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## Faces of (and for) Toronto: Community-Engaged Portrait Projects in the Neoliberal City

Jennifer E. Orpana, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Sarah Bassnett, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art and Visual Culture

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FACES OF (AND FOR) TORONTO: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PORTRAIT  
PROJECTS IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

(Thesis format: Integrated Article)

by

Jennifer Elizabeth Orpana

Graduate Program in Visual Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctorate in Art and Visual Culture

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

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Recently, we have seen a rise in portrait projects worldwide as they are used for everything from marketing and city branding to street art and activism. In this dissertation, I examine the depths of the seemingly straightforward visual trope of portraiture in community-engaged photographic projects in Toronto. Through integrated articles, this study shows how portrait projects variously support and challenge neoliberalism. This dissertation examines how photographic portraiture is used to constitute communities that are simultaneously the *public face* of the diversity of the neoliberal city and the *targets* of neoliberal rationality, policies, and procedures that further marginalize or exclude these groups. Furthermore, this research illustrates how portrait projects variably demonstrate the intensified inequality of neoliberalism, while, at the same time, their focus on identity and community sometimes obscures the systemic causes of exclusion, discrimination, and poverty that communities face. “Faces of (and for) Toronto” contributes to the study of art, photography, and visual culture by considering new roles for photographers, subjects, and photographic portraiture in a global neoliberal era.

Chapter 1 looks at how Pierre Maraval’s *Mille Femmes* (2008) and Dan Bergeron’s *Regent Park Portraits* (2008) harnessed the power of the spectacle to support and subvert urban neoliberalism in Toronto. Chapter 2 examines Bergeron’s project, *The Unaddressed* (2009), and discusses how this series of wheatpaste portrait posters contested neoliberal austerity measures and the stigmatization of homelessness. This chapter also looks at how the vandalism of these works embodied harsh neoliberal worldviews. Chapter 3 examines a civic art project composed of hundreds of photographic tiles, entitled, *Jameson Avenue Impressions* (2009), and situates it within Toronto’s creativity-led, global city strategy. By considering the visual impact of its consequent neglect, chapter three reveals how this civic placemaking strategy now challenges the vibrant image of the Parkdale community it once sought to represent. Finally, chapter 4 focuses on Manifesto Festival’s participation in JR’s *Inside Out Project* (2011) to contest proposed funding cutbacks and to celebrate diversity. Through this case study, I explore how JR’s participatory methodology encourages citizens to perform neoliberal ideas of citizenship and community.

## KEYWORDS

community-engaged photography, portrait photography, street art, urban entrepreneurialism, neoliberalism, contestation, Toronto

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

As I write these acknowledgements, I cannot believe how my life has changed since beginning this dissertation in September 2010. Not only have I had the incredible opportunity to be rigorously trained by the dedicated and talented faculty at The University of Western Ontario's Department of Visual Arts, but I have also become a parent to an energetic little boy. Though becoming a new mother and completing a doctoral program are not mutually exclusive experiences, I humbly confess that I could not imagine reaching this point without the care, support, and guidance of a number of people.

I am thankful to the members of my advisory committee, who have each questioned, pushed, and inspired me. I have had the unbelievable good fortune of working with Dr. Sarah Bassnett, my primary advisor, who has literally and figuratively seen me through thick and thin during the last several years. I have appreciated Sarah's thoughtful and thorough feedback, as well as her advice, generosity, and sense of humour. In addition to serving as a trustworthy advisor, Sarah has been my advocate and a champion of my work. She has supported me on every leg of this journey and has enriched my experience by pointing me toward new opportunities, mentoring me through teaching assignments, and employing me as a research assistant. It is no wonder that in times of doubt, my close friends and family ask, "Well, what does Sarah say?" Sarah has kept me on track throughout this program and for that I will be forever grateful. I would also like to thank my committee members, Professors Kirsty Robertson and Patrick Mahon, for their feedback and encouragement throughout this process. They each approached my work from unique points of view and I have benefitted greatly from their careful readings of my work.

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Sprengher, Kelly Wood, Joy James, and David Merritt. To my peers: it has been a pleasure learning with you and seeing your work develop. I would also like to thank the members of the department's incredible administrative staff. In particular, I am thankful to Paula Dias, Marlene Jones, Sandy Leboldus, and Joanne Gribbon for keeping me organized and for always greeting me with warm smiles and friendly conversations.

Over the course of this degree, I have enjoyed a number of exciting opportunities to teach. In my first year, I taught the History of Photography undergraduate course and I am very thankful to my primary advisor and to the department for helping with my first foray into academic teaching. Additionally, I would like to thank Doris Van Den Brekel for inviting me to intern in the Education Department at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), where I designed and lead workshops for museum interpreters. I learned so much from the AGO staff and volunteers and I am appreciative of the time granted to me by curators Sophie Hackett and Michelle Jacques, who graciously met with me to discuss exhibitions. I would also like to thank my friends at Soulpepper Theatre Company, for welcoming me back to teach arts workshops for the Youth Mentorship Program. Some of my most cherished teaching moments involve my work with these great collaborators: Paula Wing, Farwah Gheewala, Molly Gardner, and the enthusiastic corps of Soulpepper youth. Finally, on my parental leave, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to partner with the staff at the Parkdale-High Park Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and the AGO to host a day at the museum for moms and babies. Throughout these experiences, I thoroughly enjoyed sharing my passion for the arts with a diverse range of people, from the tiniest tots to the more seasoned museum volunteers, and I have gained so much from my encounters with these creative communities.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	xiv
 INTRODUCTION: FACES OF (AND FOR) TORONTO .....	 1
Why Toronto? (6) • Literature Review (19) • Theoretical Framework (32) • Methodologies (47)	
 CHAPTER 1.....	 54
1 FACE VALUE: SPECTACULAR PORTRAITS AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY .....	54
1.1 The Spectacle as a Technology of Power .....	59
1.2 Cultural Spectacles and the Entrepreneurial City .....	67
1.3 Luminato Festival, Toronto's Festival of Arts and Creativity .....	75
1.4 <i>Toronto's Mille Femmes</i> (2008) .....	83
1.5 <i>Regent Park Portraits</i> (2008).....	92
1.6 Reconsidering Spectacular Portraits of Communities .....	106
 CHAPTER 2.....	 110
2 TORONTO'S <i>UNADDRESSED</i> : PICTURING HOMELESSNESS IN A NEOLIBERAL ERA .....	110
2.1 Homelessness in a Neoliberal Era.....	113
2.2 Advocacy in Urban Design, Art, and Visual Culture .....	125
2.3 <i>Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter</i> at the ROM (2008–2009) .....	134
2.4 <i>The Unaddressed</i> (2009).....	139
2.5 Street-Level Manifestations of Neoliberal Thought .....	153



2.6 The Politics of Viewing Images of Homelessness in a Neoliberal Era .....	160
<b>CHAPTER 3.....</b>	<b>164</b>
3 FIRST <i>IMPRESSIONS</i> , THEN AND NOW: COMMUNITY PORTRAITS AND CIVIC PLACEMAKING .....	164
3.1 Representing Parkdale .....	170
3.2 Urban Neoliberalism, Neo-Reformism, and Developments in Public Art .....	175
3.3 South Parkdale and Jameson Avenue .....	182
3.4 <i>Jameson Avenue Impressions</i> (2009).....	189
3.5 <i>First Impressions</i> , Then .....	214
3.6 <i>First Impressions</i> , Now .....	219
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>	<b>226</b>
4 TURNING TORONTO <i>INSIDE OUT</i> : PERFORMING NEOLIBERAL CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNITY .....	226
4.1 JR's Global Art Project.....	230
4.2 Goals and Parameters of <i>Inside Out</i> .....	235
4.3 The Global Rise of <i>Inside Out</i> in a Neoliberal Era.....	246
4.4 <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> (2011) .....	254
4.5 Facing Ford: A Time of "Peril and Opportunity" in Toronto.....	258
4.6 Performing Neoliberal Citizenship and Community through <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> .....	265
4.7 The Cultural Impact of <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> .....	268
<b>CONCLUSION: FACING FORWARD &amp; LOOKING AHEAD.....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>CURRICULUM VITAE .....</b>	<b>320</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

### CHAPTER 1

Figure 1.1:	Pierre Maraval, Portrait of Jennifer Orpana, <i>Toronto's Mille Femmes</i> , 2008. Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval. ....	55
Figure 1.2:	Installation of Pierre Maraval's, <i>Toronto's Mille Femmes</i> (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval. ....	56
Figure 1.3:	Installation view of Pierre Maraval's, <i>Toronto's Mille Femmes</i> (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval. ....	56
Figure 1.4:	Installation view of Pierre Maraval's, <i>Toronto's Mille Femmes</i> (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008) Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	86
Figure 1.5:	Dan Bergeron and an assistant installing a portrait of Windy (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.....	94
Figure 1.6:	Dan Bergeron, <i>Regent Park Portraits—Tyrone</i> , 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.....	96
Figure 1.7:	Dan Bergeron, <i>Regent Park Portraits—Fathima</i> , 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.....	96
Figure 1.8:	Dan Bergeron, <i>Regent Park Portraits—Windy</i> , 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.....	97
Figure 1.9:	Dan Bergeron, <i>Regent Park Portraits—Valda</i> , 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.....	97
Figure 1.10:	Image of Tyrone being destroyed by a backhoe as part of the Regent Park Revitalization Project (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios. ....	105

