new genre public art theory.

While there is a small tradition of public art in the workplace, the community of the workplace has not been explored to the extent that other geographical, historic, gender-based, ethnic or racial communities have been targeted in new genre public art theory. The community of the workplace is therefore a compelling space in which the

discussion of new genre public art and community-based art projects can take place.⁵⁰

Mierle Laderman Ukeles' groundbreaking work with the New York City Department of Sanitation, for instance, as well as the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' of America Union Local 552's labour designed chocolate bar. "*We Got It! Now, YOU get it!*"; or the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre's *Spinning Yarns: The Story of Women's Work in Hamilton's North End*; and Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge's

numerous projects with unions since the early 1980s are examples of interesting partnerships between artists and working peoples.⁵¹ In general, however, the workplace is perceived as a precarious community for the kind of cultural intervention a collaborative community-based public art project requires. Dot Tuer argues that, since the 1980s, the

⁵⁰While the coalition between the community of the workplace and artists offers, by and large, positive models of cultural integration and resistance to elitism in the fine arts, Dot Tuer warns that "this reconceptualization of culture and resistance offers the potential to transform a political and social landscape. Conversely, it also runs the risk of devolving into sectarian defenses of cultural specificity based upon reactive and generalized, rather than proactive and contingent, stances" (Tuer *Parables* 3).

⁵¹Ukeles's project *Touch Sanitation: Handshake Ritual* (1978-79) was a year-long project where the artist shook the hand of every sanitation worker in the city of New York City. *Handshake Ritual* was one event in Ukeles' five-year unsalaried artist-in-residence stint with the Sanitation Department in which numerous other workplace-related community projects were conducted. See Patricia C. Phillips, "Maintenance Activity: Creating a Climate for Change." The Local 552's chocolate bar project was one of eight public art projects of the "Culture in Action" exhibition sponsored by Sculpture Chicago during 1992-1993. Two artists, Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, collaborated with twelve line workers at the Nestlé plant in Chicago, Ill., working through the creation of a chocolate bar from production to distribution. See Mary Jane Jacob, *Culture in Action*. *Spinning Yarns* was a project exploring the traditions and stories of immigrant women in the industrial sector of Hamilton. Four installations were completed and were placed in a local garden. See *Community Arts Workbook . . . Another Vital Link*.

“gulf” between art, culture and work has widened as individuals compete for fewer and fewer resources. Tuer explains that new corporate culturalism promotes ideas of elitist forms of art that carry with them “the indelible stamp of class privilege” (Tuer *Privilege* 203). She asserts that, as working peoples see less and less in art that is compelling or inclusive, the relationship between the art world and the working world deteriorates to the point where “work” and “art” become oppositional constructs. Yet, because the workplace has been viewed as antithetical to the artistic process — where work is constructed as art’s opposite — it is a vital ground upon which to debate and evaluate the methods of community-based public art practices. The workplace is a strategic site which enables a few artists such as fleury to promote the importance of art and culture in all aspects of people’s lives.

fleury’s projects in two workplaces are important milestones in the study of community-based public art. In the *Garage Project*, as well as in *The Houses of Labour*, fleury applied her own methods of community-based public artmaking to facilitate the process of bringing art to a workplace. Both projects can be considered new genre public art works. In both cases, fleury created an art encounter that attempted to depict the experience of the workers in the community and the effect that she, as an artist, had on that community. While engaged with the two communities — a unionized industrial complex and a labour council office — fleury not only successfully created art objects with the collaboration of many workers, to a small degree she was also able to re-construct a culturally-active community by breaking down the stereotypes that create

divisions between “art people” and “non-art people” by exposing to the workers the richness of culture in their own community. The collaborations in both projects allowed workers to become cultural producers who shared in the process of making art out of the materials that were of relevance to them. And fleury herself evolved as an artist. She manufactured the notion of *workshopping community* and in so doing heightened our understanding of new genre public art theory and the study of community-based art. This section begins with a discussion of *The Garage Project* and concludes with a review of *The Houses of Labour* project.

The Garage Project⁵²

I spent a lot of time positioning, sketching and repositioning the steel scrap [new sculptural components] in my storage/work space at the back by the structural welding shop. Workers going by just kept saying: 'Is that work?' or 'Is it art yet?'

(fleury Garage file)

The workers who teased fleury at the welding table, wondering when her “scrap” was to become art, had no idea that their off-handed remarks were integral parts of the sculpture she was making. The workers’ words and interest (albeit skeptical interest) were part of a larger community-based art piece facilitated by fleury.

In 1994, fleury won a competition for a residency at the Consolidated Buildings

⁵²The final sculpture of the *Garage Project*, *The Mechanics of Gauging a Trade*, was discussed in Karl Beveridge and Jude Johnston’s publication *Making Our Mark: Labour Arts and Heritage in Ontario*.

and Equipment Facility (or the Municipal Workshops) for the City of Ottawa from a field of seventeen artists. The field of finalists for the residency included highly qualified local artists such as Stephen Brathwaite (The Human Rights Monument, Ottawa), Ineke Standish, Moe Youngnap and Jean-Yves Vigneau.⁵³ As well as the artist-in-residence grant, there were also four interior art commissions awarded to artists Lynda Cronin, Susan Feindel, Lorraine Gilbert and Randy Kerr whose assignments focused on specific sites within the building and were meant to circulate through other public buildings in Ottawa as part of the project's objective to create an awareness of workers and their workplace.

fleury's placement was the first documented public art residency in Canada for an artist in an industrial setting (Garage file n.d.). The City of Ottawa took a large step toward meeting with the new agendas of community-based art and worked toward building an important bridge between art, labour and the workplace. The program was managed by the Art in Public Places Programme through the City of Ottawa's *1% for Art* policy which requires that 1% of the total budget of any new public building valued at over \$2 million, be spent on art for that site. fleury was awarded an \$85,000 budget for a

⁵³fleury was confident that her skills, desire and personal need to push at her own boundaries would take her to the finals for this project but was concerned how a "jury for a maintenance facility looking at slides from years of exploring feminist/spiritual iconography, issues and domains" would feel about her ability to create a significant exterior steel sculpture (email Feb. 3, 1999). While Annalee Adair, Director for the project, admits that fleury was not the first choice, it was fleury's interest in dialogue and her personal energy that eventually convinced the committee that she would be the best match for a project of this magnitude (Adair, Class Lecture, Carleton University 1997).

one-year residency with the mandate to create a central exterior sculpture at the entrance to the Municipal Workshops which would reflect and represent the work and activities of the 200 machinists, carpenters and other repair-workers working on Ottawa's fleets of public vehicles. While in residence, with both collaboration and resistance from the workers, fleury completed several sculptures and installations and executed the principal sculpture, *The Mechanics of Gauging a Trade* (figs. 31, 32).

The aim of the *Garage Project* was to "break down the imaginary walls that exist between artists and other professions, while offering workers an opportunity to express pride in their work and workshop" (Finken Aug. 17, 1994). fleury was successful in "breaking down imaginary walls" at the Garage precisely because of the way she approached the project as a process and used techniques consistent with the tenets of new genre public art theory. Already located in a non-traditional site for art, fleury found traditional methods of art production would not take her far in the environment of the Garage. fleury realized that she needed to extend beyond the traditional materials for fine art creation; that she needed to employ imagery that described the kinds of work in which the tradespeople engaged in a suitable ideological and political framework; and that she had to engage the workers at all stages in the production of the process in order to succeed in bringing art to and out of the community of this workplace.

As the placement of fleury as an artist-in-residence at the Municipal Garages was the first documented assignment of an artist-in-residence in an industrial setting through the *1% For Art* programs in Canada, the City of Ottawa's Art in Public Places

Programme took a large risk. Nina Freeland Gibans in her study, *The Community Arts Council Movement*, described some implications of the venture. She writes: “the arts councils have identified most clearly the meaning of a broad base for the arts, taking the first risks of public exposure for many art forms in new places. They have given confidence to some institutions to try to interest new publics, sometimes in ways so subtle that the institutions themselves are not always aware of the genesis of the idea or source of support for the idea” (Gibans 11). The risk lay in the fact that not only was this the first artist placed in an industrial setting in Canada, but there were very few precedents set for artists working within any workplaces prior to this project: there was Ukeles’ sanitation project, a few commissions through the *Artists in the Workplace* program in Ontario (1989-), and the work of Condé and Beveridge.⁵⁴ The *Garage Project*, a “new public” for community-based public art in Canada, set in relief for fleury the real divisions that exist between art and life: a divisions, or “gulfs” in Tuer’s terms, that are wide.

The *Garage Project* gave fleury the opportunity to bridge a significant gap and bring art out of the museum into the lives of working people. fleury writes: “the community artist has been challenged by other artists about compromising themselves.

⁵⁴In 1988 the Community Arts Development Office of the Ontario Arts Council piloted a program called *Artists and the Workplace*. The program continues to be funded to date. Linked to arts and labour programs in Scotland, Sweden, Australia and Latin America, the mandate of the program is to develop links between Ontario workers and their unions and engage new artists and new audiences for the arts. The disciplines for this program are varied including visual arts, video, theatre, literature, music and photography (Forbes 7).

So I think that this line of thought about responding to the community in their context, in their local, in the parameters of their work and lives is very different than answering to gallery artists” (Interview March 22, 1998).

The risk was a reality, not only for the City of Ottawa, the Art in Public Places Programme, and the artist, but also for all the workers at the workshop. As fleury explains, the men at the Garage were afraid that “The Artist” would design a piece of “twisted metal junk” or leave them with another *Voice of Fire* (Garage file n.d.). They did not believe that art could be made about their work experience, or that an artist transplanted in their workspace could understand or adapt to their working environment. Ultimately, fleury’s residency had to negotiate a unique situation in which “people who had not necessarily *chosen* or expected to come into contact with any ‘art’” (Braden xiii) would be scheduled to engage with both art and an artist in their daily work lives. As Su Braden explains, “the majority of people are passive objectors to any formal cultural activity because their social milieu has excluded them from the formal art world for so long, that both the language and contexts of such art is alienating to them” (Braden 145).⁵⁵ The non-traditional location of an artist in a workplace — even for new genre public art practices — and the classical exclusion felt by the majority of the workers demonstrated the ever-present division between art and life, despite decades of artistic

⁵⁵Braden articulates one of fleury’s concerns in regard to her community-based public art: “the problem, if we accept that the importance of artistic expression, is that it is the fundamental means by which we can all measure our understanding of our particular ‘reality’ — is to produce a new space for such expression within our everyday lives” (Braden 145).

interventions to build better alliances. fleury's *Garage Project*, therefore, is an important study for community-based public art and for the development of new genre public art theory.

In September 1994, fleury — “The Artist” — began her residency at the newly-built Municipal Buildings and Equipment Facility. The Facility itself was a product of an industrial merger with building and mechanical workers for the City of Ottawa. fleury was assigned, as a work-space, a vacant storage room which was formerly used as a shortcut to the cafeteria by the workers. fleury found the dimensions of the room restrictive, allowing her to conduct her research and construct only small-scale works. Further, the tensions were high in the initial months: building and mechanical workers had to learn to share equipment, space, and resources, and fleury and the workers had to negotiate a variety of hostilities relating to what Braden terms the objection to formal cultural activity — its language and contexts — that has for so long excluded those unused to and unaccustomed to the mechanics of fine art culture.⁵⁶

One of the first discussions between fleury and the workers revolved around the economics of art. Several of the men believed that there was inequity in arts spending and linked their concerns directly to the *1% For Art* program and fleury's presence in the Garage. However, it was not only the workers who believed money being spent on art was wasteful. Negative positions were taken by local politicians who saw the *1% For Art*

⁵⁶The fact that fleury's location blocked their entrance and exit route to breaks and lunch in the cafeteria compounded the problem.

program as a gross misuse of taxpayers' money. At the time of fleury's residency, councillor Jim Watson, now Ottawa City Mayor (1998 -), was quoted in the press saying, "we have to use better judgement than to put \$150,000 for art into what is essentially a workshop. In these tough times, it seems excessive" (Whelan *Ottawa Sun* June 18, 1995). It was fleury's difficult task to build coalitions with hostile, unwilling and unsupportive factions in the workplace so that the construction of the principal sculpture — *The Mechanics* — could take place.

fleury found that a redefinition of traditional artistic activity had to be made in order to realize the success of the project at the Garage. By bringing many of the principles that she had learned throughout her artistic career to the table, fleury was able to produce a new space for artistic expression — one that was community-based, interactive and effective. fleury did not make a piece of "twisted metal junk," nor did she leave the workers with an expensive and confusing painting.

In the course of creating the works she compiled prior to the completion of the principal sculpture, fleury attempted to create an art-like atmosphere that was compatible with the community of the Garage. She utilized non-traditional materials such as throw-away items, scrap, and importantly, *dialogue* with the workers, as the components for her art pieces. Her first works at the Garage were to become the diptych that currently resides in the building's front entrance (fig. 33). The diptych is composed of a sculpture and a mixed-media work on paper. fleury explains: "the entry hall diptych began with a flywheel that i brought from my studio. Part of a vehicle starting system, it was my first

icon for the 'whole' scenario at the Municipal Workshops. I had cut it in half, as if that might expose some information about this gigantic modern complex" (Garage file n.d.). She placed used house-shaped indicators from municipal snowblowers on top of the halved flywheel. The indicators, which were shaped like houses, suggested to fleury concepts such as "family unit, individual workers and private time, and outside labour" (Garage file n.d.). The multimedia work, entitled *Present*, then emerged (fig. 34). fleury writes: "late one night, the *Present* drawing materialized. Somehow, it felt as though another kind of 'start up' was occurring, a kind of getting 'in sync' with the site. That work on paper was both a relief and a shock to me. It just didn't look like my drawing" (Garage file n.d.).

fleury's expression of her experience of making *Present* indicates a change in her personal art form. Her relationship with the workplace, a non-traditional artistic partner, required that she find alternate forms of media to express her experience. The early watercolours, her choreography, her feminist Seed Drawings and Shields series were artistic forms that were not suitable for the *Garage Project*; however, fleury was to apply the processes learned in her early works to the making of new objects with new materials in this industrial setting.⁵⁷

⁵⁷fleury also completed two personal pieces: *Stud* and *La Femme Galvanisée* (*La Femme* (fig. 38). (*La Femme* was purchased by the Director of Special Projects (a woman) at the Garage). fleury explains that *Stud* and *La Femme* were "like caps on either end of the project. They are personal studio pieces that render linkage and perhaps expose you to my fears of the public realm" (Garage file n.d.). *La Femme* was an important piece for fleury as her earlier feminist projects became subordinated in the deeply patriarchal nature of the *Garage Project*. fleury explains: "From my feminist

fleury explains that she made a series of three sculptures in the form of chairs “as a way of ‘elbowing my way’ onto the welding table and establishing some shop time before the big piece got under way. . . . Everyone had lots to laugh at. In the opinion of the watchers, i was just wasting my time with a heap of junk — until they saw the finished chairs. Then, i think, the head scratching intensified” (Garage file n.d.). The chairs are called *The Alchemy of . . .* (fig. 35), *Measure of Madness* (fig. 36), and *Belief* (fig. 37).⁵⁸ All contain the re-assemblage of trade materials, stories and suggestions from workers and the assistance of workers for design ideas and some welding. According to fleury, “the chairs have multiple meanings. They hold stories, events and moods of the weeks during which they were fabricated. They were originally conceived as a homage to tradespeople who do almost all their work on their feet. . . but ‘if you are sitting you can’t be working’ so you can’t really sit on these chairs either. They became more wonky

work, I’ve learned that you have got to accept people and just go a little deeper than what is surface. The reason that i wanted the *Garage Project* was that i believed it would function like a big test — working that way with people, working on a personal level with them. Even though art is so difficult to talk about, if you talk honestly with people (and it seems to me you should be able to talk art with people even though it is difficult) you can make connections. And it seemed to me that just doing work about the female kept blocking that ability to make connections because the conversation could not go any further. However, what i found was that with that public art project, and public art in general, the interaction affords one the ability to discuss; however, it is almost impossible to discuss feminism” (Interview November 12, 1998).

⁵⁸For further discussion on fleury’s chairs, see **APPENDIX B** and **C** for fleury’s personal analysis in interviews and correspondence.

with each successive construction” (Garage file n.d.).⁵⁹ fleury added “mistakes” or inconsistent juxtapositions to her pieces which were intended to highlight the artistic qualities of the chairs by calling attention to their ironical dysfunctional presence. What fleury discovered moved her. She explains: “not only did finding these ‘odd bits’ represent their [the workers’] mastery over their use of tools, but they discovered that they were seeing tools in different ways and ‘getting’ the chairs as art” (Interview March 22, 1998). fleury used private-practice artistic skills in the design and construction of the three chairs out of discarded materials — ironically the “junk” the men were afraid “The Artist” would make — as a proving ground before she began to involve the workers in a collaborative, participatory manner. Yet, even as the chairs were welded, some of the workers were drawn into the process, initiated contact with fleury, and assisted collaboratively with the constructions. For fleury, the human interaction around the chairs was the first stage in building the collaborative relationship she felt necessary to execute her principal sculpture and, more generally, to measure the success of the project with the workplace itself. fleury writes: “artists commonly find ‘art supplies’ in junk piles. So the workers thought that the whole idea of being able to get art materials from the junk pile was absolutely ludicrous and therefore of no value . . . no value in terms of money, meaning or ‘looks.’ The idea of recycling — on a physical or symbolic level —

⁵⁹fleury adds: “The word ‘chair’ implies functionality and in my efforts to build bridges, i started out intending to construct functional chairs. So, I was going to put a seat on the first one, but could not quite bring myself to actually do it. still not wanting to add some piece that could block the vision of all the other parts” (Interview March 22, 1998).

was of no importance to them, to the point that the chairs and my working on them, was a joke — useless — to all but [one worker] for a good while. [The worker] was a rebel in every way and an extremely skilled welder. He ended up doing a lot of work on the final sculpture. He had had the opportunity to sit on the selection jury, took extra time after hours to help me with the machinery and difficult joins. Bit by bit other welders took an interest to the point that we were actually ‘arguing’ about the inclusion of the oiled baseball [*The Alchemy of . . .*]. [We had] ongoing arguments about using an ancient leather ball as a foot on a steel chair and why these materials could possibly go together. But in fact, the ball did come from a retiring welder's tool stand, saved from the city's repaired grass-cutting machine and welders always had oil-stained leather gloves. So this chair actually ended up becoming acceptable as ‘art’ to many of the guys, even though you could not sit on it” (Interview March 22, 1998).

The workers’ ability to “get it as art” was critical to developing a collaborative artistic relationship, fleury believed. However, for the workers to understand her art, fleury felt it imperative that she attempt to become a member of the working community and, in particular, learn the workers’ language and terminology. fleury’s desire to connect herself to the community as a member of that community is one of the principles she developed at the Garage which she employs in her concept *workshopping community*. fleury found the key to the connection between her and the community of the workplace was in language itself. fleury purchased, for her workspace, a dictionary and thesaurus and set about the task of learning the technical language of the shop. She also kept a

journal of “shop-talk” as it related to the art project in any way.

fleury first used the language of the workshop community as a material for art in the series entitled *The Retirement Suite* (figs. 39, 40). The *Suite* is an unfinished series of boxes that deal with absence, transition and waste. fleury recalls: “the making of these pieces served a two-fold purpose during the early phase of the residency. Their research and construction was my way of dealing with the pervasive anxiety and mass shock that blanketed Swansea (the street name of the newly-built Municipal Workshops) in reaction to the announcement of the required retirements. . . i had heard so many conversations about the loss of skillful workers and the holes in operations these people would leave. that i decided to make homage pieces that would remain in the building after the workers had left. . . . The processes of explaining my needs, listening to their stories and taking the casts had a kind of mending quality for many of us” (Garage file n.d.). In the *Bayview Duo: Mechanic and Welder* (fig. 39) and *The Last Painter* (fig. 40), fleury took plaster casts of three workers’ hands and created a piece around them and the discussion that went on during the casting. Open and unfinished, the hands, and the boxes which they inhabit, call attention to the particular skills, stories, and experiences that describe the personalities of the men that were part of the community of the Garage. The hand-boxes resonate with other cases such as coffins, museum display cases, art gallery frames, and clocks. The hands centre the piece as mechanisms of time; but an absent time, a retired time, a memory or a memorial. The words that were shared during the period it took to cast the workers’ hands (exacerbated by the time it took away from the men’s

official work schedules) were cut into the frame charging the piece with an active, continuous quality, like the on-going dialogue that fleury sought to create at the Garage.

fleury's use of dialogue as an alternative material for art, like her found, discarded objects such as an oily baseball, contributed to the success of the *Garage Project* as a community-based public artwork consistent with new genre public art theory. fleury believes that dialogue is critical to the success of any collaborative experience, especially where non-traditional partnerships are struck. The importance of dialogue to fleury is highlighted in her Final Proposal for the project. fleury wrote that her intent was to establish a common vocabulary that would facilitate a labour/art exchange. fleury wrote that this exchange would fuse conceptual, visual, technical comprehension to build access to dialogue. From this dialogue, fleury believed that she would learn, from the workers' themselves, their inherent sense of scale, weight, volume, assembly, motion and procedure. She offered terms for discussion that would facilitate the establishment of a common vocabulary which included inspiration, symbolism, representation, metaphor, chance, line, space, density, composition, and notions of new genre public art (Garage file Final Proposal May 6, 1994).

Language and dialogue were critical tools that facilitated fleury's primary goal of "forging vision," or in other words, developing a collaborative relationship based on trust and respect. fleury explains: "they don't call themselves 'creative,' but tradespeople I have worked with show exceptional design and problem-solving skills at work. They know techniques and processes far beyond job requirements" (Final Proposal Garage file

May 6, 1994). fleury approached the project with the belief that “people’s capacities and processes extend far beyond original self perceptions” and argued that her approach would “expand limits of understanding, mutual and personal esteem and ultimately produce creative energy that spreads” (Final Proposal Garage file May 6, 1994).

The negotiations leading to the dialogue that fleury envisioned, however, were often realized with a struggle. fleury came to realize that in community-based public art projects, the community is not a cohesive, singular concept. In fleury’s “shop-talk” journal — fleury’s record of quips and conversations with several of the workers — sexist, misogynist, aggressive and debilitating quotes are kept alongside the positive and challenging words.⁶⁰ There were those individuals who resisted the project through to its end, and those who supported it. Others were distant, silent. fleury writes: “in the process of trying to talk about so many individuals and these thousands of ‘snippet’ conversations and interactions, it is quite important to me that I do not generalize. So when i say ‘they’ i mean to say the men and women that do make eye contact and operate on a verbal level with me. There are many silent watchers. Each employee is a really

⁶⁰Half-way through the residency, the artist spoke with two workers to express her dissatisfaction with their negativity and invited them to participate in the advancement of the project as opposed to contributing to its frustration and retrogression. fleury writes in her notes: “one has to be open to be creative. . . the threat of sincerity is large and looming in this industrialized world” (Garage file Dec. 13, 1994). fleury was able to resolve the difficult issues with the two workers in a manner that was satisfactory to her and the project.

different being” (Garage File June 6, 1995).⁶¹ Learning new ways of speaking (and even remaining silent) in order to share knowledge and skills for the construction of a collaborative project is a necessary requirement for fleury’s understanding of community-based public art practices. It is through this active, specific and engaged approach to understanding the community with whom she works that has led fleury to describe her practice as *workshopping community*.

fleury argues that in order to workshop a community, a considerable amount of planning, research and the setting of specific goals and measures are necessary for the successful collaborative venture. fleury’s position is reflected in new genre public art theory. Critic Nina Felshin writes: “a high degree of preliminary research, organizational activity, and orientation of participants is often at the heart of its collaborative methods of execution, methods that frequently draw on expertise from outside the art world as a means of engaging the participation of the audience or community and distributing a message to the public” (Felshin 10-11). fleury put a tremendous amount of time and research into the *Garage Project*. She set up meetings with artists outside the Art in Public Places Programme and effectively organized opportunities for others to engage in the process. She conducted media interviews in print and broadcast genres, gave public

⁶¹fleury writes: “there were people who always seemed to be known as the ‘talkers’ and if they were talking with me — and I *had* to talk to them — then they were seen as just trying to have time off. In the early stages of the project, many men and women looked at these workers as if they weren’t really interested in the art project at all but that maybe they were just trying to have another break” (fleury Interview March 22, 1999).

talks to a variety of interested groups and organized a Mayworks Festival Lunch at the Garage. It was important to fleury that the dialogue within the workplace be extended out into the larger social sphere. fleury's work to open the dialogue outside the Garage demonstrated how community-based public art projects, especially with a volatile and non-traditional partner such as the workplace, must be conversant with the relevant local socio-cultural and political structures in order that the re-definitions of artistic activity can take place. As such, fleury was able to re-design the artistic activity and involve the workers at the Garage, as well as the community of Ottawa, and create the principal sculpture — *The Mechanics of Gauging a Trade* (figs. 1, 31-2).

fleury accomplished *The Mechanics*, a work depicting three, "freestanding," ten-foot tools, in suspended animation, partly encircled by a massive gauge, through the development of a dialogue between the workers and the artist and a final vote involving four different maquettes and several drawings from which *The Mechanics* won. Throughout her residency, fleury compiled notes, talked with workers, created secondary sculptures in order to create an art atmosphere that would be conducive to an exchange of ideas and tastes relevant to the creation of a principal sculpture. With the pressure of deadlines and budgets, the outside commitments and public appearances, fleury created four maquettes with the input of several workers. The maquettes were displayed on a table in the cafeteria with a voting sheet asking the workers to rank the model sculptures from their first to last choice. A space was left open for workers' comments. The maquette that was to become *The Mechanics* was by far the preferred piece of the

tradespeople. However, it was not fleury's first choice. She felt the sculpture was too literal, even didactic, and she was apprehensive about the fact that it did not represent all the trades that were assembled in the Garage itself. fleury accepted the challenge, however, and went further to solicit from the workers their ideas on how to add features to the sculpture that would be inclusive of all the workers. fleury writes: "i have tried to create a piece that speaks on both direct and metaphoric levels. Style, location, materials are suggested by site, architecture, function. The chromed 'whole' tool in motion is obvious while the massive raw steel gauge of time and pressure is secondarily evident, yet ominously present. It [the sculpture] addresses the tensions and struggles of maintenance, efficiency and seasonal stresses. Employees see themselves in the faces of the synthesized chrome tools (fig. 31). Their work is symbolized numerous ways and can be read on an assortment of scales. At this stage, the dualities of readership intrigue me. i seem to focus in on the arc's weight, path and pressure and the fact that the tools' open backs (casing concept) reveal a complex interior webbing (only) to building users (fig. 32). Personally, i have come to 'read the tools' as a giant 'feeler gauge' (a mechanics' tool for measuring minute spaces in-between metal surfaces — pin and electrode spark plug)" (Garage file April 13, 1995).⁶²