## CHAPTER 2

- Figure 2.1: Photograph of Lisa Fischer posing for her photograph at Bergeron’s studio (Fauxreel Studios, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios. .... 142
- Figure 2.2: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Ron Craven, “Don’t u dare deny my existence,” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios..... 143
- Figure 2.3: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Daniel Dempster, “For me this was not a choice!” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios..... 144
- Figure 2.4: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Andrew Thomas, “The system is broken... I am not,” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios. .... 145
- Figure 2.5: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Leslie Morrison, “Stop giving handouts to the rich and start giving handouts to the poor,” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios..... 146
- Figure 2.6: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Martin Beebe, “I’d rather beg than steal,” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios..... 154
- Figure 2.7: Photograph of Martin Beebe’s portrait poster six months after it was pasted at the site (Toronto, Ontario, c. 2010). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios. .... 155
- Figure 2.8: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Traci Noble, “Without ID you can’t get ahead. Without ID you can’t get benefits,” *Who Are You Without ID?* (2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios..... 158
- Figure 2.9: Photograph of Traci Noble’s portrait poster ten months after it was pasted at the site (Toronto, Ontario, c. 2010). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios. .... 159

## CHAPTER 3

- Figure 3.1: Photograph of Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young’s 2009 project, *Jameson Avenue “Impressions”* (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. .... 164

Figure 3.2:	Detail of didactic tiles for <i>Impressions</i> , 2009 (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana..	165
Figure 3.3:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail of peeling tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	166
Figure 3.4:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail of graffiti on the tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	166
Figure 3.5:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail of litter around the tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.....	167
Figure 3.6:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young's, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail of a peeling tile (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	168
Figure 3.7:	Photograph documenting the Jameson Avenue Revitalization Project process (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2008–2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.....	190
Figure 3.8:	Photograph of Jameson Avenue sidewalk with the old configuration of cobblestones (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, c. 2007–2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.....	190
Figure 3.9:	Photograph of Jameson Avenue tree planters prior to the Jameson Avenue Revitalization Project (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, c. 2007–2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto. ....	191
Figure 3.10:	Photograph of Jameson Avenue with the reconstructed sidewalks and tree planters. Detail of James Thierry Bravo's redesigned cobblestones (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto. ....	196
Figure 3.11:	Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009. Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	204
Figure 3.12:	Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009. Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	205
Figure 3.13:	Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009. Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	206
Figure 3.14:	Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009. Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	206

Figure 3.15:	Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009. Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	207
Figure 3.16:	Kate Young, Photograph of Mother India, Fine Indian Cuisine restaurant storefront for <i>Impressions</i> (1456 Queen Street West, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young....	208
Figure 3.17:	Kate Young, Photograph of a view from a balcony for <i>Impressions</i> (Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.....	209
Figure 3.18:	Kate Young, Photograph of traffic on the Gardiner Expressway for <i>Impressions</i> (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young. ....	209
Figure 3.19:	Photograph of Bridgette Estrela sealing up tiles and Kate Young sorting tiles at Bravo’s temporary studio (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.....	212
Figure 3.20:	Photograph of Kate Young sorting tiles at Bravo’s temporary studio (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.....	213
Figure 3.21:	Photograph of portrait tiles sorted on the studio floor (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.....	213
Figure 3.22:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail of tiles with mud and snow (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 5 February 2014). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	221
Figure 3.23:	Photograph of a Jameson Avenue tree planter box covered in snow and garbage (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 5 February 2014). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	221
Figure 3.24:	Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, <i>Impressions</i> , 2009. Detail showing graffiti (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana. ....	222

## CHAPTER 4

Figure 4.1:	Cover of <i>Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture Festival Magazine</i> , Vol. 5 (2011). Photograph by Che Kothari. Permission courtesy of Che Kothari and Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture.....	227
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Figure 4.2:	Che Kothari wheatpasting Denzel’s portrait to the wall (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph by Brian LaPointe. Permission courtesy of Che Kothari and Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture.....	227
Figure 4.3:	<i>Toronto Inside Out</i> poster being wheatpasted near the intersection of Queen Street and Spadina Avenue (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Ahmed Sagarwala. ....	229
Figure 4.4:	JR, <i>28 Millimeters, Face2Face</i> , March 2007 (Separation Wall, Palestinian Side in Bethlehem). Photograph and Permission Courtesy of JR.....	233
Figure 4.5:	Photo documentation of the <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan. ....	237
Figure 4.6:	Photo documentation of the <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan. ....	246
Figure 4.7:	Photo documentation of <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Ahmed Sagarwala. ....	257
Figure 4.8:	Photo documentation of the <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan. ....	257
Figure 4.9:	Photo documentation of the <i>Toronto Inside Out</i> group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan. ....	264

## LIST OF APPENDICES

---

APPENDIX 1:	
Ethics Approval Notice .....	312
APPENDIX 2:	
Letter of Information & Consent .....	313
APPENDIX 3:	
Consent Forms .....	316
APPENDIX 4:	
List of Interviews .....	318
APPENDIX 5:	
Permission to Use Copyrighted Material—Request Letter .....	319

## INTRODUCTION

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### FACES OF (AND FOR) TORONTO

In the last few decades, there has been a surge in community-engaged visual strategies that put us face-to-face with lives and experiences of individuals and communities. These projects are inspired by global art movements and new research methodologies, many of which utilize participatory photography to make authoritative statements about communities. From Photovoice projects that place cameras in the hands of marginalized people to viral videos that encourage us to reconsider persistent stereotypes, the number and variety of art-inspired projects by socially conscious artists, photographers, videographers, outreach workers, and everyday citizens are on the rise. In particular, photographic portrait projects have become an exceedingly popular visual strategy for “putting a human face” on a diverse array of communities, causes, and even, corporations and civic plans. More and more, we encounter large-scale portrait projects in contemporary art, street art, entrepreneurial displays, activism, public art, and user-generated online projects. In line with these trends, several photographic portrait projects have sought to represent, and articulate messages about, Toronto’s communities. These projects capture the everyday people of the city through portrait photography to highlight a range of characteristics—from the diversity, creativity, and civic-mindedness of Toronto citizens, to the resiliency and marginality of the city’s more disenfranchised community members. Through these projects, the “faces of Toronto” have been popping up almost everywhere, attesting to the willingness of Torontonians to represent themselves, their communities, their causes, and their city. In this dissertation, I examine the recent, global rise of community-engaged photographic portrait projects, focusing on Toronto’s participation in this emergent trend in collective portraiture.

More specifically, this study investigates the political, social, and economic contexts surrounding a selection of Toronto case studies to consider the connections between these visual projects and the processes of neoliberalism. On the one hand, the rise of neoliberalism is associated with the time of the Thatcher and Reagan



administrations, which began around the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>1</sup> This era of neoliberalism reduced the role of government and shifted the responsibility of social welfare onto citizens, and it has been linked to a “new regime of capitalist accumulation” that goes by a number of names, including: “post-Fordist, neo-Fordist, neo-Taylorist, flexible, [and] liberal productivist,” to name a few examples.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, neoliberalism is a multifaceted concept that has been defined as a post-Keynesian economic theory, a pedagogy and cultural politics, a set of ideologies, a governmentality, and a system of evolving and adaptive technologies of power.<sup>3</sup> In the last several decades, neoliberal economic theory and policies have resulted in hotly contested developments worldwide, including the deregulation of the global marketplace, the increased commodification and privatization of goods and services, the reduction of social welfare programs, and growing inequality, particularly with regard to race, class, gender, and labour.<sup>4</sup> Today, as scholars Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton explain, neoliberalism has become “hegemonic political thought.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, neoliberalism and its “‘cousin’ globalization,”<sup>6</sup> as well as forms of global capitalism, are now central to

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada,” *Antipode* 34, 3 (2002): 580.

<sup>2</sup> Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 580. In this summary of the political economy of neoliberalism, Keil draws on the work of David Harvey (2000), Bob Jessop (2001); and Alain Lipietz (2001), among many others.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, 37–64 (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996); Engin Isin, “Governing Toronto Without Government: Liberalism and Neoliberalism,” *Studies in Political Economy* 56 (Summer 1998): 169–191; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Wendy Larner, “Neo-Liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” *Studies in Political Economy* 63 (2000): 5–25; Henry A. Giroux, “The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics,” *College Literature* 32, 1 (Winter 2005): 1–19; and Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil, and Douglas Young, *Changing Toronto: Governing Urban Neoliberalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 28–29.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000): 176; Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 580; and Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, eds., *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Braedley and Luxton, eds., *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 581. Here, Keil notes that neoliberalism and globalization are central to social theory.

a range of disciplinary studies, as scholars and theorists investigate how these developments have variously restructured our cities, catalyzed new forms of resistance, and altered our understandings of everyday life, community, culture, and even ourselves.<sup>7</sup> Informed by interdisciplinary scholarship that acknowledges cities as central sites of global neoliberalism and that illustrates how neoliberalism takes “context-, territory-, and/or place-specific forms,”<sup>8</sup> this study focuses on a small collection of contemporary portrait projects in one urban site to offer a nuanced investigation of the many uses of this visual trope. In addition to its plenitude of possible case studies, Toronto offered an ideal point of departure as it has been deeply impacted by neoliberal developments and it has served as an epicenter for contestation and resistance.