After a long nine-month residency, hours of intensive labour and a community vote, fleury, together with the workers completed *The Mechanics*. The installation of the

⁶²Beveridge and Johnston's *Making Our Mark* adds that "the piece portrays the tools used in the work at the yard and refers to the repetitive, cyclical nature often found in trades work" (Beveridge 64).

sculpture signified the end of fleury's residency at the Municipal Garages and the beginning of her life-time commitment to community-based art practices. The response from the employees was everything that fleury could hope for: "You really made a piece that talks about us. Thank you" (Garage file n.d.). The director, Adair, wrote to fleury as well explaining that "you have enlightened the lives of many people and changed attitudes during your residency at the workshops, probably more than most will ever know! At the same time, I see a new direction happening in your approach to art. This direction will be exciting, and I have no doubt you will pursue it with great enthusiasm and skill" (Letter to artist Garage file July 5, 1995). That fleury made an object that "talks about us" — about the workers themselves with whom and for whom the art was made — was immensely satisfying for her. However, it was the process behind its construction involving learning, sharing, and dialogue wherein fleury truly emphasizes the art. fleury admits that when working peoples cannot see what is compelling about art or take pleasure in their own inherent artistic activities, then art does not work. It is an artistic achievement that fleury created a rich chrome exterior for the principal sculpture so that employees could see themselves projected directly onto the artwork and into culture itself. The workplace is a strategic site for a few artists such as fleury to promote the importance of art and culture in all aspects of people's lives — the mandate of community-based public art practices. fleury's methods can be contextualized by new genre public art theory and served by the concept of *workshopping community*. Accentuating production, fleury's *workshopping community* is a particularly well-

developed theorization and application of the collaborative and public aspects of making community-based public art.

fleury first identified and expressed her idea *workshopping community* while working on the *Garage Project*. She sought to find expression for the art encounter that narrativized the experience of the workers in the community and the effect that she, as an artist, had on that community. fleury created lasting art objects with the collaboration of many workers, but her interest was in the processes behind the development of the objects she was commissioned to create. One of the valuable materials fleury discovered while at the Garage was community itself. fleury, forced to try to break down the divisive art/work stereotypes that divided the workshop community, sought a methodology to express to the workers the richness of culture in their own community. Consistent with new genre public art theory, the collaborations at the Garage, beginning with the welding of the chairs through to the *Mechanics*, allowed workers to become cultural producers who shared in the process of making art out of matters of relevance to them: it was not junk nor (mis-)conceptual painting, it was structurally-sound, well-designed, and spoke to their trades and skills. fleury conceptualized her experience in the term *workshopping community* where she argued that community is a material for art.

As well as affecting and changing the community of the Garage, the *Garage Project* affected and changed fleury both as an artist and as a member of the community. The experience at the Garage demonstrated to fleury the importance of an artist's recognition that she is a member of the community, with specific skills and talents. At

the Garage, fleury “enlightened lives and changed attitudes” but, according to fleury, “an artist is just another worker” (Interview Garage file Aug. 17, 1994). Learned through the residency at the Garage, fleury’s notion of *workshopping community* requires that in any community-based public art project, an artist be considered a participatory member of a community.

Whether it was in listening to the stories, in making art from the hands of the workers, or in finding objects indigenous to the site of the Municipal Workshops, the form fleury’s art took was perforce changed by her engagement with the workshop community. fleury explains: “i feel very, very much a beginner in this community thing. Like at the garage, i could not believe what had just gone down and how major it was and how i would never look at anything the same again; and, i really like how long it took. The fact that i was so changed after it, you know, it was like six moultings. And it was just so different than making something for a gallery and after three weeks going to collect it and maybe making a sale. The dialogue! There was just no going back” (Interview March 22, 1998).

fleury accomplished the difficult task of making public art through her alternative and flexible approaches to the making of art, in using non-traditional materials such as “scrap” and through the use of language and how using language itself is integral to the collaborative, audience-centered project. fleury believes that collaborations enhance the production of art. She is committed to the hard-fought process of consensus-building and finding ways to overcome the complexities and problems that are inherently built into

partnerships struck with supposed fundamental ideological differences. fleury writes: “what really intrigues me now is just how wide the parameters of input can stretch and still serve the requirements of a public art commission. This project is about expanding links of communication and respect where subtle threads barely exist. i see this position as that of passenger, recorder, catalyst; in this the artist wears the label of ‘other.’ i am learning not to generalize” (Garage file n.d.). However, the learning process was not over at the close of the *Garage Project*. fleury was to take her experience to another community project — *The Houses of Labour* with the ODLC and an *Artists in the Workplace* grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

The Houses of Labour

*Doing an entire piece about othering, homophobia,
corporate agendas and how this effects lives and spirits of
individuals . . . that seems "home" to me.*

(fleury email March 22, 1998)

In *The Houses of Labour* (figs. 41-46) fleury created six “houses,” or house-shaped wooden cases each featuring a different “family” of issues important to unions and workers today: including the issues of technology versus industry, the representation of unions in the media, women in the union, a worker’s love of her job, gay and lesbian issues in the workplace, and the relationship between paid and unpaid labour.⁶³ fleury

⁶³The inspiration for the title for the six-piece artwork came from a union activist who said during one of the discussions fleury had with the employees that “the house of labour is never finished.”

created these “family houses” from the interaction and dialogue between herself and employees at the Ottawa and District Labour Council (ODLC).⁶⁴ The houses include stories written by workers, personal objects from the members themselves, and ideological and political information important to the job of labour activism. The “houses” were developed with the collaboration and participation of several of the employees and their families, including objects made by the employees during workshops fleury held. *The Houses of Labour* is a permanent, site-specific work that remains with the people with whom and for whom the work was produced.

Produced in collaboration with the ODLC under an *Artists in the Workplace* grant from the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), *The Houses of Labour* was fleury’s second project involving art and the community of the workplace.⁶⁵ The project evolved over a six-month period in which fleury worked on a part-time basis with the employees at the labour offices. fleury admits that she was reticent about doing another intensive labour project so soon after the “Garage experience.” While she was interested in furthering her

⁶⁴Each of the six wooden frame houses were co-designed by a union finishing carpenter who is working on concepts for house/community shaped room dividers that evolved from his work with fleury’s project.

⁶⁵The grant received from the OAC in 1997 was one of seven which were awarded totaling \$52,385. fleury’s award of \$7,500 was matched with \$2,500 from the ODLC in order to complete the project. The recipients for 1996-1997 were Tom Brouillette (\$10,000), Carole Condé (\$3,750), c.j. fleury, Luis Garcia (\$10,000), Sheila James (\$9,370), Aida Jordao (\$3,300), and Faith Nolan (\$8,465). For more information on the Artist and the Workplace/Community, contact the Ontario Arts Council. Published yearly in the *Annual Report* are the artists who have received grants and the amounts of those awards.

understanding of community-based public art practices and honing her concept of *workshopping community*, fleury felt that doing another collaborative project immediately after the *Garage Project* would not allow her the time to reflect upon the experience, to enable her thoughts and criticism to catch up to the practice. Lacy writes: “It is evident that criticism has not caught up with practice. Until a critical approach is realized, this work [new genre public art work] will remain relegated to outsider status in the art world, and its ability to transform our understanding of art and artists’ roles will be safely neutralized” (Lacy *Debated* 173). In Lacy’s terms, fleury did not want to “neutralize” her experience. fleury explains: “at the garage, i could not believe what had just gone down and how major it was and how i would never look at anything the same again” (Interview March 22, 1998). fleury’s hesitancy was also part of her belief in the necessity of a long-term assessment process for community-based public art projects. Patricia Phillips concurs: “the long-term consequences of the work are difficult to access. Paradoxically, while the production of the work engages the disenfranchised in a reinvigorated social dialogue, there is little concrete evidence of a sustained process with clear results. The data require a longer time frame to develop — the real time of response and reaction” (Phillips *Diggs* 287).

However, the interest and commitment of Ken Clavette, Coordinator, Labour Community Services of Ottawa-Carleton, and the main contact for the project, convinced fleury that her community-based public art practice, as it related to the workplace, would be effective in another labour setting. Clavette believed that during her time at the

ODLC, fleury could refine her theorizations and sustain the results of the *Garage Project* in the real time of response and reaction with the community of the labour office. fleury accepted the challenge.

In this section, I will discuss and interpret each of the six pieces of *The Houses of Labour* project as they were created in collaboration between fleury and the community of the labour office. I argue that fleury again applied her community-based public art-making skills to *The Houses of Labour* project by using alternative artistic materials, exploring the political and ideological contexts of cultural and manual work, and engaging a participatory audience in a collaborative relationship.

fleury is interested in the ways working peoples respond to the art world in which they often find little that is compelling or inclusive. At the ODLc, one of the most important aspects of the project for fleury was that, according to Clavette, “many people had previously limited their thinking on art to house decoration or bronze statues. Most had never had an arts experience outside of high school, much less understood the concept of HOW or WHY art is made for public sites” (Clavette Interview March 1998). fleury believed that she could break down further barriers by her involvement with the ODLc and apply her idea of *workshopping community*. fleury explains: “since the idea of making and having ‘real art’ in union context seemed so mysterious to members, many activists have just begun to be interested or participate in the art process . . . many people need to see concrete evidence before they believe that they are allowed to ‘get it’” (Fleury ODLc Final Report Sept. 29, 1997). The project with fleury was an opportunity for

labour unionists to participate in cultural work — to “get it” — and an occasion for fleury to cultivate her skills in advanced community-based public art. fleury is aware that the workplace is a strategic site to promote the importance of art and culture in all aspects of people’s lives. fleury writes: “by introducing the ODLC to this open art experience, members will have a guided view into, and an opportunity to participate in, the private and public thinking behind the many processes of making art for a public site. They will see how common materials and techniques acquire meaning when selected and manipulated for the purposes of artistic expression. Through this exposure to the root phases of art making, they will get a clearer sense of their own creative potential. Creative insight eventually filters back out to society in an enriching way, on personal and public levels” (fleury ODLC Proposal Nov. 27, 1996).

As she did in the *Garage Project*, fleury used the non-traditional material of dialogue to construct her artworks. One of the key discussions among the many conversations fleury had at the ODLC centered around the changes technology has made to industrial labour. fleury’s *Pre-Millennial Industrial Fetish Piece* (fig. 41) speaks about the demise of manual labour and the effects of computerization as it frames environments and redefines concepts of work. It is about work and the effect of technology on survival. The rusted metal on the inside and the outside of the box suggests decline and forgetting. The outside of the box is struck with horseshoe nails. They imply energy, and have a charged value, like electricity, or like an explosion. There are also keys from a manual typewriter, each bearing a letter of the alphabet facing outwards. The house is

reminiscent of a bed of nails, a coffin — the final house of rest — or a fetish piece. The nails and letter-makers can represent workers, past and present, male and female, and the physical (nails) and mental (keys/language) aspects of their work. The other main feature of this house is the rusted shovel head, an object that, should it be used as a tool, would be useless. It is behind glass, in the coffin, or in a museum case. The shovel is now a “pre-millennial industrial fetish piece,” an object of interest for industrial archaeologists or curious viewers of future generations. Finally, behind the shovel head lies the gleaming map of the computer motherboard. It graphs out the new city of the future. The “mother” element is strong in this image; the house resembles a nest in which nails and letter-makers are the nest and the computer components are the interior swaddling that holds the precious cargo— the shell of the industrial worker. In another reading, the rusted shovel head is a shield (evoking fleury’s early Ideology Shields), suggesting to the viewer that in order to understand the future, one must know the past and recall the labour of the absent hands upon the missing shovel handle that led to the possibility of the computer age as we know it today. At the same time, the juxtaposition of the metal shovel and the shining metal wires (and nails/letter-makers), implies that the *materials* of the industrial age and the computer age are identical. The *Pre-Millennial Industrial Fetish Piece* (fig. 41) asks the viewer to consider the role of the worker in the making of technological history.

With the dialogue begun between artist and audience, fleury organized several meetings and workshops that would create the collaborative environment necessary to her

art. fleury was interested in the issues that were of importance to the labour activists, those issues that would then be translated into creative and sustaining artworks of relevance to the community in which they were made.

Media Profile — Shaping Media (fig. 42) is the result of a variety of collaborative ventures. A small group of union workers and family members of other workers visited the SAW Gallery (Ottawa) video co-op and explored how media shapes perceptions of the labour movement. The presentation also focused on the ways that video can be a powerful tool for activism. Over a number of visits to the ODLG offices, fleury made casts of workers' fingers. These finger casts became the "agents" — as the workers themselves were agents in providing labour education and information to labour organizations and society in general — in the *Media Profile* marching forward from the house of labour bearing placards made from a metal-working session also held by fleury. The television was a material supplied by a postal worker who had suffered a debilitating job loss. The media house is lined in playing cards that suggest the day and night aspects of strikes, tv viewing and flickering images. fleury writes: "among other associations, they may suggest hierarchies, strategies, homes, the vulnerability of structures and, as my nine-year old volunteered, 'the chance to start all over again'" (*Houses* file n.d.).

A third house, *After Bozica* (fig. 43), evolved from the many discussions fleury had involving women and the workplace. The house places the artist's own working drawings for CUPE's 1983 Solidarity/Solidarité poster that was developed with Bozica Costigliola during what the artist identifies as her "first introduction to women's struggles

within the union” (*Houses* File n.d.).

Important to her concept of *workshopping community*, fleury self-identified as a member of the community at the ODLC and used her own previous experiences with labour issues to engage the audience in a dialogue centered on art and women’s work. fleury’s feminism is synthesized in a variety of ways in all her works. At the Garage, fleury felt that her feminist interests were generally sublimated in everyday discourse but enacted in the processes she used to engage workers in a collaborative structure. At the ODLC, feminist issues were foregrounded as important ideological and political constructs within the labour movement. fleury found that working again toward feminist goals, like she had done in partnership with Mary Faught on *The Women’s Monument Against Violence*, enhanced her collaborative methodology by revisiting the power of language and story. fleury explains: “while in my own work and approach to *workshopping community*, dialogue and language are critical to the collaborative experience, the work by Barbara Myerhoff further defines the potential of what language can mean within a specific context: learning new ways of *listening* and learning new ways of *speaking* to the point of always having a dictionary and thesaurus” (note to author Aug. 3, 1999).

It was fleury’s intent to listen to and to tell the “story” that is the primary feature of the house *I Love My Job* . . . (fig. 44). In this house, a teacher describes her love of the work that she does. fleury also believes that work is a home in itself in that it is a place where cultivation, light and care are integral to a healthy community. Work, for fleury, is

a place of cultural and creative light which is in need of cultivation by artists interested in social and ethical practices.⁶⁶ fleury recognizes that the workplace is an untapped community for art — an important site for the her effort to bring life and art together.

However, fleury does not see the workplace as a utopian community for artistic interaction; she recognizes, through her experience at the Garage and with the ODLC, that difficulties and differences are already embedded within any community. Critic Rosalyn Deutsche explains: “*community* conjures images of neighborhoods bound together by relations of mutual interest, respect, and kinship; *community-sponsored* connotes local control and citizen participation in decision making. . . . If anything, clashes, rather than confluence, between communities and state-imposed initiative are more likely to characterize urban life today” (italics hers; Deutsche *Public* 165). It is her role and responsibility as a community-based public artist, fleury believes, to negotiate the “clashes” while mapping new community works, each with their own unique set of discord. As such, collaboration, in fleury’s public art, does not assume equal, consistent and unequivocal participation from participants. There are also stories that are often unheard in communities; these silent dialogues are of great interest to fleury and influence her methodology in *workshopping community*. Accentuating production, fleury’s *workshopping community* is a particularly well-developed theorization of the collaborative and public aspects of making community-based public art. fleury is willing

⁶⁶The *I Love My Job* . . . house is also an alternative portrait of the teacher herself, a single mother of two sons and a devoted gardener.

to incorporate difference and even conflict within her projects as she believes that contradictions exist within any “family house” or community. Consequently, after several discussions relating to conflicts over gay and lesbian issues and the union, fleury created *Being Out*.

fleury introduced an important house called *Being Out — Unified without Uniformity* (fig. 45) into the collection. Coloured in the spring hues of new growth, this house is inlaid with sections of writings by labour activist Susan Genge and from the document *Confronting The Mean Society*, the sexual orientation policy of the Canadian Labour Congress. The broom in the image reflects the union’s urgent need to “clean house” in regard to gay and lesbian issues. Contributions were made by collaborators to the home’s interior and the exterior panels, which are the ergonomic stencils for the 50th percentile man and the 50th percentile woman, are doors which have to do with “coming out” of the “closet” and also represent those working people who do not close doors on minority groups. *Being Out* explores the rights and struggles of all workers to promote equality and recognize contributions.

The final piece in the *Houses of Labour* exhibit is a house called *Dishes Don’t . . .* (fig. 46) which uses the sign “THE DISHES DON’T DO THEMSELVES!” from over the ODLC kitchen sink as the inspiration to discuss issues of the struggle over the division of domestic duties, the need to recognize housework as a labour issue, the reevaluation of childcare responsibilities, and larger features such as time, control and domestic violence. fleury writes, “a large factor that changed the project for me was that most individuals

participated for short periods of time. Pressures of second jobs, double shifts, union duties, school/course work did not allow time for these people to fully develop the artwork on a conceptual level or commit to longer term tasks” (*Houses* file Dec. 29, 1997). As a mother of a young son, fleury recognizes the multiple stresses upon a woman’s time as it relates to many aspects of work in her life. *Dishes Don’t . . .* involves a cast of a dish-soap bottle, ironic in its female form, and is capped with an electronic component suggesting a Medusa head. The Medusa is currently a significant figure in fleury’s work. fleury views the Medusa as a positive icon allowing for the effective maintenance of many divergent duties required of women in a rapidly changing world.

The *Houses of Labour* project was an example of fleury’s successful negotiation of a community-based public art project involving the workplace. The labour activists who participated in *Houses* went from complaining that they “couldn’t draw” and, as such, could not participate in an art project in a union context, to becoming quite overwhelmed by and proud of the input they had made toward the exhibit. fleury comments: “Even those that did not get their hands into the making [manual work], have experienced the ideas of contemporary art practice as it can relate to both labour and public place. Now that the artwork is permanently installed, now that it is *in* their physical workplace, now that visitors to the busy central labour offices will interact with the pieces regularly, I perceive that a more profound type of art thinking [mental work] will flower” (*Houses* file ODLC Final Report Sept. 29, 1997). She adds that “the more i do these projects, the more i view their meaning and value as quite distinct from that of

the studio/gallery experience. Labour in particular is a serious place in which artists who value social interests and ethics of work, not just formal or aesthetic ones, can locate their practice, build and cultivate wisdom” (Fleury ODLC Final Report Sept. 29, 1997).

Distinct from the gallery or private studio work, the workplace, according to fleury, is an important location for her community-based public art practice. fleury, who has an interest in the social responsibility of art, articulates that “labour, in particular,” is a community in which artists can enter to “build and cultivate wisdom.” An artist’s involvement with a labour community or a workplace, fleury suggests, can bridge the “gulf” between art, culture and work precisely because the arts are a place where working people rarely see themselves reflected. fleury explains: “I still don’t think an artist has to be a union activist to work successfully within a union context. . . . I believe that the union voice can do stronger work through community arts practice, through the focus and desire of a more informed membership” (*Houses* file Dec. 29, 1997).

Conclusion

Success hinges on process and widened understanding (by workers AND artist) as much as it does on the final production of the art objects. While the basic format, site and scale of this project is established, true ‘realization of meaning’ comes about only with the ideas, views and participation of union members.

(fleury *Houses* file ODLC Proposal Nov. 27, 1996)

fleury believes that the workplace is a significant community and an important

context where art can be made. The *Garage Project* and the *Houses of Labour* were experiences in which fleury had the opportunity to renegotiate the distance between art and work in our culture and show it for its potential cultural and social possibilities: here it is possible that individuals can collectively work together to make art from lived experience and in so doing endow a formerly passive art object with an active quality that has both value and relevance to the community from which it comes. As such, individuals realize that art is not a neutral, inaccessible feature of life but that it both effects and can be affected by important interventions and interactions. As the Ontario Federation of Labour report *Towards a Living Culture* states: “the films, theatre and art we see, the music we hear, and the books and magazines we read are not simply neutral entertainment or diversions. They have a profound influence on the way we see ourselves, our unions, our communities, and the political and social options available to us. They define what we know, think and feel” (*Our Times* 13:1 11).

fleury’s work demonstrates how art can involve new, non-traditional partnerships and overcome complexities and problems that are inherently built into relationships with presupposed fundamental ideological differences. In this regard, fleury accomplishes a significant social critique. I believe fleury’s interventions into the workplace offer an important insight into a contemporary understanding of Canadian culture especially as it relates to the relationship between work and art. Her art form, which has an equally-weighted emphasis on its practice as on its object and the community-based public nature of her work returns the arts to the social or real life contexts from which they came.

fleury concludes: "It's not like i expect everybody who does a community art project to turn around and become an artist. i would just like them to be able to know that they have the capacity and the permission to think in an artistic fashion and i would like the chance to work with them within their own context" (fleury Interview March 22, 1998).

Conclusion

It is like a walk in the woods in autumn, you don't know what you are going to see. There are just glimpses of things because the light is shining in a certain way. It's easy to make metaphors about being in the woods because the woods are chaotic and evil and you know all the old stories about the woods and the evil critters. Community work can also be like that, and also very rewarding. But it is very hard. I don't think it is for everybody. I'm interested to watch. I wish I knew more. I wish there was more coverage of community art.

(fleury Interview March 22, 1998)

There is a black and white picture of fleury (fig. 47) taken at the end of the *Garage Project*. Gritty, pulpy and textured, it is the formal artist's portrait for the project (fig. 47). It ties together fleury's experience as an artist-in residence at the Garage and can be used to discuss her approach to community-based public art. The woods, the wooden chair, the snow, the dress clothes, the welding goggles and the oil-stained leather workman's gloves imply many elements of fleury's experience at the Garage and as an artist engaged in community-based public art work.

The woods act both as a metaphorical backdrop and a metonymic reflection of the artist's psyche. The woods, like fleury's psyche, are "chaotic," yet charged with energy. You can see the threshold of the wood but inside it is dark and unknown. fleury explains that in the woods you only get glimpses of images, that you need the light to shine in a

certain way to reveal the fuller picture. fleury understands this to be her experience of community-based public art work. The wisps of hair that fall on her forehead act as a metonym for the forest that is the artist's mind.

The wooden chair — perhaps a kitchen chair — set anachronistically in the snow recalls the three sculptures fleury made at the Garage to initiate her presence as “The Artist” in a long and important art project made with a non-traditional community of an industrial workshop. She leans forward interactively with the viewer, ready to either converse or spring to a task at hand.

The snow seasons the portrait. The project winters fleury. Thought and reflection are required. The figure skater, used to the movement and emotion on ice finds herself again in another *Circle Cycle*: she is now an evolved community-based public artist. She is a prism, demonstrated in the one reflected pane of her welder's goggles, and radiates outward in all directions. She has realized, for now, the quote she providently pulled from Suzi Gablik's book, *Progress in Art*, eleven years prior to this portrait: “the whole process of development . . . starting out with perception and culminating in intelligence, demonstrates that transformations continually increase in importance, as opposed to the original predominance of static perceptual forms.” fleury's transformation after the *Garage Project* demonstrated that the process of doing community work is increasingly important; that there is no hold on development from a (mis)perception of art to an understanding of at least parts of it. And fleury, ready to slip away from her chair at any second attests to the need for continual and never-ending work toward building

community arts. In her portrait, the woods, dark and foreboding suggest that transformations in the practice and idea of art *can* occur.

The costuming of fleury anticipates these transformations. The “person” of the artist herself is secondary: her face, invisible, masked by the two circles that overcome her visage — one blackened, the other reflective — recall again that “tangent point” where the artist balances precariously. Just as light passing through a prism yields colour, so, life experience passing through an artist yields expression” (Circle file. n.d.). fleury’s early explorations of human potential found in the centre of two circles in the form of the seeds of fruit, have continuously manifested themselves throughout her artistic career.

The portrait asks the viewer to meet the artist on unfamiliar ground, out of place with the natural order of the environment, resonant with the way in which community-based public art moves out of the museum and into the communities with little previous access to or interest in institutionalized culture. The viewer is required to put aside the personality of the artist and to think about art in a different manner; to build bridges, in collaboration with others, over the holes in our understanding of art and take it where it may not have been before.

In the three chapters of this thesis, I have covered fleury’s early artistic practice from her life as a figure skater through to her well-formed community-based public art commissions. I have suggested that fleury is a significant community-based public artist whose practice can be understood in the context of new genre public art theory. I have

argued that a study of fleury's work, a particularly well-developed theorization and application of the collaborative and public aspects of making community-based public art, is an important study for new genre public art theory. I illustrated that fleury's concept of *workshopping community*, a term which she coined, contributes to our understanding of new genre public art theory and expands the vocabulary of the discourse.

The four distinct principles of new genre public art theory that I discussed — the employment of alternative, experimental art materials and forms; the location of art projects and objects in non-traditional sites; the integration of political and ideological content and contexts as visible components of the art project and object; and the engagement of a participatory audience in a collaborative art venture — were used to outline the main principles of new genre public art theory as it distinguishes itself from its predecessor: public art. In this discussion, I introduced fleury's concept of *workshopping community*. I demonstrated that fleury added to the vocabulary of new genre public art theory with her new term and contributed to the way we look at the idea of community and audience in two manners: first, fleury argues that the *community is a material for art*; and second, she believes that artists involved in community-based public art projects must consider themselves as *a member of the community*.