Through a collection of integrated articles, “Faces of (and for) Toronto,” investigates how Toronto photographic portrait projects, and responses to their visual outcomes, have reflected, engaged with, served, or contested urban neoliberalism. I discuss the complexities of these projects by recognizing their potential to elicit multiple, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations. I also address how this visual strategy recruits citizens to perform a range of neoliberal subjectivities and how in some cases, this methodology has been used to market the city’s diverse citizens as symbolic capital. Furthermore, I address the powerful messages that were initially conveyed through these

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example: Doreen Massey, *World City* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador, 2000; 2002); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S. Sheppard, eds., *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2007); David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012); Braedley and Luxton (2010); Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London & New York: Verso, 2013); Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund, “The Responsibilities of the Poor: Performing Neoliberal Citizenship within the Bureaucratic Field,” *Social Service Review* 87, 2 (June 2013): 292–318.

<sup>8</sup> Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, eds. *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002): Preface, Kindle edition. See also: Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004): xi–xii; and Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” *Antipode* 34, 3 (July 2002): 383–404.

projects, as well as their changing meaning over time as a result of their exposure to urban revitalization, vandalism, and/or the elements, or due to the emergence of new ways of viewing portraits, which are inflected with neoliberal worldviews. This study draws on the theories and methods used in photography and visual culture studies to consider how these visual representations produce discourse, power, and knowledge.<sup>9</sup> To consider how subjects and viewers perform neoliberal subjectivities through these projects, I draw on photographic theories of performativity, materiality, and affect.<sup>10</sup> Finally, to reframe these often overlooked community projects as complex technologies of power within the context of urban neoliberalism, this study draws on theories of neoliberalism as governmentality and re-theorizations of “community,” “everyday life,” and “culture” in a global neoliberal era.<sup>11</sup>

Chapter 1 explores photographer Pierre Maraval’s portraits of creative women in *Toronto’s Mille Femmes* (2008) to show how this spectacular portrait project was expedient to civic and capitalist agendas. I compare *Mille Femmes* to street artist and photographer Dan Bergeron’s *Regent Park Portraits* (2008), which were monumental portraits of Regent Park residents that were pasted on community housing buildings. I argue that while these portrait posters were similarly part of the creative city’s entrepreneurial spectacle, they also dramatically visualized the social impact of urban redevelopment. Chapter 2 focuses on Bergeron’s wheatpaste portrait posters of people experiencing poverty and homelessness in *The Unaddressed* (2009). This chapter considers how these portraits contested austerity measures and how the troubling

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<sup>9</sup> For example: Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 3–64; John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications Limited in association with The Open University, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> For example: Laura Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography,” *Photography and Culture* 2, 3 (November 2009): 327–336; Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” in *Material Memories*, eds. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley, 221–236 (Oxford: Berg, 1999); and Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, eds., *Photography and Feeling* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> For example: Foucault (1978); Lerner (2000); Rose (1999); Crary (2013); Braedley and Luxton (2010); and Yúdice (2003).

reception of these portraits reveals the impact of a harsh neoliberal worldview on the politics of viewing images of people in need. Chapter 3 examines *Jameson Avenue "Impressions"* (2009), a civic art project that represented the Parkdale community through hundreds of photographic portrait tiles. This chapter discusses how in addition to its role as a celebratory community art project, *Impressions* served as a form of civic placemaking for Toronto's creativity-led, global city strategy, which aspired to promote Toronto neighbourhoods as authentic, livable, diverse, and vibrant. Finally, chapter 4 discusses Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture's participation in JR's *Inside Out Project* (2011), which captured the faces of citizens and activists who were recruited to celebrate Toronto's diversity and to challenge proposed funding cuts to arts and social welfare sectors. This case study reveals how, on the one hand, photographic portraiture has been used in contestations of austerity politics in Toronto, while on the other hand, JR's methodology encourages citizens to perform neoliberal ideas of citizenship and community. Together, these chapters reveal how photographic portraiture is used to constitute communities that are simultaneously the *public face* of the diversity of the neoliberal city and the *targets* of neoliberal rationality, policies, and procedures.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to the field of art, photography, and visual culture by bridging a number of interdisciplinary fields through a critical visual analysis of community-engaged portrait projects. To date, the methodologies and human impact of participatory photography has been examined in the social sciences, but their visual outcomes have rarely been taken up in critical art and visual culture writing. Art scholarship is increasingly looking at participatory art forms; however, thus far, there are few studies of community-engaged *photographic* practices, even though there is significant scholarship on urban revitalization, creative cities and the creative class, or global activism, as well as much work on the impact of globalization and neoliberalism on culture, museums, and new forms of, or institutions for, contemporary art.<sup>12</sup> Finally,

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example: Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996); Angela McRobbie, "'Everyone is Creative': Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?" in *Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life*, eds. Elizabeth B. Silva and Tony Bennett, 186–202 (Durham: Sociology Press, 2004); J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson, eds., *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press,

while there are numerous studies that examine how photography helps to constitute individual and collective identities, there is very little scholarship on how photography presents us with performances of *neoliberal subjectivities*. Thus, this research engages with important developments in the field of art, photography, and visual culture, including: the expediency of participatory photographic practice for a wide range of agendas, and the impact of neoliberalism on photography and community engagement, as well as new roles for photographers, subjects, and collective portraiture in a global neoliberal era.

### WHY TORONTO?

To investigate recent trends in participatory or community-engaged photography, I chose to examine case studies in the City of Toronto. The case studies were selected from the relatively brief timeframe of roughly 2008 to 2011 and each one used photographic portraiture in some way. Primarily, I chose to examine a small number of contemporary, Toronto-based portrait projects for practical reasons. First, as I have suggested, the sheer number of potential case studies can be overwhelming. To date, art and visual culture scholarship that examines these photographic practices is only fractionally representative of a growing glut of unexplored case studies. With so many possibilities, it was crucial to place clear parameters around my research to ensure that the project would be feasible and that it would make a coherent contribution to scholarship.

Narrowing the scope of my exploration to focus on *a single city* was also essential for methodological reasons, as I sought to consider the relationship between photographic portrait projects and neoliberalism. Canadian urban and environmental studies scholars

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2011); Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz and Lynn Szwaja, eds. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, eds., "Editorial," *E-flux* 12 (2010): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/editorial-18/> (accessed 2 June 2014); and Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). See also: Yúdice (2003); and Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil, and Douglas Young, explain that cities function as key “political sites” where much of the “dirty work” of globalization (and hence neoliberalism) takes place.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, political science scholar Magrit Mayer describes cities as sites “where global neoliberalism ‘touches down’ to make itself felt, [and] where global issues become localized.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, as geography scholar Doreen Massey explains, cities are “central to neoliberal globalization.”<sup>15</sup> More specifically, Massey notes how market dynamics impact the form of cities (“the shining spectacular projects, the juxtaposition between greed and need”) and how the global competition between cities both reflect and advance neoliberal agendas.<sup>16</sup> Massey also argues that on the one hand *neoliberalism affects cities*, while on the other hand *cities have become significant sites where neoliberalism evolves and changes*.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by this research, I thought that an examination of community-engaged photography projects within a context of urban neoliberalism might garner multiple and perhaps even contradictory findings, which could deeply enrich our view of these visual practices.

Furthermore, a number of scholars have addressed how neoliberalism manifests in vastly different ways, depending on geographical, temporal, political, and cultural contexts. For instance, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore’s book *Spaces of Neoliberalism* (2002), helps to address how neoliberal policies have been imposed in global, continental, national, and local spheres in, “context-, territory-, and/or place-specific forms.”<sup>18</sup> Inspired in part by Brenner and Theodore’s work, Boudreau, et al., explain that neoliberalism is not a “monolithic affair,” but rather is “contextually embedded” and determined by a number of site-specific factors, including “institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles.”<sup>19</sup> In addition to the spatial

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<sup>13</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Magrit Mayer, “Contesting the Neoliberalization of Urban Governance,” in *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers*, eds. Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S. Sheppard, 90–114 (New York: Guildford Press, 2007): 93.

<sup>15</sup> Massey, *World City*, 9. See also: Sassen (2001).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> My emphasis. Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brenner and Theodore, eds., *Spaces of Neoliberalism*, Preface, Kindle edition.