The conclusions I arrived at from the analysis of new genre public art theory or the study of fleury's specific works in this study are not designed to serve as the definitive approach to the topic or offer the "proper" model for community-based art

projects. In fact, fleury's work raises further questions and her own practice changes with each new question that is posed. However, in the process of debate and evaluation, definitions applied to concepts such as "art," "culture," "community," and "audience" can be extended beneficially. In fact, during the process of debate and evaluation, new languages for art and new methods of cultural analysis can be discovered; that newness is the principle behind new genre public art practices.

It is important that fleury's approach to making art is discussed and that contemporary art criticism involve itself in discussions relating to all community-based public art practices. The work of artists like fleury helps to break down stereotypes that create divisions between people and empowers those uncomfortable in museums to see the richness of culture in their community. The collaborative aspects of community-based public art projects allow individuals to become cultural producers who have a say in matters that are relevant to their experience. Culture, then, is charged with an active quality, reinforcing the idea that it is neither static or neutral. With the community at the centre of the art-making process, the art-object becomes secondary to the process itself. The focus on the process of making art collaboratively changes the patterns of economic thinking; it gives legitimacy to the process of making art rather than the consumption of a commodity or good. fleury writes: "I want to begin the discussion before the thing is made and i want the making of the thing — "THE OBJECT" — to be something that just came out through the relation. The conversation made plastic one day. The object is never what the whole dialogue was about. But imagine if people went around and the

artists went around and the conversation and the chance to talk to people and the talk was what was valued as art and all that other stuff was inconsequential. And everyone could have it and the pricing of the art would crumble and the objects could just be tradable as the conversation went on. IT'S A COMPLETELY UTOPIAN IDEA, but it is the wonderful idea that would be my dream to achieve" (Interview November 12, 1998).

fleury's self-generated community works, public commissions, and her activist interventions position her in the tradition that has evolved outside the museum setting; a tradition of socially motivated, community-based, with activist intentions. fleury's socially concerned aesthetic finds its supporters within the new genre public art movement which acts as a centering theory recognizing diverse, eclectic, multi-tasked, and audience-focused art forms. Her work, she believes, moves in the direction of conceptual art in that it explores models of interactivity and participation. She writes: "i have actually spent more time on . . . there has been more consistency in working from/exploring, the human spirit/relation than any one material in particular. Where i have moved from casual landscape painting to very formal academic seed drawings through shields, metal, granite, the landscape and right back into the community, i have always worked in response to the human condition, the question of the tender spot" (email n.d.). By working to show how art relates to community, how it should involve new partnerships between art and non-art interests, and how it could overcome complexities and problems that are inherently built into partnerships struck with presupposed fundamental ideological differences, fleury continues her search for the tender spot in the human condition.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

RECHERCHES
FÉMINISTES EN DROIT
AU CANADA:
UNE BIBLIOGRAPHIE
ANNOTÉE

CANADIAN FEMINIST
LITERATURE ON LAW:
AN ANNOTATED
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1980-98
en français

1988-98
in English

Josée Bouchard, Susan B. Boyd and Elizabeth A. Sheehy

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

ENCLAVE

Agents of Gaia created this monument in the tradition of the massive standing stones. Designed for community participation, the space is welcoming and hopeful. Touch the symbols. Visualize change. Make rubbings. Carry the feeling to a wider circle. This granite marker is set at the hub of a red spiral path, creating a safe space, a rallying point. ENCLAVE is both a place of memory and action. It acknowledges a turning point towards an improved future. The smaller stones honour each of the Ottawa women killed within the past two years. Looking out in their own direction, they stand as guardians of the ENCLAVE. In Spring the mounded spiral garden will blossom, first, with tulips and then be filled with Thyme.

We worked with ancient feminine symbols of continuity, renewal, cycles, passage and hope.

The spiral has been found on megaliths and temples dating back to..... It deals with the ideas of continuity, death and rebirth. Like the snake that sheds its skin each year, society can work to shed its shell of violence. The tri spiral at the top represents the three stages of life: childhood, maturity and the elder years....all stages where abuse may happen....all stages where action and change can take place.

The changing moons represent women's harmony with the universe and speak of the passage of time.

The waves represent the cleansing healing properties of the waters of the Earth, the waters of the Mother....the waters in which humanity is formed. They represent the flow of time, the past, the present and the future. Intersected by the large yoni shield shape, HERE AND NOW, we speak out for change. The repeated waves, drawn from a female hand, echo the hope and energy of this sight. Tracing the flowing lines with your own hand, you become part of the voice and action for zero tolerance of abuse and violence.

These signs from Women's heritage are engraved here to represent all women, all ages, and all races. The visual design on the stone and on the Earth focuses on the positive ideas of renewal and the empowering forces that can grow after intolerable acts are committed towards our sisters, mothers and daughters. The symbols, like the rock, will stand for generations and speak of a time where woman and children are respected and thriving.

The statement was by direction of the Woman's Urgent Action

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

Figure 25

Figure 26

Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

Figure 34

Figure 35

Figure 36

Figure 37

Figure 38

Figure 39

Figure 40

Figure 41

Figure 42

Figure 43

Figure 44

Figure 45

Figure 46

Figure 47

Figure 48

APPENDIX A

c.j. fleury Curriculum Vitae

PUBLIC ART / 1% COMMISSIONS

- 1998 Ecole des Cépages, Gatineau, QC
- 1997 Foyer Harricana, Amos, QC
- 1996 MDS Nordion, Kanata, ON
- 1995 Municipal Workshops, Ottawa *
Bibliothèque Dr. Jean Lorrain, Gatineau
Centre d'Accueil, Buckingham, QC
- 1992 Women's Monument Against Violence, Ottawa * >>

SITE SPECIFIC INSTALLATIONS

- 1998 Forêt Raciste, Wakefield, QC *
- 1997 Flower Petal Mandala Project, Wakefield * >>
Ottawa and District Labour Council Offices *
- 1994 Artists' Gardens, Harbourfront, Toronto
Art Terre, Ange Gardien, QC
- 1995 NCC Christmas Lights Program, Major's Hill Park, Ottawa
- 1993 BorderCrossing, Stone Quarry Hill ArtPark, Cazenovia, NY
Excite/Outside, Axe Neo 7/ Gallery 101, Victoria Island
- 1992 Art Terre

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Classical Antiquities/ U of Ottawa, Royal Ontario Museum, Vancouver Art Gallery, Nickle Arts Museum/ Calgary, Ottawa Art Gallery, SAW Gallery, Gallery 101, Artcité/ Windsor, KAAI/ Kingston, Maison de la Culture/ Gatineau/ QC, MacKenzie Gallery/ Trent University & Artspace/ Peterborough, Museum of Contemporary Art/ Santiago/ Chili, Artemesia Gallery/ Chicago, Computer Commons Gallery, Arizona State U, United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women/ Beijing/ China, Universidade Estácio de Sa Reitoria/ Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

RELATED ACTIVITIES / PRESENTATIONS

- 1998 Panelist, Oeuvre, Réseau et Communauté, colloque, Université Québec à Montréal
Panelist, Contact, Forum de Développement, Ontario Arts Council, Collège Boréal, Sudbury
- 1997 Panelist, 25th National Conference, US Women's Caucus for Art, Philadelphia
Jury work: Ontario Arts Council >Community Arts Practice Grants and OAC w/ Laidlaw Foundation, Toronto Arts Council & Canada Council >Long Term Community Pilot Projects
- 1996 Guest Lecture, School for Studies in Art & Culture, Carleton University
- 1992 Founding Member, Art Terre, International Land Art Symposium, Ange Gardien

AWARDS AND GRANTS

Ministère de la Culture et des Communications
Ontario Arts Council
City of Ottawa
Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton
Vancouver Women's Monument Design Competition, Special Mention
Loomis and Toles Graphic Horizons Drawing Prize

COLLECTIONS

The Canada Council Art Bank
City of Ottawa Public Art Collection
Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton
Trent University

SELECTED GRAPHIC COMMISSIONS

Atlanta / Nagano Olympic Team Pin, Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport
United Nations 'Decade of The Woman' poster, Secretary of State
'Solidarity' poster, Canadian Union of Public Employees
'Olympic Village' poster, Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

/BOOKS

1999 Making Our Mark, Labour Arts in Ontario, Jude Johnson & Karl Beveridge
1998 Community Arts Workbook, Ontario Arts Council

MAGAZINES

1998 Where Magazine, Ottawa, October
Item, Université Québec à Montréal, Octobre
1996 Sculpture Magazine, International Sculpture Center, Washington, D.C, March
1993 Vis-à-Vis, Canadian Council on Social Development, October
Maquette, International Sculpture Center, Washington

VIDEO

1996 Making Art Work, 10:30, City of Ottawa Public Art Program
1995 The Creat Hers Series, 5:20, Women's Television Network
1994 Rockburn and Company, 14:00, C.B.C., 10/94

* Collaborative or Community Arts based projects

APPENDIX B

Interview with c.j. fleury

March 22, 1998

Interview Date: March 22, 1998

Interview Place: c.j. fleury's Studio
Wakefield, Quebec

Interviewee: c.j. fleury (cjf)

Interviewer: Kim Lulashnyk (KLL)

KLL I'm interested in your experiences as a public artist. There are some chairs you made while you are at your residency at the Municipal Garages in Ottawa, Ontario. I am focusing on these sculptures and this one before us because I really like them, find them fascinating, and would like to talk about your experience at the Garage.

cjf There is an order in these chairs. ...and a development of meaning, a transformation of understanding and process, that starts right with the gathering of their building materials and is connected to the idea of their progressive deconstruction. Their titles, the stories each one contains [referred to in my notes] help to explain the levels of perception that both the workers and myself had to pass through. When I began the residency I spent a good deal of time searching through the scrap bins. Not only is that a great way to learn more about a 'civilization' but it was a unique place to experience solitude at that monstrously large and busy work site. Artists commonly find 'art supplies' in junk piles. So the workers thought that the whole idea of being able to get art materials from the junk pile was absolutely ludicrous and therefore of no value...no value in terms of money, meaning or "looks". The idea of recycling -on a physical or symbolic level - was of no importance to them...to the point that the chairs...and my working on them, was a joke...useless... to all but Dave Watt for a good while. Dave was a rebel in every way and an extremely skilled welder. He ended up doing a lot of work on the final sculpture. He had had the opportunity to sit on the selection jury, took extra time after hours to help me with the machinery and difficult joins. Bit by bit other welders took an interest to the point that we were actually 'arguing' about the inclusion of the oiled baseball ... ongoing arguments about using an ancient leather ball as a foot on a steel chair and why these materials could possibly go together. But in fact, the ball did come from a retiring welder's tool stand, saved from the city's repaired grass cutting machine and welders always had oil stained leather gloves. So this chair actually ended up becoming acceptable as art to many of the guys, even though you couldn't sit on it. And certain arguments continued, like themes, because they wanted to add the

correct structural thing and I didn't want to, no, no.

KLL Is there a hierarchy their positions and their structure.

cjf Oh very much...i would even say a hierarchy that reflects attitudes about some of the men and how they measured the value of work...what tasks they actually considered to BE work . So therefore, if you were dirty you looked like you had been doing more work then someone who was clean. . . . It seemed, in many cases, not about the best work but about the man who seemed to do the most work....and the whole idea of time, and pressure....of amount of time....and what they had to produce in their blocks of morning and afternoon time between their breaks. How other people would be making fun of them. The whole idea of the ego was very important and very much a part and how their work was assessed. There were people who always seemed to be know as the "talkers" and if they were talking with me - and I had to talk to them - then they were seen as just trying, to have time off. In the early stages of the project, many men and women looked at these workers as if they weren't really interested in the art project at all but that maybe they were just trying to have another break.

I spent a lot of time positioning, sketching and repositioning the steel scrap [new sculptural components] in my storage / workspace at the back, by the structural welding shop. Workers going by just kept saying, "Is that work ?" or "Is it art yet?" In one case, i had wanted to have this one odd piece joined down onto another piece. But because of a length problem, I didn't know how to get it there or how best to attach it. Everybody knew that i had been cutting and reshaping scrap iron, had already made 'that box' and broken 'that rule' of the 'unspoken thing' and had started cutting the tools, sawing them apart.. . Lots of anti-art jokes...and work questions, but then one supervisor from another department just leaned over one morning, after watching a bit . . . joined right into my perplexing moment. He came closer and picked up the two parts and suggested, "Why don't you cut that in half and aim that up into there." So this whole design was a gift from one of the guys who had been pretty irritated about the \$ being spent on art. But he still volunteered a great idea and really showed his thrill about the project idea the last five days.

KLL Did they want to sit on it?

cjf Well they expected to originally. The word chair implies functionality and in my efforts to build bridges, i started out intending to construct functional chairs. So, I was going to put a seat on the first one, but couldn't quite bring myself to actually do it, still not wanting to add some piece that could block the vision of all the

other parts. Annalee [Adair, Public Art Consultant for the Project] came one day and she just kept looking at it and saying: "It's a piece of sculpture." Yes, I told her, but it's a chair for the guys. She said, "No, no, just look at it. Stop." I was so much trying to be "there," at the garage that I forgot to be where I came from, my imagination. And so her saying that to me was quite a turning point. I knew that i would be doing a series but at that point i stopped worrying about being practical for their sake. So this also provided an answer to their saying: "You have to add stabilizing sections." And there were other humorous parts, really funny things where i played with deliberately wrong juxtapositions of components — little ironic statements hidden in the overall composition for the guys to discover. Not only did finding these "odd bits" represent their mastery over their use of tools, but they discovered that they were seeing tools in different ways and "getting" the chairs as art.