<sup>19</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 28. See also: Brenner and Theodore, *Spaces of Neoliberalism*, 351.

and contextual determinants of neoliberalism, many scholars such as Lisa Duggan, Jamie Peck, and Adam Tickell, have identified specific phases of neoliberalism. These stages have included everything from “attacks” on Keynesian economics in the 1950s and 1960s and the “pro-business activism” of the 1970s to the “roll back” neoliberalism of the 1980s and the “neoliberal ‘equality’ politics” of the twenty-first century.<sup>20</sup> Thus, I developed my methodology in response to a body of research that acknowledges the significant role played by cities in the global neoliberal era, as well as the inherent complexities of examining neoliberal practices, policies, and ideologies in different contexts. My hope was that I could better our understanding of the intricacies of community-engaged portraiture by focusing my investigation on *multiple variations* of this practice taking place within a *short timeframe in one urban site*. But, why Toronto?

To those who know me, it may not come as a surprise that I chose Toronto as my site of investigation, as it is the city that I have called home for the past 15 years. While completing an undergraduate degree in art history and theatre at the University of Toronto, I volunteered at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) as a museum interpreter and a facilitator of school group tours. I later served as an AGO Education Officer during which time I helped to create and facilitate family programming for the museum. After graduation, I accepted a position in the development department at the National Ballet of Canada, where I secured corporate sponsorships and fostered relationships with foundations. Later, I made the jump to Soulpepper Theatre Company, where I managed an extensive portfolio of community outreach and education programming. I am connected to the City of Toronto on both a personal and professional level and through all of my experiences, I have developed an intimate understanding of the city and its arts and culture sector. However, in addition to my history with the city and my knowledge of its cultural landscape, there were far more compelling reasons for choosing Toronto as the site for my research.

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<sup>20</sup> Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality*, xi–xii; and Peck and Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” 383–404.

Toronto is Canada's largest, and arguably most diverse, city and as such it stood out as an ideal starting point for research focusing on community-engaged photography and urban neoliberalism in Canada. Like many Canadian cities, Toronto has felt the impact of a number of phases, stages, and forms of urban neoliberalism, including the "austerity politics" of all levels of government since the 1980s, and in particular, Ontario Premier Mike Harris' "Common Sense Revolution" (1994–2003).<sup>21</sup> The latter, as Keil argues, took up neoliberal strategies akin to those developed by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations as the province reduced taxes for the wealthy, reduced the role of government, and generated policies and discourse that attacked, rather than supported, the poor.<sup>22</sup> As federal and provincial governments reduced funding for social welfare programs and for municipal governments, civic leaders sought out entrepreneurial strategies to make up for the economic shortfall.<sup>23</sup> In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, civic leaders invested in creativity and culture to try to restore urban communities and to attract global capital and the creative class.<sup>24</sup> The creative class were believed by many urban planners to be the new economic drivers, and as Richard Florida has famously argued, they were attracted to diverse cities with vast amenities, as well as high levels of technology, talent, and tolerance.<sup>25</sup> Thus, as is the case with many global cities competing on the "world stage," developments in the global economy, specifically the emergence of post-Fordist neoliberal capitalism, as well as the social and economic theories championing culture,

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<sup>21</sup> See: David J. Hulchanski, Philippa Campsie, Shirley B. Y. Chau, Stephen W. Hwang, and Emily Paradis, "Introduction: Homelessness: What's in a Word?" in *Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada*, 1–17 (Toronto: Cities Centre, University of Toronto, 2009): 3–5; Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*. 32; 58–59. See also: Keil, "'Common-Sense' Neoliberalism," 588–589.

<sup>22</sup> Keil, "'Common-Sense' Neoliberalism," 588.

<sup>23</sup> C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, *Local Government in Canada*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Toronto: Nelson College Indigenous, 2009): 18.

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of how the city turned from austerity to creative competitiveness, see: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 183–198.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example: Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (London: Routledge, 2005); and Florida (2002).



the “creative industries,” entrepreneurialism, and technological innovation as economic engines have significantly restructured the city.<sup>26</sup>

As Boudreau, et al., explain, neoliberalism has manifested in Toronto in distinct, and yet interrelated ways as it has become: an entrepreneurial city, a city of difference, and a revanchist city.<sup>27</sup> First, Toronto has become an increasingly entrepreneurial city as its government has looked to big business to find new strategies to raise much-needed capital in light of federal and provincial cutbacks and a downturn in its tourism industry.<sup>28</sup> These strategies have included fostering private-public partnerships or increasing privatization of public services, and competing for tourist dollars by promoting the city through entrepreneurial strategies such as spectacular art, architecture, and events. The latter resulted in new arts festivals such as the annual Luminato Festival of Arts and Creativity (c. 2003–), new campaigns, such as the bid for the 2008 Olympics, wide-scale redevelopment, such as the revitalization of Regent Park or the broader waterfront redevelopment plan, and a dazzling new collection of art and cultural buildings.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as Toronto has sought to be a successful entrepreneurial city, the spaces occupied by and the roles performed by Torontonians have been variably impacted by urban redevelopment or aggressive global marketing strategies.

Secondly, Toronto has been marketed as a “city of difference” not only with its post-amalgamation motto, “Diversity Our Strength” (1998–present), but also through a range of civic placemaking strategies that effectively market the city’s diverse

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<sup>26</sup> Many scholars touch on these points. For example, see: Barbara Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 30 (2005): 169–186; Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 4 (2005): 740–770; Barbara Jenkins and Patricia Goff, “The ‘New World’ of Culture: Reexamining Canadian Cultural Policy,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* 36, 3: 181–196; Laura Levin and Kim Solga, “Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto,” *The Drama Review* 53, 3 (Fall 2009): 37–53; Kirsty Robertson, “Titanium Motherships of the New Economy: Museums, Neoliberalism, and Resistance,” in *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, eds. J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson, 197–214 (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2011); and Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 61–63. See also: Jenkins (2005).

communities with the hopes of appealing to the profitable creative class.<sup>30</sup> Toronto's motto, albeit often contested, is widely acknowledged as both a point of pride and part of a global branding strategy that seeks to bolster Toronto's reputation as the "most multicultural city in the world."<sup>31</sup> Although there are questions surrounding the origins and validity of this claim, there is impressive quantitative data that supports Toronto's multicultural image.<sup>32</sup> For instance, Toronto currently has a population of approximately 2.79 million people, and as a recent census noted, roughly half of its citizens at that time originated from outside of Canada.<sup>33</sup> Toronto is home to people of over 200 distinct ethnic origins and over 140 languages and dialects are spoken in this city.<sup>34</sup> As a "city of difference," civic leaders find ways to promote this data and in doing so, it "makes ethnic diversity a marketable commodity."<sup>35</sup> However, as scholars have noted, often the citizens who serve as the faces of Toronto's multicultural mosaic, are some of the city's most marginalized.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, as a "revanchist city," Toronto's poorest citizens experience insurmountable poverty and housing instability, and many citizens are stigmatized, criminalized, or displaced through anti-homeless legislation, social welfare cuts, and gentrification.<sup>37</sup> As sociologist Loïc Wacquant explains, multipronged attacks on the poor

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<sup>30</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 62.

<sup>31</sup> Karen King, Briand Hracs, Mark Destedt, and Vass Bednar, "Toronto Election 2010: Discussion Paper (August 2010), Diversity Our Strength," Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010, [http://www.martinprosperity.org/media/pdfs/Toronto\\_election\\_series-Diversity\\_Our\\_Strength.pdf](http://www.martinprosperity.org/media/pdfs/Toronto_election_series-Diversity_Our_Strength.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2013). See also: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 8; 86; and City of Toronto, "Toronto Facts: Diversity," in *Toronto*, 1998–2015, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=dbe867b42d853410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=57a12cc817453410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (accessed 13 May 2015).

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion about the motto's origins, see: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 86.

<sup>33</sup> City of Toronto, "Toronto Facts: Diversity." Note: These figures are always in flux. Also, the population of the GTA is 5.5 million people.

<sup>34</sup> City of Toronto, "Toronto Facts: Diversity."

<sup>35</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 38; and Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 34; 85–98.

<sup>37</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20. See also: Bill O'Grady, Stephen Gaetz, and Kristy Buccieri, "Can I See Your ID: The Policing of Youth Homelessness in Toronto," in *The Homeless Hub Report Series, Report #5* (Toronto: Justice for Children and Youth, and Homeless Hub Press, 2011).

are a hallmark of the neoliberal era, which he boldly describes as a kind of “neo-Darwinism.”<sup>38</sup> Neoliberalism, Wacquant explains, brings about discourse, law-enforcement policies, and legislative acts that “[praise] the ‘winners’ for their vigor and intelligence and [vituperate] the ‘losers’ in the ‘struggle for [economic] life’ by pointing to their character flaws and behavioral deficiencies.”<sup>39</sup> In the last couple of decades, there have been a number of instances when the various levels of government, the press, or even everyday citizens, have produced or mimicked a negative discourse that imposes debasing characteristics onto people experiencing homelessness and poverty.<sup>40</sup> Yet rarely do these accounts take into consideration larger systemic issues such as: the fact that Toronto has Canada’s second most unaffordable housing market, that its income gap continues to rise, and that the people most affected by these developments include individuals representing the diverse groups that Toronto leaders use as “marketable assets.”<sup>41</sup> Examples of the latter include, visible minorities, newcomers and immigrants, and even young, creative, full-time workers who need to spend over 40% of their income on housing alone.<sup>42</sup> Thus, despite the efforts on the part of community agencies and advocates for people experiencing urban poverty and housing instability, many of

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<sup>38</sup> Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009): 6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example: O’Grady et al., “Can I See Your ID,” 24; Jean Swanson, *Poor Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001); Patrick Parnaby, “Disaster Through Dirty Windshields: Law, Order, and Toronto’s Squeegee Kids,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 28, 3 (Summer 2003): 281–307; Jonathan Greene, “‘Whatever it Takes’: Poor People’s Organizing, OCAP, and Social Struggle,” *Studies in Political Economy* 75 (Spring 2005): 9; and Cathy Crowe, *Dying for a Home: Homeless Activists Speak Out* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007): 29.

<sup>41</sup> For statistics, see: City of Toronto, “Poverty, Housing and Homelessness in Toronto,” in *Toronto*, <https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Affordable%20Housing%20Office/Shared%20Content/pdf/poverty-factsheet.pdf> (accessed 4 June 2015); and Emma Woolley, “Where does Toronto stand in terms of housing and poverty?” in *The Homeless Hub*, 10 October 2014, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/where-does-toronto-stand-terms-housing-and-poverty> (accessed 2 June 2015). For the quotation about “marketable assets,” see: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 86. For the issues of failing to recognize underlying systemic issues, see: Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word,” 1–16.

<sup>42</sup> City of Toronto, “Poverty, Housing and Homelessness in Toronto”; and Woolley, “Where does Toronto stand in terms of housing and poverty?”

Toronto's most vulnerable communities have certainly fallen victim to these powerful forces of neoliberalism.

As Boudreau, et al., explain, neoliberalism in Toronto has manifested not only via technologies of power—such as new legislation, increased surveillance, funding cuts, and de- or re-regulation—but it has also emerged as everyday urbanism and forms of resistance.<sup>43</sup> For example, the everyday lives of many Torontonians have been put in peril by rising inequities, the privatization of public space, developer-driven urban revitalization projects, slashed social welfare spending, the rise of punitive laws against people experiencing homelessness, and the imposition of new civic identities. In light of all of these developments Toronto has also become a charged site of resistance through the work of activist groups such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and other groups fighting for better housing or contesting government policies.<sup>44</sup> Toronto citizens are increasingly recruited to participate as activists in campaigns against neoliberalism, globalization, and capitalism, or, alternatively, as ambassadors for high-profile events that make positive claims about life in the city. As a result, Toronto communities are often embroiled in controversy surrounding conflicting views about identity and place, and participatory photography has played a significant role in representing these different views.

In the past decade, several Toronto non-profit organizations and educational institutions have engaged community members as photographers to help expose the social impact of gentrification, poverty, and urban isolation in Toronto neighbourhoods by using the Photovoice method. “Photovoice” is a term that is derived from a 1997 article by US health and education scholar Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris of the Ford Foundation for a representational strategy that has since been made famous by the documentary film, *Born into Brothels* (2005).<sup>45</sup> Wang and Burris defined “Photovoice”

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<sup>43</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 62–63. This chart appears in Keil, ““Common-Sense Neoliberalism,” 591.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> See: Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, “Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment,” *Health Education & Behavior* 24, 3 (June 1997): 369–387; and Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski, *Born into Brothels* (THINKFilm, 2004, 85 mins.).

as a participatory visual research method that uses photography as a tool for social action or needs assessment within communities.<sup>46</sup> Photovoice is a form of participatory documentary photography that is rooted in theories that seek to decentre and transform the traditional approaches to the production and dissemination of knowledge, in particular: feminist theory and the education and empowerment theories of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire.<sup>47</sup> The Photovoice practice is based on the idea that “insiders” have an intimate knowledge of their surroundings that “outsiders” lack and this knowledge can be captured in photographs.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Photovoice is widely considered a *powerful* and *authentic* research tool that enables community members to document their environments, to reflect critically on social issues that impact their lives, and to reach policy-makers.<sup>49</sup> As Wang and Burris note, Photovoice is flexible and highly adaptable to a diverse range of social, geographical, and disciplinary contexts, which is clear from the recent ubiquity of such projects.<sup>50</sup> Driving the popularity of this practice is the fundamental belief that “virtually anyone can learn to use a camera,”<sup>51</sup> and a demand for holistic and inclusive research and planning methodologies in a vast range of fields, including but not limited to, anthropology, child and youth studies, social services, education, urban planning, archival practices, and the arts.<sup>52</sup>

In the past several years, a number of Toronto Photovoice projects have been used in advocacy efforts. For instance, in one project that was led by scholar Nancy Halifax,

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<sup>46</sup> “Needs assessment” is a research term used for the process of identifying and addressing living conditions in need of improvement within communities.

<sup>47</sup> Wang and Burris, “Photovoice,” 370; see also: Patricia Maguire, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach* (Amherst: Center for International Education, 1987). See also: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1970); and Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973).

<sup>48</sup> Wang and Burris, “Photovoice,” 370.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For examples, see: Hal Foster, “The Artists as Ethnographer,” *Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996): 171–203; Ausra Burns, “Emotion and the Urban Experience: Implications for Design,” *Design Issues* 46, 3 (Autumn, 2000): 67–79; Louise Holt, “The ‘Voices’ of Children: De-Centring Empowering Research Relations,” *Children’s Geographies* 2, 1 (February 2004): 13–27; and Joanne Sharp, Vendla Pollock, and Ronan Paddison, “Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration,” *Urban Studies* 42, 5/6 (2005): 1001–1023.

entitled, *A Day in the Life* (2006), people experiencing homelessness were encouraged to take photographs that addressed important issues related to housing instability and poverty.<sup>53</sup> The *Exposed Photovoice Project* (2008), which offers another example of this methodology in the city, recruited fourteen Toronto residents to capture the social impact of poverty and racism on low-income families living in a high priority suburb of Toronto.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, cultural and civic institutions have utilized Photovoice strategies to market the city's creativity and diversity. For example, in the City of Toronto's *Mobile City Youth Photography Contest* (2007), the flexible Photovoice strategies were redeployed by civic leaders for cultural diplomacy and placemaking agendas. *Mobile City* was developed by the executive director of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, Corrado Paino, and launched in partnership with the City of Toronto in 2008. The project sought to engage youth in community-building between Toronto and Milan, inspired by the 2003 formal international alliance that sought to strengthen economic and cultural bonds between the sister cities. Using mobile telephones equipped with cameras, youth were asked to "build bridges," to "exchange ideas about challenges and opportunities in today's urban culture," and "to develop meaningful connections with their respective neighbourhoods," by sharing photographs of their daily lives.<sup>55</sup> The winning photographs were later exhibited and helped to promote Toronto as a hip, urban environment with vast amenities and a thriving youth culture. Furthermore, the images and accompanying discourse aligned the city with important themes in the creative city script, such as "creativity," "mobility," "diversity," and "technology."<sup>56</sup> Thus, Photovoice

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<sup>53</sup> Nancy Viva Halifax, Fred Yurichuck, Jim Meeks, and Erika Khandor, "Photovoice in a Toronto Community Partnership: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health with Homeless People," *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action* 2, 2 (2008): 129–136.

<sup>54</sup> Ruth Wilson, Yogendra B. Shaky, and Sarah Flicker, *Exposed Photovoice Project*, 2008, <http://accessalliance.ca/research/activities/exposedphotovoice> (accessed 5 June 2015).

<sup>55</sup> City of Toronto, "Press Release: City Launches Mobile City Youth Photography Contest," in *Toronto*, 6 March 2008, <http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/it/newsrel.nsf/56025a97a57611d485256dde005a4473/fdf6f46ad72ddafd8525740500661abd?OpenDocument> (accessed 17 May 2013).

<sup>56</sup> The photographs were exhibited, and later published in: Matteo Balduzzi, *The Mobile City* (Milano: Museo Fotografia Contemporanea, 2008).

has been used for a number of agendas in Toronto and this background helps to introduce why this city is an important site for explorations of participatory photography in Canada.

In the early stages of my research, I also discovered a number of community-engaged photographic *portrait* projects that were produced in Toronto in the past decade, many of which I selected as my core case studies. In contrast to Photovoice, which places everyday people *behind* the lens, this strategy makes the participants the *main focal point* through photographic portraiture. Drawing on outreach strategies, these projects recruit citizens to pose for portrait photographs, which are then mounted in spectacular displays, including traditional exhibitions, street art, public art, or websites. I quickly realized that these Toronto-based projects were similarly produced by a wide range of stakeholders for multiple, and sometimes contradictory, purposes. On the one hand, photographic portraiture has been used to celebrate and promote Toronto's motto, "Diversity Our Strength," as the city has taken up urban planner Richard Florida's creative city agendas. Photographic portrait projects offer an appealing strategy for celebrating multicultural Toronto by capturing the city's visible diversity and by creating platforms from which the stories and experiences of Torontonians can be shared. Large-scale compositions of photographic portraits are also useful for city branding strategies that market "diversity without difference" by producing spectacular entrepreneurial or placemaking displays.<sup>57</sup> As scholars Laura Levin and Kim Solga note, spectacular performances and events present us with, "complex webs of ethnic, religious, racial, and economic difference masquerading as a *smiling multicultural mosaic*."<sup>58</sup> Arguably, displays of diverse portraits present us with the most literal manifestation of this strategy. Thus, photographic portraits of real citizens help to create a positive image of the city's quality of life and to promote Toronto's most "unique selling point"<sup>59</sup> at a time when global cities are in competition to attract tourists and the profitable creative class.