KLL Knowledge was an important thing?

cjf Yes. It was very much like guarding a fire. The men would guard the fire and make the fire and keep the fire.

KLL So the people at the Garage didn't think that you had any of the right 'knowledge.'

cjf No. Not the kind of knowledge that was of value at that site at that time. And why did I have the job, I'm sure they wondered. They didn't think I had the knowledge. But at the end it was quite different. So this chair is called the "The Alchemy of . . ." It's a multi-layered statement about the possibility of transformation, about the idea that "junk," as they put it, could be turned into art, and that people who say art is worthless could actually begin to see further and re-find their own imaginations. It is particularly related to Dave Watt and the few people who were coming around, going through their own alchemic processes . . . about people coming on board. It was very important to me that it looked like a kitchen chair because there's a certain amount of camaraderie that happens around the kitchen table.

[About a 'Measure of Madness'] By the time it got around to that chair, the second one, they just thought that it and i were completely crazy and there was nothing that now prevented them from expressing that to me.

KLL It is mad.

cjf Torture.

KLL Torture . . . teeth that are around it . . . the back, as well, like a weapon.

cjf The un-sit-on-able chair is the continuation of the a concept i began to explore the summer prior to the residency. My task had been to create a site specific piece of work for a land art symposium and the site i chose was by a gulch edge. Dealing with the notion of a society going too fast to think about, or actually see, what is happening, the title of the work was "La Quatrieme Chaise de Reconnaissance" — [Translated means "The Fourth Seat of Recognition"]. Technically my design project was to work the site/manipulate the space so that people would not walk near the edge, possibly slipping down into the rushing water. Philosophically i wanted to express a meditation on the edge of chaos — both societal and physical . . . a chaos fed by demands and stresses of time and productivity. It contained a series of 3 burnt un-sit-on-able seats with thorny protrusions. There were two traditional oak school chairs and one oak office chair. The school chairs, one with fir tree seedlings, set in preserving jars, growing up through the seat and the other pierced with stainless steel turnings represented "science/ecology" and "industry." They flanked the office chair, "management" which sprouted a mass of threatening brambles. The actual fourth seat of recognition was a lung x-ray [suspended over a fire sculpted of linear wire forms.] So this whole "chair that you couldn't sit on thing" during the residency was an echo of something before of a bigger question . . . on sitting . . . [segues over into issues like education, forced location / ideological etc, phoenix , Bhuddism and so on . . .]

KLL What is at the top? [of the Measure of Madness chair]

cjf The top piece was one of my own tools . . . a compass for precise measurements, purchased near Haystack. To fasten that piece required some extremely skilled welding. Dave did that. He was just finishing up when the MayWorks festivities began in the cafeteria. I had organized some entertainment for the guys during their lunch break for MayWorks. Phil Jenkins came to sing for the workers and the Union reps had gotten a great cake. That day that the Community Labour Relations people came to see the project in progress. Dave had stayed back to finish the task and brought the chair into the cafeteria, set it down just as the performance was ending. He was really, really proud and it seemed everybody was. The "mad"ness implies equally, the anger on site and backstabbing between workers that i think i covered in notes etc.

KLL I notice, that when I look at it now, I see a lot of couplings and I was thinking about your work in series, series-es. *Laughs.*

cjf Series. I've worked in a lot of series, with drawings and shields and now sculpture

but it's more difficult to explain it briefly when working with groups of people. I wish that I could present my work more clearly but I just have to trust that there will be a consistency that becomes more apparent in the larger picture. Essentially I am more interested in people than i am in materials or techniques, but even though the experience of working with one group can inform the next process with the next group of people, you can't always reduce these to short overviews. Also, I think a lot of my work [not just spatially]is very grounded in my choreographical background . . . in my study of centering and balance and movement and emotion.

And there are a number of very complex ideas tied into the whole idea of collaborative expression with community, especially at the garage, especially in consideration of gender, structure . . . male tradition, herding, fear and so on.

KLL When you said choreography it just cleared that to me. What these pieces do when I look at them. They move. There is so much movement in them. Your sculpture also appears to me quite conceptual.

cjf Movement seems apparent to many people i discuss my work with — and sometimes overwhelming to anyone who knows me really well. *Laughs.* Extremely conceptual right down to the idea of opening the process to non-artists on such a huge scale . . . finding that place to share understanding, their experiencing on a conceptual level . . . not to mention the artists who think working like this is impossible. And at the same time, I think that the challenge of it is tempting: that at the same time that you can be pushing the conceptual boundary or treading the conceptual water, you can be doing it with someone and your foot is over here in grass roots, or over there at the side of union issues — which - i must say - were not in my plans.

Re skating: Because I was really set up to be in another career, and i sometimes carry my experience and training as a trained athlete into the realm of community activation, i had something like a Ph.D in figure skating and I had also the mentors. It was all laid out for me, but I couldn't stay in skating — too many boundaries. And when I went to art school, I didn't go to get a degree; just enough to go off and do my thing. Now I dream of doing nothing but studying. I have a lot of out of institution education and sorts of mentoring. I just think that right now the challenge is to be pushing what it is you are trying to do and understand it more clearly — the implications; but at the same time, I believe that it is important not remove yourself from the 'real' world. I am very interested in the role of the artist in contemporary society. I often wonder, after attending some art function, how long it is going to take to filter into the world out there. It is not

that 'out there' is a place without intelligent, interested people, it is just that they do not have access to "art" in the same way that practitioners do.

KLL How do you talk about the work you do in the community, with the community. You used an interesting term earlier . . .

cjf Workshopping community. I have not said it till now; I'm terribly afraid of saying it and having it taken the wrong way, as arrogant or contentious. However, I do intend it with the utmost of respect. The idea of workshopping community is complex and I started to write about it in an article on Community Arts practice for SAW Gallery; but I soon realized that it needed a lot of backup. "Workshopping Community: Exploring What the Role of Art in Society and Community Means." Community art involves being all kinds of characters. You sometimes uncover the creativity by being a playmate for a seven year old [the mandala project] or a student of a thirty-year old welder or a tea guest of an eighty year old whose hand you are casting. [It IS amazing how some people don't EVEN question the concept--they JUST jump in and tread with you !!] And it is funny how a role can shift right in front of everyone; they see it. And I think it gives them permission to try on other roles. For instance, at the Garage, I am working with someone who discusses by arguing. We're arguing our points and we're trying to work out something. Behind that are a lot of other tasks going on at that same moment. And then someone else comes into the room and it now becomes a meeting with an engineer. So I all of a sudden assumed the role of the project coordinator and they become structural consultants. There are shifting roles in front of each other as i am, right in front of peoples' eyes. And they feel safe when because this becomes a kind of consistent activity.

KLL I had another question about your understanding of workshopping community, which I think is brilliant and really interesting . . . I don't think I can ever put it right, but, do you have a sense of what community is?

cjf What community?

KLL Okay, is there one community? When you go on site to do a project when does community or the workshopping of that community happen?

cjf What a difficult question. Do you have a sense of what community is. The Wakefield community? The community at the garage? Community can fall apart when somebody else enters the room. It's like a party: how do women act at a party and then how do they act when the men come into the room?

I think community is permeable. I don't think you can say community without having a context, I mean it's a word that has hanger's-oner's.

KLL That must make it really difficult for you when you do a project where the established community is spatial.

cjf It's a feeling. The community is a feeling, an attitude. For now that's the best I can make of it. Because, you know four people can be a community, or four hundred, and then . . . It is a very hard line.

KLL I think that you must have a sense of community for yourself in order to progress in terms of going from project of project. Like the idea of workshopping community. Where is community located?

cjf Oh, everywhere. I think it is everywhere. Community grows. Sometimes when you apply for these projects that talk about what an established community is, there are official Arts Council definitions of community. If I sit on their jury, that's what I'll work with and add too, in order to exchange and support the process we are all there to uncover. But I really think community is an attitude. A very sharing attitude about sustenance. To me the primary environment is the psyche so you ask me what community is: it's psychological. Once Annalee [Adair, Public Art Consultant, Ottawa, ON] said to me, "Well, it is obvious, your work is about the human spirit." Oh thank you, I thought, she gave me a gift in saying that. I'm aware of the fact that my work is about the human spirit, that I am concerned about the human spirit.

I know that there are communities like the guys at the garage; but in fact they are all together there because they work together and, in fact, it wasn't a very content community. There was a shitload of animosity and a lot of hidden anger, predicated on fear, i would imagine. And go anywhere where there is a union and a 3 acre workplace and . . . I'm not really sure that's what a community is if you had to pick the ultimate description. Maybe we don't want to hear this but I don't think the word 'community' does all that it is supposed to do. And that's another form of research. For instance, I am as interested in finding out what community is as I am in finding out what's the best way to weld something. i wonder about what community is as one might wonder about a mysterious material. In these types of projects it occurs to me that the artist is allowed/encouraged to "manipulate" a group situation "with respect" by exerting a creative force or "will to query" on them and flowing openly with the resultant energy. But if you don't work openly and honestly . . . Manipulate can be a very bad word. I intend "manipulate" in the manner that we use quite often in the manipulation of the

material, the exploration . . . as to possibilities, potential, understanding, interaction with and so on. I feel in this way it is not like that coercive sense of manipulation. Like you tell the people what you want and they do it. I think that honesty is paramount. I feel the term "workshopping community" is more in line with what a catalyst does. In the chemical, electrochemical sense, what does it do and what does it affect. What has happened in your development that you feel right in your shoes to walk this path? I have to learn about that in my own personal experience, and work on concepts such as will and force, because sometimes when I think I've been very nice and really gone to a community with heart open, I'm see a video of myself saying a few things pushy or bossy. i do not ever mean to be like that. My eagerness carries me away. I wouldn't like to be called manipulative but in one sense, only in the sense of explaining that community is another material to work with and that if I am working honestly in a community where the people recognize their wealth and their richness, then I feel workshopping community works. That's my attitude of community art.

It's not like I expect everybody who does a community art project and turn around and become an artist. I would just like them to be able to know that they have the capacity and the permission to think in an artistic fashion* and i would like the chance to work with them within their own context.

*This idea is incredibly daunting to so many more people than i had initially understood.

- KLL Much of the writing that comes out of the most recent community art debates talks about the political aspects of making community art; but I don't think that what you do is overtly political. I'm trying to do the awful thing of finding a way to talk — yes, a label! — about what it is that you do.
- cjf It's subversive.
- KLL But it is not political-subversive, yet you often work with politically subversive communities, such as unions. *Laughs.* I intend that a little sarcastically.
- cjf No, it feels much less political than the feminist work I used to do.
- KLL Is it feminist?
- cjf It is totally feminist without using the word. I just decided I'm going to stop talking about the dogma and practice it. And it also has a lot to do with guts. It is a fact in every community project that I do, the fear, the journey of not having

total responsibility for the look, the resulting pieces being at times disjointed from previous work, ending up realizing that i want another two years to do it to a deeper level. It's really very disappointing in many ways to accept that i simply can not move so quickly from one to the next project as if they were assignments on a to-do list. The spiral into and out of a community arts project consumes massive amounts of evaluative energy.

Actually I get a lot of rejections for gallery shows because I show my recent work/slides from these projects and they do not present a cohesive body of work. Individually, the projects have all received amazing response, but they are visually separate and extremely situation-specific — regardless of the continuity in concept and trajectory that i am going through.

I do not have large bodies of my own private work because I put so much energy into these projects and take — i realize — a lengthy period to wrap up the new strings that each project unravels. I give up a lot to do them. But I consider all the work I do very feminist because the honesty, the non-top-down approach and the view to multiplicity.

And then again I feel as if I am a beginner in this community thing. For instance, after the Garage project, I could not believe what had just gone down! i was in a state of disbelief for a few weeks as to the times i had put myself and the project on the line — [hard to go on here without getting into the abuse/confrontation thing with one certain supervisor] — and how I would never look at anything the same again.

I like how long it took and most of it was very, very difficult. That could be a whole book, the difficulties of that job. Yet, I was so changed after it. The experience was just so different than making something for a gallery and after three weeks returning to collect it. The dialogue! There was just no going back. I'm glad that we are talking about this now because I've got a lot of thinking to do yet on that project. That is why I did not want to do the Labour project [an Artist in the Workplace project with the Ottawa and District Labour Council]. I wasn't ready. But it turned out to be something completely different. It is like a walk in the woods in autumn, you don't know what you are going to see. There are just glimpses of things because the light is shining in a certain way. It's easy to make metaphors about being in the woods because the woods are chaotic and evil and you know all the old stories about the woods and the evil critters. Community work can also be like that, and also very rewarding. But it is very hard. I don't think it is for everybody. I'm interested to watch. I wish I knew more, I wish there was more coverage of community art.

KLL There needs to be a lot more coverage, especially in regard to the relationship between labour and the arts.

cjf Labour and arts is still a mystery to me. One very nuts-and-bolts issue is when workers are working, in other words, getting paid to do certain tasks whether it is to manage, or labour or whatever. Now the artist [as was my case in the Garage project] is inserted into that space which causes a new set of problems. A further stress on the relationship is the fact that work and art were supposed to happen in a certain amount of time. That is why perhaps the artist and the analyst type of people take time to wax poetic about it, because we're not so concerned with getting a job done in an hour or when we can take the next break. And so these are big questions too that i see in labour related projects.