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<sup>57</sup> Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 38. Levin and Solga reference Ric Knowles' response to their 2007 conference paper, "Building Utopia," in which he mentioned the concept of "diversity without difference."

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>59</sup> King et al., "Toronto Election 2010: Discussion Paper (August 2010), Diversity Our Strength," 1.

On the other hand, community-engaged photographic portraiture has also been used by activists and advocates trying to illustrate the human impact of, or to expose the people negatively impacted by, neoliberalism in Toronto. As noted, neoliberalism has resulted in reduced social welfare spending and increased housing instability, and has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. In Toronto, neoliberalism has not only had a detrimental impact on individuals and community groups, but it has also helped to galvanize citizens seeking to contest neoliberal austerity measures and the harsh discourse that has been used to justify these measures. Due to its size and the diverse needs of Toronto residents, the city has numerous social organizations dedicated to advocacy and outreach, many of which have turned to socially engaged or participatory art forms to convey important social messages. Toronto is also home to a number of Canada's leading arts organizations, which have necessarily broadened their mandates to include community outreach, in part out of a sense of social responsibility, and in part in response to the community-engagement agendas of corporate sponsors and philanthropic institutions. These developments have resulted in a number of partnerships between arts organizations, outreach organizations, artists, and communities-in-need, some of which have also generated photographic portrait projects to inspire social change, or at the very least, to promote an image of social consciousness. For example, in 1998, Dr. Mark Nowacynski started to take photographs of the seniors he treated during his house calls. Through this work, Nowacynski aspired to marry medical, social advocacy, and photographic practices, and the outcomes of this initiative were documented in a 2004 film for the National Film Board of Canada, entitled *House Calls*. Later, Nowacynski's black-and-white photographs, including portrait and documentary-style images, were displayed in an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, entitled *House Calls with my Camera* (2010). Drawing on the "transformative power of photography," the photographs were used to raise awareness about the "complex issues related to aging" and the rise of elder poverty in the city, and to advocate for the need to fund the Aging at Home Strategy.<sup>60</sup> Nowacynski used photography with the hopes of inspiring social change in

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<sup>60</sup> See: Ian McLeod, dir., *House Calls* (National Film Board, 2004, 55 mins.); Royal Ontario Museum, "House Calls with my Camera," in *ROM*, 2010, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/exhibitions->



Toronto, and by supporting his work, the ROM not only offered him a platform, but also aligned itself with Nowacynski's mission.

The sheer range of community-engaged photographic portrait projects that I encountered inspired me to wonder: what do these projects reveal to us about the symbolic value of everyday citizens for cities in a neoliberal era? If photographic portraits of Toronto residents have been used by civic leaders to make positive claims about the city's communities and the urban spaces that they call "home," what role has this photographic practice played for people who are denied, or who are in the process of losing, a legitimate sense of place in the city of Toronto, such as people experiencing poverty, housing instability, or developer driven urban displacement? What do community-engaged portrait projects reveal about how participants grapple with the social and economic impact of neoliberalism in the urban environment? How do we navigate the conflicting visual and discursive terrain produced by these projects?

It is important to note that while none of the projects that I examine explicitly indicated a stance that contested or supported neoliberalism, their frameworks of participation, the communities that they mobilized, and the representations that they produced were deeply entrenched in, reflective of, or at the very least influenced by, neoliberal policies, practices, and discourse. Furthermore, the case studies that I explore not only reveal that this photographic practice is a cultural resource that is co-opted to serve powerful agendas, but they also help to illustrate how neoliberalism and its contestations are thoroughly entangled. Similar to scholarship that seeks to do away with a binary of "local" and "global," much scholarship has rejected the dichotomy of neoliberalism and its contestations, thereby decentering the concept of neoliberalism and at the same time implicating some forms of contestation in contributing to the greater neoliberal project.<sup>61</sup> My research explores frameworks of participation and visual outcomes to show how community-engaged photographic portrait projects are sometimes

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[galleries/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/house-calls-with-my-camera](#) (accessed 3 June 2015); and Susan Pigg, "Doctor's Photo Display at ROM Opens Window on Aging," *The Toronto Star*, 6 May 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Leitner et al., *Contesting Neoliberalism*, 1–25.

fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. By offering multiple readings of these creative projects, this research highlights the complex and sometimes duplicitous role that photographic portrait projects have played as they have been used to make assertions to local and global audiences about life in Toronto. The many interpretations that each project inspires show how, as Leitner et al. explain, the forces of neoliberalism and its contestations are at times indistinguishable from each other.<sup>62</sup> Thus, my research applies the work of sociologists and geographers, as well as urban studies and political science scholars, to the field of visual culture, with the hopes of better addressing the cultural impact of, and the meanings produced by, community-engaged portrait projects in a global neoliberal era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section offers an overview of how I situate my dissertation within existing art, photography, and visual culture scholarship and notes some of the unique contributions that I hope to make with this work. By examining a selection of case studies that engage with different aspects of urban neoliberalism, this dissertation responds to demands for more scholarship that exposes the “‘messy actualities’ of [...] neoliberal projects.”<sup>63</sup> In doing so, my research may be of interest to scholars in fields outside of art and visual culture, specifically to those who study urban neoliberalism and its impact on communities and culture. However, my principal goal is to contribute to scholarship on photography and arts-based engagement strategies in a global neoliberal era. Here, I begin by situating my project in histories of photography. In particular, I link my work to scholarship on portraiture, Photovoice, and photography as a social practice. This discussion is followed by a brief analysis of how my research intersects with participatory art scholarship, as well as art and visual culture scholarship that engages with our contemporary political context.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>63</sup> Larner, “Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” 14.

Since the invention of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, photographic portraiture has taken many forms including, but not limited to, *cartes-de-visites*, studio portraits, and today, the ever-popular selfie. Portraits have been used for documentation, identification, the production of knowledge, and expressions of individual and collective identities, to name only a few examples. Photographic portraiture has played a pivotal role in our freedom and confinement, via passport and identification card photographs, as well as in the form of mugshots, which have long been used in disciplinary archives.<sup>64</sup> To this day, portrait photographs are used in visual inventories of workforces, students, and members, which are used to grant or restrict peoples' access to physical spaces, services, or benefits. The histories of photographic portraiture also includes its controversial use in medicine, psychiatry, anthropology, and ethnography, particularly in the nineteenth-century context of colonization and imperialism, as doctors and social scientists attempted to map out the physiognomy and phrenology of mental illness, criminality, gender, and race on the surfaces of portrait photographs.<sup>65</sup> Here, we may recall John Lamprey's anthropometric studies, Thomas Huxley's ethnographic studies of indigenous people, Joseph Zealy's daguerreotypes of enslaved African American men and women, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond's clinical portraits, or Francis Galton's photographic studies of criminals. Conversely, we have also long used portraits to acknowledge our achievements or to commemorate significant moments, in the form of graduation portraits, wedding photographs, or photos that document our participation in historic events. In a similar vein, we use portrait photographs to pay homage to our heroes and leaders, in such forms as celebrity headshots and photographic displays of school valedictorians, CEOs, and politicians. As photo historians such as Christopher Pinney, Heidi Ardizzone, and Lily Cho argue, the global histories of photographic portraiture includes the use of portrait photography to anticipate and/or resist hegemonic narratives.<sup>66</sup> Thus, many scholars and

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<sup>64</sup> See: Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 3–64; and Tagg (1993).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example: Christopher Pinney, "Notes from the Surface of the Image: Photography, Postcolonialism, and Vernacular Modernism," in *Photography's Other Histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, 202–220 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Heidi Ardizzone, "'Such Fine Families': Photography and Race in the Work of Caroline Bond Day," *Visual Studies* 21, 2 (August 2006): 106–132; or Lily Cho, "Anticipating Citizenship:

historians have noted that photographic portraiture has variably played both repressive and honorific roles.<sup>67</sup> My study adds to this robust field of research by examining how photographic portraiture has been used in the neoliberal city in ways that similarly create knowledge and discourse about communities, honour urban citizens, or function as forms of social control.

Photographic portraits also confront us with powerful representations of human suffering and loss with the hopes of eliciting emotion or possibly even action. For instance, portraiture has, and continues to, expose the human toll of social crises, through the work of photographers such as: FSA photographer Dorothea Lange in the 1930s or contemporary photographers Lisa Kristine and Steve McCurry, who produce compelling portraits of modern-day slaves and refugees.<sup>68</sup> As scholars Elizabeth Edwards and Marita Sturken discuss, portrait photographs are also important objects of, or technologies of, memory. Photographs are surrogates for memory in intimate acts of remembrance, they are added to public memorials as visual surrogates for the dead, and they are used as visual aids in the search for lost persons.<sup>69</sup> Alternatively, performance studies scholar Diana Taylor explains that photographic portraits can be used to transmit traumatic memory in a way that exposes human loss and “refuses surrogation,” as evidenced by the performance activism of the *Abuelas, Madres, H.I.J.O.S.*, and Julio Pantoja’s *fotografías* project, which respond to Argentina’s Dirty War (1976–1983).<sup>70</sup> Thus, there is a rich history of using portraiture to advocate for, memorialize, or seek restitution for

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Chinese Head Tax Photographs,” in *Feeling Photography*, edited by Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu, 158–180 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> See, for example: Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 6. See also: Cho, “Anticipating Citizenship,” 170–171; and Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> See: Prints & Photographs Division Staff, “Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother,’ Photographs in the Farm Security Administration Collection: An Overview,” in *Library of Congress: Prints & Photographs Reading Room*, 1998 & 2004, [http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128\\_migm.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html) (accessed 1 June 2015); Lisa Kristine, *Lisa Kristine: Fine Art Photography*, 2015, <http://www.lisakristine.com/> (accessed 1 June 2015); and Steve McCurry, *Steve McCurry*, 2015, <http://stevemccurry.com/> (accessed 1 June 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” 221–236; and Marita Sturken, “The Image as Memorial: Personal Photographs in Cultural Memory,” in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch, 178–195 (Hanover: Dartmouth, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> Diana Taylor, “DNA of Performance: Political Hauntology,” *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, ed. Doris Sommer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 52–81.

individuals and communities, and linked to this history, my exploration investigates how portraiture has been used in Toronto to achieve similar goals.

In contemporary art and visual culture, photographic portraiture is used to investigate concepts of identity, particularly through self-portraiture and appropriations of historical portraits. For instance, photographic portraits have been used to create fictions, expose communities, and/or contest stereotypes through the work of such artists as: Cindy Sherman, Nikki S. Lee, Diane Arbus, Nan Goldin, Carrie Mae Weems, Catherine Opie, and Jeff Thomas, to name only a few. Drawing on photographic portraiture, these artists have explored important themes related to identity, such as “the personal is political”<sup>71</sup> or ideas about gender, race, class, or sexuality. Additionally, the dawn of the digital age brought with it new variations of portrait photography such as vernacular images that have been tightly cropped around the subjects’ faces or selfies, which are our online avatars as we interact on a variety of social media platforms.<sup>72</sup> My dissertation connects to this history by exploring visual projects that convey messages about individual and collective identities in ways that are mediated through portrait photography, art and visual culture, participatory art strategies, and online technologies.

All of the examples that I have listed thus far offer only a glimpse of the rich history of photographic portraiture, within which my study is situated. As this summary helps to indicate, the breadth of scholarship surrounding this practice is as vast as the varied uses of, and meanings produced by, photographic portraits. My research adds to this field by exploring how Toronto has participated in the recent global rise of photographic portrait projects that engage with and/or feature individuals and communities in public spaces. These projects capitalize on photography’s associations with democracy, authenticity, the everyday, and/or social justice. They also reflect the

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<sup>71</sup> See, for example: Angela Kelly, “Self Image: Personal is Political,” in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells, 410–417 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> A selfie is a photograph that is taken of oneself from arm’s length, or more recently with the use of a “selfie stick,” which is a hand-held tripod. For an article that consider the impact of both social media and selfie culture, include: Jennifer Allen, “Who, Me? Narcissism is Back in Fashion,” *Frieze* 143 (November–December 2011): <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/who-me/> (accessed 2 September 2013).

recent “social turn” in a vast range of fields and illustrate new forms of collective portraiture in a global neoliberal era. A short and partial history of these developments might begin with what scholar Andrew Weiner describes as early “attempts to use photography as a vehicle of collective portraiture.”<sup>73</sup> Weiner offers a brief chronology of examples, including: the photographic work of the FSA, August Sander’s *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Faces of Our Time*, 1929), Edward Steichen’s *The Family of Man* exhibition (1955), Robert Frank’s *The Americans* (1959), and Douglas Huebler’s attempt to photograph every living person in *Variable Piece #70 (In Process)—Global* (1971).<sup>74</sup> To this list, we could add photo-based portrait series that have similarly engaged everyday people, including art works such as Braco Dimitrijević’s *Casual Passers-by* (c.1971–present) series or Gillian Wearing’s, *Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (c.1990s). Each of these series involved chance encounters between the photographer and their photographic subjects, but whereas the visual outcomes of Dimitrijević’s series are large-scale, black-and-white portraits, which are mounted in public spaces to resist “the cult of the personality”<sup>75</sup> that is propagated by the media, Wearing’s series of colour photographs involved photographic subjects in their own self-representation by asking them to pose with personal messages to, “interrupt the logic of photo-documentary and snapshot photography.”<sup>76</sup> With the turn of the twenty-first century came a veritable explosion of community-engaged projects that introduced photographic portraits of, and by, everyday people into their surrounding landscapes, including: Susan Meiselas’s polaroid-inspired murals in Cova da Moura (Lisbon, Portugal, 2004) and Wendy Ewald’s black-and-white portraits of school children in Richmond, Virginia (*Carver Portraits*, 2005), as well as street artist and photographer JR’s site-specific, wheatpaste portraits of marginalized communities worldwide and his

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<sup>73</sup> Andrew Stefan Weiner, “Stimulus, Austerity, Economy: Photography and the US Financial Crisis,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 32 (Spring 2013): 103.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Dimitrijević quoted in: Jean-Hubert Martin, “Interview with Braco Dimitrijević,” in *Braco Dimitrijević*, n.d., <http://bracodimitrijevic.com/index.php?p=pages&title=Interview-with-Braco-Dimitrijevic> (accessed 15 May 2015).

<sup>76</sup> Jemima Montagu, “Gillian Wearing OBE,” in *Tate*, 2001, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wearing-im-desperate-p78348/text-summary> (accessed 5 June 2105). See also: Wearing (1997).

consequent *Inside Out Project* that encourages people to take up his methodologies in their own communities (201–present).<sup>77</sup> In the past decade, we have also seen a number online portrait projects, including, *We Are the 99 Percent* (2011–present), which is a user-generated photo-blog that galvanized people across the globe to speak out against social and economic inequality and capitalist corruption, as well as projects that explore place-based identities, such as Tim Van Horn’s *Canadian Mosaic Project* (2008–present) and Brandon Staton’s *Humans of New York* (2011).<sup>78</sup> Beyond offering glimpses of global, national, and local communities, it seems that every day, amateur and professional photographers conceive of new themes for portrait projects to reveal people who are connected, sometimes tenuously, by a range of shared interests, including: sports (Pierre Maraval, *1000 Cuban Athletes*, 1997); toys (Gabriel Galimberti, *Toy Stories*, c. 2011); South African “bike culture,” (Stan Engelbrecht and Nic Grobler, *Bicycle Portraits*, c. 2010), or art and fashion (Ari Seth Cohen, *Advanced Style*, c.2010; and Anna Bauer, *The Portrait Project*, 2014).<sup>79</sup> Thus, my case studies are part of this long trajectory of “collective portraiture,” and, in particular, the booming trend that we are experiencing today that puts us face-to-face with the people populating our world via different manifestations of photographic portraits.

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<sup>77</sup> See: Susan Meiselas, “Cova da Moura, Portugal,” in *Susan Meiselas Photographer*, n.d., <http://www.susanmeiselas.com/community-projects-1975-2015/portugal-cova/#id=workshop> (accessed 4 May 2015); Wendy Ewald, *In Peace and Harmony: Carver Portraits* (Richmond: Handworkshop Art Centre, 2005); JR, *JR—Artist*, 2015, <http://www.jr-art.net/> (accessed 4 June 2015); and JR, *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2015, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en> (accessed 4 June 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Weiner uses this project as one of the case studies in his article. See: Weiner, “Stimulus, Austerity, Economy,” 94–105. See also: *We Are the 99 Percent*, c. 2011, <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/> (accessed 22 May 2015); Tim Van Horn, *Canadian Mosaic Project*, 2008–present, <http://canadianmosaic.ca/> (accessed 4 June 2015); and Brandon Stanton, *Humans of New York*, c. 2011–present, <http://www.humansofnewyork.com/> <http://canadianmosaic.ca/> (accessed 5 June 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Pierre Maraval, “*1000 Cuban Athletes*,” in *Pierre Maraval Productions*, 1997, <http://www.maraval.org/spip.php?article122>; Gabriel Galimberti, “*Toy Stories*,” in *Gabriel Galimberti, Photographer*, c. 2011, <http://www.gabrielegalimberti.com/projects-2/toys-2/>; Stan Engelbrecht and Nic Grobler, *Bicycle Portraits*, c. 2010, <http://www.bicycleportraits.co.za/>; Ari Seth Cohen, *Advanced Style*, c.2010, <http://advancedstyle.blogspot.ca/>; and Anna Bauer, *The Portrait Project*, 2014, <http://theportraitproject.com/> (all sites listed here were last accessed 2 June 2015).