In terms of critiquing the art, the community artist has been challenged by other artists about compromising themselves. So I think that this line of thought about responding to the community in their context, in their local, in the parameters of their work and lives is very different than answering to gallery artists; that this is a point to understand.

KLL That is something that you have always talked about which is your belief that is you are also a member of a community, such as a worker in the Garage project, with a different set of skills and a different language to approach your task, but one who could learn and perform tasks and get payment for them too! I think that it demonstrates that art is a critical tool which can address complex cultural issues. This kind of art that you do.

cjf Thank you for recognizing the other tools involved. I think the community artist is going to move away from a certain kind of recognition that has been traditionally guarded and that is perhaps why some people would not want to see changes in the perceived role of the artist. The recognition part — I'm really glad we are having this discussion — but I am not interested in recognition now. I think the art is getting smaller and smaller and because of that, it's just becoming interesting. i think the anthropology aspect is intriguing.

I am realizing that this great thing has happened: seven year olds are coming up to me and asking me to organize the "petal thing" I did last summer. i met this one youngster upon his third visit to the winter project [La Foret Raciste]. His father said to me: "It's the third time he's been here. It's only been up for 3 days, he has to come every day." i took a picture of the young man grinning from ear to ear in front of a huge 'rasict' blue spruce. I'm really interested in how the memory of creative making works and what that means to a young child. What does it do

to a child who is raised in a community where these actions happen on a regular basis? What does that do to their potential image of self in terms of working collaboratively? So it is interesting that both of those things have revealed to me the importance of the child. Even in my talks I now discuss the "child." Yet none of these projects I mentioned were made for children.

KLL Where do you see yourself going in the next period of your artistic life?

cjf I want the experience of working with different kinds of communities. In 1989, I had the opportunity, with Women and Sport, to work with two completely different groups of kids — in terms of gender and context. I'm trying to follow that model now, something with maintenance workers, something with union people, corporate culture, schools, people in therapy, writers, my own village. You know different kinds of structures as well. Different clusters and mind sets allow me the ability to work on my dialogue skills. More and more, it's not just in my art, but in a wider reading with this ability to speak and listen, and not assume, and truly understand what the other person is attempting to express. i would like to balance that with listening to my body, Kim !!

Interview with c.j. fleury

November 12, 1998

Interview Date: November 12, 1998

Interview Place: c.j. fleury's Studio
Wakefield, Quebec

Interviewee: c.j. fleury (cjf)

Interviewer: Kim Lulashnyk (KLL)

KLL Your *Flower Petal Mandala Project* is featured in the Ontario Arts Councils' *Community Arts Workbook . . . another Vital Link*.

cjf How the Mandala Project ended up in this [*Community Arts Workbook: . . . another Vital Link*] was that I wanted to give away the 'how to' for the Mandala Project and one of the juries I had been on was partly funded by (Laidlaw?) so I called her [Melanie Fernandez] to ask for (Laidlaw's) address because I wanted to seek some funding to pay someone to post the Project as a webpage or make it into a chapbook. I'm looking to give it to someone so it can get out there and that's when she explained that the Arts Council (Ontario) was putting a book together and asked if I would like to have the Project included in the book. I had not thought of its inclusion in the book because it contained these model projects that we had juried before. It was an honour for it to be included.

The woman who edited the Mandala Project for the book [*Community Arts Workbook: . . . another Vital Link*] changed a few things. She left out that one could dry the flowers in a microwave because she felt that a lot of people did not like microwaves. I felt, however, that a lot of people also do not have a problem with microwaves and it works really well in fact. In the kitchen you can be making an art process while you are cooking or being a parent or with your kids. It is bringing life back into the kitchen; it's another way of using the kitchen space. It is like when we were casting the hands — it's in the kitchen. When I have gone into the houses of people I don't know, we are in the kitchen and it resembles being at a party. There is something about being in the kitchen that makes art very easy and it is not that it makes it of less value, just that it is easier to do. But to give the Mandala Project away is what I would really like to do. To have it in a chapbook and have it paid for and if I could have a dream Y2K project, it would be just to have those books and distribute them to schools.

After I finished the Mandala Project, a woman of the community showed me a chapbook that her daughter's-boyfriend's-mother from England had sent after

hearing about the Project. The book was about these things called “Window Dressings.” Members of the community would take a piece of wood in the traditional shape of an arch and they would use these as dressing around the well or a village spring. They cut the pieces of wood, harvested mud, patted the mud on to the board and then they would collect all these flower petals and throw these petals into the mud to make incredible mosaic images — 99% of which were religious. After reading the process I was certain that the tradition came from a pagan celebration with flowers around the village well — the water source. However, they do not know the origin of the tradition. So there is this book about the “Window Dressings” and I thought I’d like to do that: just distribute and give art free.

KLL The Mandala Project and your interest in the “Window Dressing” brings me to mind of the strong environmental involvement or environmental activism aspect in your art — something we haven’t really talked much about.

cjf That is why I am trying to work with stone.

...

KLL Can you talk a little about the process of getting the hands project from a vision to a piece?

cjf It is kind of a continuation of the Garage project except that I cast the hands knowing that I would talk to the workers while casting their hands. I have enough experience to know that conversation happens. The people just really want to talk — some talk about the future, some about the past; but each one has been so different that I cannot draw any similarities.

KLL Just as the cast hands themselves are so different. Do you have discussions on the process of the dipping and rinsing?

cjf No, they have all been incredibly different and that is why I keep wondering if I should focus my conversations with directed questions.

KLL When I was dipping my hands I wanted to do it well, do it right and not RUIN your project. *Laughs*. How are the people reacting to the ART they are actually making?

cjf So far it has been only people I know and who have known about my work either by personal contact or through reading about it. Some are “thrilled” . . .

KLL I was certainly thrilled!

cjf . . . to be in something. For instance, one woman wants to be a painter and she really knows about a lot of things in that area, especially literature. So we talked about how hard it is to be an artist. . . we talked about art, too, but mostly her wanting to be an artist. She knew way more than I did! And we really enjoy each other's company and I've known her briefly so it was really neat to get to know her better and to get to know all these people. It reminds me of Robert Theobald when he talks about 'reinventing a community.' I was thinking that my project had something to do with Theobald's thoughts on community because after each session, I definitely know the people better, and all the people that I have yet to meet — I don't know what is going to happen yet, but I know that I will definitely know them better than not knowing them at all. *Laughs*. But for the people that know me, they are so thrilled to be in an art project. It's a bit intimate, isn't it? In the beginning, I was rubbing the Vaseline on people's hands and it was people I knew very well, but as the circle is getting wider and wider, I am conscious of a boundary around how much you think people want to be touched. I believe it is about making connections with the people around you. However, it is not like these people are all going to contemporary art shows; it is just that you will know them and something will exist there and once again the art is another step removed from what really happened when you were working with the people. I did not see this project as this in the beginning as being connected to the Garage Project, but remember I told you a long time ago that I knew it was going to affect me in ways that I won't know for a really long time — I think this is one of those ways. I'm not sure it is the right thing to do but I CAN'T STOP DOING IT! It's fascinating and yet it is so simple.

KLL But it is not simple, really. The time . . .

cjf It is sort of like knitting, isn't it?

KLL Or like typing a story on the computer or like telling a story out loud. It's real time and I think the project is very large.

cjf It is very large.

KLL But not simple.

cjf What I like about it is that they are all portraits of the people — not what they look like: big ears, bumpy noses, wide cheekbones or what their chins are like and so on — but each hand is about individuals with separate and significant

lives.

KLL It's almost like a reflex or a shadow.

cjf It's an extended reading, really. I think that is why in the beginning, I was driven toward elderly people's hands rather than all ages of persons because it seemed to me that one would look at the piece and see that it was composed of many hands of aged people and that a realization would hit that there were all these different people in there. At some point a tidal wave of recognition would come that all those people in that piece volunteered and gave their time in the making of it.

KLL And all those people, all those hands tell not only the story of the making, of their bodies, but of the stories that we will never hear — the stories of their lives.

cjf It is an interesting discussion about community as well which involve the issues of preservation and respect. That's the difference between public work and private work: it is okay that I don't have it resolved yet.

...

In discussion involving the *Women's Monument Against Violence*

cjf Mary and I went together and Eleanor Milne who was the sculptor for Canada took us to this quarry and helped us to meet these people and get a really good price. Neither of us had worked in stone before. We came up with the layout for the project in our studio. Then there was an engineer that had to do the drawings. Mary worked with the engineer and got the drawings done for underneath the monument. It was a good project and I really enjoyed doing it. For both of us it was the first — well Mary had project-managed big landscape events before such as decks over rivers and worked for the City of Kanata . . . — so the idea was when we started doing this we got these business cares and we were going to be the "Agents of Gaia" and work on similar projects together. We worked on the Women's Monument and the one on the Island and then we both did Art Terre but as individual arts.

But the Women's Monument was really important and it was the first time I've worked with a landscape architect before. Mary had taken some sculpture courses but she really had not been doing much art. So we both grew a lot learning from each other, learning from Eleanor, learning from the system. It was a great project to do but the most important thing was that it got up and it got in that park. We made \$750.00 and probably worked 1000 hours and to this day, our role is to take

care of ordering the stones and being in charge of getting the stones for each local woman murdered. The Women's group who is in charge of it is a women's group that has come together to form *The Women's Monument Committee*. We do not know who they are, we only ever met a few at the meetings. They call us when they want more stones and go about fund-raising.

When we came up with the idea in the beginning there was a spiral and there was a spiral into it and you would enter the space, just walk just a very little spiral but we had to do another version. That is why the Monument at present looks just like the end of the spiral — the last curl — because the space had to be accessible by a wheelchair.

...

From my feminist work, I've learned that you have got to accept people and just go a little deeper than what is surface. The reason that i wanted the *Garage Project* was that i believed it would function like a big test — working that way with people, working on a personal level with them. Even though art is so difficult to talk about, if you talk honestly with people (and it seems to me you should be able to talk art with people even though it is difficult) you can make connections. And it seemed to me that just doing work about the female kept blocking that ability to make connections because the conversation could not go any further. However, what i found was that with that public art project, and public art in general, the interaction affords one the ability to discuss; however, it is almost impossible to discuss feminism. Feminism still really interests me and as i move from one project to another, it is something that i hold near and dear to me — like when we sit down to talk about public art and begin to discuss parenting or mothering or gender roles. I am always hoping that in public art conversations that the conversation comes back to that.

KLL Feminism is one of the areas that really started your move to public art: skills, community relations, grassroots activism. You have mentioned that you think feminism is public art or public art is feminist.

cjf I believe that when people who think this way — and it is not just women — when one goes into a space and talks about a space for what it is (not just geographically but how a site-user uses the space and what the energy is, the emotions are, or what the space gives to it) then the idea of public art is going to change.

KLL Is that what *workshopping community* is about?

cjf I thought the phrase worked well with the discussion of the medium being the interaction (although I did not make that up — medium is the interaction — it was another artist). I believe it is an idea that a lot of people would use. The action is the art. I told that to Vivienne [Laxdal] and she asked me to explain to her what i meant by “the action is the art.” When I finished explaining she said to me, “Well that is theatre.” And I said, “OH! I guess!!” So there is this person who is a playwright and an actor and I was talking about something in *The Garage Project* which I compared with dance because when dance was over only what existed was memory. Vivienne argued that theatre was the same because if you have video or the script then that is not what theatre is. So maybe there are NO WALLS and there is NO DEFINITION and it is all fluid and we just have to do what we do and we better damn well know what RESPECT is. I often wonder, as it is always theorized, what came first, the word or the image? Art is another language. This is what i am discovering with the Hands right now, or *The Garage Project* previously. I do not want to make something (well, sometimes I would like to work on a few of my “own” things) in general. I want to begin the discussion before the thing is made and i want the making of the thing — “THE OBJECT” — to be something that just came out through the relation. The conversation made plastic one day. The object is never what the whole dialogue was about. But imagine if people went around and the artists went around and the conversation and the chance to talk to people and the talk was what was valued as art and all that other stuff was inconsequential. And everyone could have it and the pricing of the art would crumble and the objects could just be tradable as the conversation went on. IT’S A COMPLETELY UTOPIAN IDEA, but it is the wonderful idea that would be my dream to achieve.

APPENDIX C

Edited Correspondence

c.j. fleury

Email March 30, 1993

email March 30, 1998

c.j. fleury to Kim Lulashnyk

. . .

i am tickled that you like the Racist Forest. Vivienne will be too, i think. Preparing for — and all the other stages of that project — as well as taking it down this afternoon — showed us a lot about collaboration / speed thinking / humour / stress and evaluation. At least there is GROWTH to be had in all this work we all are going through . . . and when we are older we WILL be ABLE to select AND adjust the speed at which we go. Yes there are forces from without . . . but they are our teachers and testers, i have come to see . . . and it is how we use them that helps us face our quests, spin riches from our choices and find wisdom with the crones and boy kings. (On a psychological level, i was kicking and screaming all through marriage work but seeing how, in fact, it IS personal work and coming to a sense making level at long last)

The title for your April 4th presentation brings it [the verbalization of her term “workshopping community”] to the point and it's fine with me that the words are out. It is verbalized with respect so i hope it is heard with the same. If you are excited by it and we share concerns about caring language, we are already two who 'get it'. Thanks for clarifying how new dialogue relies on old understanding . . . i will carry that near my tongue for some time.

i wouldn't worry about not having focused on the mother/ing body because your 'work' research will provide a really strong platform from which to spring if you continue that way. i support the 'never erase' advice and will add that the mysteries and ghost lines of pentimento give beauty and energy and REAL traces of chance taking, perceptual darting and the excitement of a thinking life.

ANSWERS:

1. There were various numbers participating in the Flower Petal Mandala Project FPMP. In all, about thirty people pre-gathered organic materials, about ten others arrived, went away to gather and returned with arm loads of fresh materials. And about fifty other people came through, helped, later many, many observers passed by.
2. Pierre Lalonde — sprout grower and Mandala watercolourist. But really, the community work of Phil [village poet] and Glennis Cohen was a terrific inspiration and model for me. Their work is seminal in the project. When i realized that the Mandala was such a universal symbol and that a local villager

painted them, i acted out of fear of offending him, and invited him to join me on the project. i openly shared all the details of the dream, my fascination with community art and my intention to give the project freely. Later, to my dismay and great disbelief, we had quite a lengthy and difficult ordeal over authorship of the project. i was working on the planning issues before i invited him to be part. There were a number of uncomfortable things for me to realize. i wrote a lot about this. Much arose from Pierre's ideas of making money with the flower petal mandala. i can not control what i give out but i can tell what i intended. It is very important to me that the project is recognized as one that was DESIGNED and presented and INTENDED to be freely given . . . AND that a community or ANY group can do on their own, the information was always meant to be as universal as the mandala. i am looking for a way to spread the fine energy of this community making. It was invited to be in the upcoming VITAL LINKS workbook.

3. The FPMP was a subversive action intended to raise awareness of the potential a space (specifically, the recently vacated firehall adjacent to the biblio Wakefield) can offer, when it is used in a creative and respectful manner. It is inspired by the freely given services of the volunteer library workers and the concept of energy and knowledge freely radiating outwards from a (sacred) center . . . hub of the village or self. In an effort to support a magnificent proposal that had been ignored by the town council . . . An ad-hoc group had prepared a most wonderful research/study/proposal to use the recently room as a multi-purpose community room . . . i began questioning WHAT i could do to RAISE AWARENESS. After an unsuccessful attempt to get a letter-writing campaign i faced the idea of what the space could tell me, what the space could mean, what a temporary installation could be and HOW I COULD INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY???
4. ((here's a copy of something i sent someone - you can use it if you want)) [fleury cites the material on the FPMP submitted to the Vital Links workbook referred to earlier. Consult bibliography for reference and further information]

. . .

What i feel works (worked) about the process is that diverse people experience the trust and 'chance taking' of building a unique — yet universal — symbol together in an open situation that reintegrates the creative experience back into everyday life. The project functions as a homage to nature in its collection, preparation, use and disposal of the materials as well as through the tactile and structuring memories it engenders.

Briefly: "THE FLOWER PETAL MANDALA PROJECT" was a most successful

event that saw people of all ages and backgrounds come together for a day to share their materials and energy in the building of a stunning sixteen-foot mandala, which later was put back into Nature's cycle. i invited a local Mandala painter to share in the organizing and along with many people from the community, we gathered materials from Nature's wild and cultivated gardens, and invited participation. It was at once ancient, new, simple, joyous and so much more on individual and collective levels.

4. Flower petals come from all sorts of wild, cultivated places and even vegetable gardens, secret caches of meaning, etc. The design of the mandala was dictated by the materials, and a continual feedback of the people in the group.
5. [The following question was asked: "How long did it take to complete the Mandala?"]
 - a) a lifetime
 - b) a full summer
 - c) about five hours
6. Maggie from the health food store had to make an angel in the center. Several participants came to collect small jars/boxes for mementoes. A few of us swept it up and threw it in the river from the new covered bridge. After the Mandala was finished i asked the group to vote on putting it to compost or the river. The river won!
7. Because it came FULLY NAMED . . . in a morning dream and hovered on my eyelids for minutes . . . while i felt the morning breeze on my face, listened to the birds and 'watched' myself in the dream walking round and round this fragrant, pulsing flower petal mandala. It was sacred and i can not treat this dream with anything but the utmost of respect.
8. [The following question was asked in regard to *The Racist Forest*: "How did the collaboration with another artist turn out?"]

Working with Vivienne was rewarding and up front and challenging and intelligent. We were fully two artists collaborating on all development, content, materials, placement, installation, publicity and the list goes on. We have been discussing the implications, methods and community approach of this project since last October. That was a true CO-llaboration.

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Edited Correspondence

c.j. fleury

Email No Date, 1998

email No Date

c.j. fleury to Kim Lulashnyk

...

i enjoyed how our discussion was [is and will be] informed by/questioned language and all the recognized and unrecognized components of it. Thinking that over, as i lay in the morning light, i felt a sense of regret at having used the word manipulate when we were discussing 'community'. 'Manipulate' in terms of 'people' completely turns me off for it echoes of control. In searching for something that related to an exploration — as in an artist "exploring materials." "exploring new territories, liaisons and ramifications" that word popped out . . . and took me by surprise! i'm sure because i was thinking of community as material to work . . . as an artist would want to understand all the implications of a material that they had decided to work with . . . to commit themselves to.

Come to think of it . . . i have actually spent more time on, there has been more consistency in working from/exploring, the human spirit/relation than any one material in particular. Where i have moved from casual landscape painting to very formal academic seed drawings through shields, metal, granite, the landscape and right back into the community, i have always worked in response to the human condition, the question of the tender spot. i could. NOW, actually take you through my slides and reveal the thread . . . to you and to myself!!

...

i mean, take the ODLIC, for instance . . . Labour activist is a term i don't feel qualified for. but doing an entire piece about othering, homophobia, corporate agendas and how this effects lives and spirits of individuals . . . that seems "home" to me. Or making a series of chairs that embody the conflicting dynamics of that workplace — more specifically its crushed and angry spirits, its tired bodies that aren't seen as 'working' if they sit down. Take the intimacy of a chair, how it touches and supports the human frame . . . how these ones struggle to be/yet disallow the functional in their macho mis-structuring.

The visceral nature of the seed drawings really threatened people. i was labouring sixty and seventy hours on academic studies of apple cores. To my husband, Mr. 'Rockliffe', and a number of the public i was portraying 'cunts'. "NOT"!! Those topographies of encased potential were so fascinating to me at the time. Husband # 2, hated them and the hair i grew on my legs . . . just to see if i really had the guts to be myself - in totality - as i faced the anorexia i had just come through and a world, replete with guilt, outside skating. As well as drawing, i was running and during the winter choreographed

(experimental vs classical) and performed a fourteen-minute alternative skating piece (The Circle Cycle), through SAW gallery on the canal . . . totally alternative for Winterlude [Winterlude is a three-week National Festival held in Ottawa during February]. . . . i must have realized the marriage was doomed when he kept asking me when i would do some real art, why did i have to do these 'silly' drawings. For a couple of years i would draw for eight hours in a row, exploring the fleshy convolutions, the tenuous threads that held segments together, the transition from pulp to skin, all the while lost in classical music and floating in some cerebral place. i conclude i must be thinking about how humans' potential was hidden under fleshy buffer zones. So many questions were revealed to me . . . i ended up leaving my three story house in the Glebe one day after supper, with \$214 and my skates, a week or so before my show at Wallacks. 84?

To answer some questions . . . i am influenced by the fact that we grew up with real paintings in our house. i knew it because the you could touch the brushstrokes. I knew father's sister was a painter but she was not part of my life. She did give us some nudes and a hunt scene on paper and my mother had neat stuff under the glass on our coffee table. i can't remember not doing art. When i was in elementary school i would make these incredible paper flowers. i only ever made enough money to buy more supplies . . . but i was so turned on . . . riding my bike to get those supplies and touching the coloured tissue papers. i could just stand there for some time staring at the colours and how they affected each other. And the lady in the store would keep asking me if she could help me and i would just stand there . . . and think about how the whole range of colours and how i could spend my few dollars at fifteen-cents-a-sheet and ride home without wrinkling them. And later, watercolour greeting cards on beautiful English stationery. i would spend, like \$8 on the cream card set and then work for a couple of hours on each card and practically give them away and then do it all over on the next set. At that point i discovered india ink. guess i must have begun to feel 'artsy' then but never thought of myself as one because i had started skating and was seduced by the ability to lean and race through the wind expressing myself to all this wonderful music. To this day the smell of arenas makes my stomach nervous and my heart race. In my teens i found one of my mother's sketch books under the piano seat. It had only a few worked pages. She, as always was very concerned with perfectionism and control. But i poured over the three or four pages a lot. My brother was always practicing guitar, my sister drawing clothes. i knew it was "something" about the Fleurys.

No, i can't make a very good distinction between my working life and my personal life. And i know that my survival might be easier if i could . . . but it all rolls into one big expression for me. Actually i like it that way. i just wish i could stop myself from thinking sometimes. It worked for a while when i began rowing . . . because i was so afraid of falling in the river. The best i can do is not work in my studio or office on the

weekends and lately trying not to do art stuff at night. Here, you can insert the baby diatribe . . . ugh!! But i am aiming at being a very open sixty year old with a solid formative period behind me — then i imagine i will be able to do something calm and unfettered. As you can see i dread the accusations of being unfocussed !

Mothering was the kick in the pants that made me use my time more wisely. Having a birth that was a near death experience shook me to the bone. Mothering is half over for me . . . i am aware the period MUST end.

My parenting and my mothering is completely informed by feminist practice. My disdain for violence and yearn to explore communication and understanding are probably linked to a short lived relationship i was in with a younger man who was physically abusive. i moved out from him the day he threw me across a room — i found myself traveling sideways through space like a character in a Marc Chagall painting. i know about being hurled through space from figure skating but this was unbelievable!!

The lower case is admiration for the shapes of the letters and more recently, i admit, my disdain for big EGO. i am a very insecure individual. It's just that people won't believe me when i summon up my guts to admit my fears. [meanies !]

The cj stands for Claude Johanne. i was supposed to be a boy, Jean, but when i came out a girl, they called me Johanne and when i was old enough to think about it, i didn't think i was a Johanne, other JoAnnes were so femm-ee and gutless. Besides in my teens when i was taking watercolour lessons my mother's way of complementing my abilities was to tell me i "painted like a man." We used to have screaming matches in my early teens. She would shriek that she "Would make a lady out of me, no matter what!!!" And i would firmly yell back, "Oh no you won't." To me 'ladies' played bridge and were 'high-heeled-stay-at-homes' doomed for depression. cj was how i signed my early watercolours so that no one would be able to tell what gender i was. [73]

But i didn't get called that in public till the year i toured with Ice Capades.[78] i was a new anorexic, trying to run to full time art school, trying to run away from the competitive figure skating world, trying to recover from the briefest of failed marriages (1½ years) by doing something "on the road." Touring with them was the run-away-to-join-the-circus icon in my life. There were 3 JoAnnes at that hollow August rink in Bakersfield. The director just asked me what my initials were and TOLD me that i would be cj. Ice Capades is owned by MGM. There's a very Hollywood /showgirl mentality that permeates the scene. Tits-and-ass and lots of queens . . . Among other things, i was the understudy for the Australian Champion who had the stereotypical sexy number. It's interesting because that year of sex-symbolism was my discovery of feminism. A colleague, an adopted person was reading *MY MOther/My Self*. i borrowed it and

discovered the Bibliography . . . the path was discovered at twenty three. The revealing was laboured.

The evolution has brought me to a point where i realize the need to fully accept (as opposed to talk about) the reality . . . by going out and DOING it at the most powerful edge i can — that being the public edge. To accept the challenge of answering my own question — WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY? — is about as daring with myself as i can be. There is no hiding behind, or for that matter support from, the rhetoric of curators and the systems of the art world . . . Maybe that's the scariest part of it all. In community art the artist actually has to DO IT themselves WITH the audience/participant and live to evaluate the experience WITH the same. Doing community art in my own village pushes that even further as i have seen in the Flower Petal Mandala Project and the Racist Forest. There are many difficult, challenging and experimental issues to be examined. One would only hope that with this opening would come respect and sustain-ability. That's where i am so intrigued with the generational aspect. i am most recently 'blown away' by the remarks of five and seven-year-olds about these two Wakefield projects.

In my community art practice i understand that the artist has the difficult task of maintaining a dynamic tension among the parties involved as multiple pathways are named, navigated and assessed. Later, certain pathway experiences take seat in the memory of the non-artist and help weave their inner fabric of belief and perception. There is, as i see it, no closure . . . because the experience of touching those creative/receptive/exploring seeds within each individual has the continuing ability to resonate from their own inner place. The non-arts individual gets to sense the synapse of the artist's way. to realize that, in fact it has always been there, IN themselves. It's not that doing community art will breed a plethora of new artists, but to actually name, work with and celebrate the creative process . . . it's language and energies . . . is exciting to me beyond belief. Lately i've been wondering about the idea that making art objects is small by comparison to the wider exploration and implications of making/supporting CREATIVE and IMAGINATIVE energy. i circle back to the notion of survival . . .

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