Despite its overwhelming presence in our everyday lives, recent community-engaged portrait projects have yet to be comprehensively mapped out or critiqued in art and visual culture scholarship. This trend in photography is deeply rooted in the broader cultures of participation that have developed in the last few decades, and in particular the emergence of participatory photography strategies such as Photovoice and participatory art. Since the 1990s, a number of fields have turned to participatory, holistic, or inclusive strategies, to represent communities, rethink stereotypes, or generate new forms of knowledge, including: art and visual culture, social work, health and education studies, and urban planning.<sup>80</sup> The interdisciplinary scholarship on these visual strategies represents a robust body of research, and yet, I believe that my research makes some important additions to this literature. To date, scholarship addressing participatory forms of photography has focused a great deal on the Photovoice method, and much of the research surrounding this genre of photography is generated from scholars in the fields of sociology, education, health sciences, and anthropology. This research primarily focuses on the methodologies, outcomes, and ethical implications of Photovoice as an academic research practice, rather than examining the visual outcomes of these projects or looking at Photovoice as a collaborative artistic practice.<sup>81</sup> Many Photovoice pioneers such as photographers Caroline Wang, Wendy Ewald, James Hubbard, and Norma-Louise Thallon, have produced accounts that reveal the challenges faced by facilitators and participants, as well as the positive social impacts of these projects.<sup>82</sup> Some methodological critiques touch on issues of representation, such as the potential risk that Photovoice projects produce visual documents in which participants might perform identities, rather than capture realities.<sup>83</sup> Research from this field also addresses how

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<sup>80</sup> For example: Foster (1996); Burns (2000); Holt (2004); and Sharp et al. (2005)

<sup>81</sup> See: Wang and Burris, "Photovoice Concept," 369–387; Jamie Patrice Joanou, "The Bad and the Ugly: Ethical Concerns in Participatory Photographic Methods with Children Living and Working on the Streets in Lima, Peru," *Visual Studies* 24, 3 (2009): 214–223, and Ellen Maccarone, "Ethical Responsibilities to Subjects and Documentary Filmmaking," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25 (2010): 192–206.

<sup>82</sup> See: Wang (1997; 2001); Ewald (2005); Jim Hubbard, "Everyone is a Photographer," in *Shooting Back*, n.d., <http://shootingback.net/shooting-back-press> (accessed 15 March 2015); and Norma-Louise Thallon, "You Press the Button and I'll Do the Rest: A Study of Participatory Photography Projects with Vulnerable Groups." *Engage* 14 (2004): 44–51.

<sup>83</sup> See: Joanou (2009).



humanitarian projects might serve as framing devices for the knowledge that is produced, thus pointing to some of the dangers of assuming that participation is the key to resolving issues of representation in the production of knowledge about communities.<sup>84</sup> I should note that some research has also been done to bring Photovoice practices into discourse with histories of photography. For example, visual researchers Wang and Burris discuss documentary photography as a precursor to Photovoice practices, photographer Michelle Bogre makes a nod to Photovoice projects in her book on the history of photography as activism, and scholar Margaret Olin brings Photovoice into conversation with the broader histories of photography as a social practice.<sup>85</sup> Still, participatory photographic practices such as Photovoice are not generally discussed in the scholarship on art, visual culture, or photography. Nevertheless, the existing interdisciplinary research on Photovoice helps scholars such as myself who study *different variations of community-engaged photography* to: understand the realities of running such projects, investigate how the frameworks for participation informed the visual outcomes of each project, ask fruitful questions when interviewing project facilitators, develop more even-handed and thoughtful critiques of the final outcomes of these projects, and situate these new practices within a larger historical framework of socially engaged photographic practices.

As my case studies used photo-based strategies to represent diverse communities of women, marginalized people, immigrants, and concerned citizens, early on I consulted a great deal of research on photography, identity, and community. Many art and visual culture scholars have discussed how photography has been used, for better or for worse, to produce knowledge about individual and communal identities. For example, scholars such as Allan Sekula, John Tagg, Christopher Pinney, Louis Kaplan, Cherise Smith, Sarah Bassnett, and Tina M. Campt have produced significant research about portrait photographs as important sites where racial, ethnic, and cultural identities are imposed,

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<sup>84</sup> See: Joanou (2009); and Prem Kumar Rajaram, "Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, 3 (2002): 247–264.

<sup>85</sup> See: Wang and Burris, "Photovoice Concept," 371; Michelle Bogre, *Photography as Social Activism: Images for Social Change* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2012): 138–152; and Margaret Olin, "Looking through Their Eyes," in *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012): 131–160.

performed, contested, or negotiated.<sup>86</sup> These and other scholars, such as Ardis Cameron, Carol Payne, Claudette Lauzon, and Ariella Azoulay, have considered photography's role in constituting, or challenging hegemonic discourses related to, national or civil identities.<sup>87</sup> Artists and scholars such as Jo Spence, Patricia Holland, bell hooks, Annette Kuhn, Marianne Hirsh, and Laura Wexler have examined the cultural impact of family photographs in broader narratives about identity and community.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, there is a great deal of research on the relationships between photography and class identities, identities related to sex and gender, and/or subcultural identities.<sup>89</sup> Of course, within this

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<sup>86</sup> See: Sekula (1986); Tagg (1993); Pinney (2003); Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Cherise Smith, *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011); Sarah Bassnett, "Shooting Immigrants: Ethnic Difference in Early Twentieth-Century Press Photography," in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, eds. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard, 106–119 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); and Tina Campt, *Images Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012). These themes were also central to a recent exhibition in Toronto, curated by Sarah Bassnett and Patrick Mahon: *Picturing Immigrants in the Ward: How Photography Shaped Ideas about Central and Eastern European Immigrants in Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Toronto* (Toronto: City of Toronto Archives Gallery, June 21, 2012–June 5, 2013).

<sup>87</sup> Ardis Cameron, ed., *Looking for America: The Visual Production of Nation and People* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); Carol Payne, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941–1971* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Claudette Lauzon, "Monumental Interventions: Jeff Thomas Seizes Commemorative Space," in *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, eds. Kirsty Robertson and J. Keri Cronin, 79–93 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); and Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London & New York: Verso, 2011). See also: Payne (2006; 2011).

<sup>88</sup> Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991); bell hooks, "In Our Glory: Photography in Black Life," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells, 387–395 (New York: Routledge, 2003); Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1999); Laura Wexler, "Techniques of the Imaginary Nation: Engendering Family Photography," in *Looking for America: The Visual Production of Nation and People*, ed. Ardis Cameron, 94–117 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); and Annette Kuhn, "Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration," *Visual Studies* 22, 3 (December, 2007): 283–292.

<sup>89</sup> See: Geoffrey Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: *Cartes-de-visites* and the Bourgeois Imagination," in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, eds. J. J. Long, Andrea Noble, and Edward Welch, 80–97 (New York: Routledge, 2009); Dana Seitler, "Making Sexuality Sensible: Tammy Rae Carland's and Catherine Opie's Queer Aesthetic Forms," in *Feeling Photography*, eds. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu, 297–324 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014); and Paula Roush, "Download Fever: Photography, Subcultures, and Online-Offline Counter-Archival Strategies," *Photographies* 2 (2009): 143–167.

field of research the themes of class, race, gender, and sexuality, as well as ideas of individual and communal identities are deeply interconnected. For instance, in one of the few scholarly works to have addressed my selected case studies, communication studies scholar Chris Richardson considers how photographic portraiture might inspire us to reconsider media stereotypes of class and race in his discussion of JR's work and Dan Bergeron's *Regent Park Portraits*.<sup>90</sup> Acknowledging that photography captures varied and complex individual and group identities is also crucial to my work. However, I focus mainly on how photographic portrait projects present us with images of people from a *diverse range of backgrounds*, who contest or perform *neoliberal identities*.

Since my case studies approached photography as a social practice, I also looked to literature about participatory art. Many scholars, artists, and curators have sought to define the surge of participatory art that began around the 1990s, including Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of "relational art," Suzanne Lacy's writing about "new genre public art," and Grant Kester's conception of "dialogical art."<sup>91</sup> Often less interested in producing aesthetic objects, these practices tend to value the collaborative process and "the creative rewards of participation as a politicized working process."<sup>92</sup> Art scholar Claire Bishop famously described the upsurge in participatory art forms since the 1990s as the "social turn" in the arts and critiqued the consequent "ethical turn" in art discourse, which, she argued, favoured ethical discussions about participatory art practice over discussions of aesthetics and politics.<sup>93</sup> Bishop challenged art scholars to move beyond a discussions of ethics when critiquing unsettling or potentially exploitative collaborative

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<sup>90</sup> Chris Richardson, "On Devrait Tout Detruire: Photography, Habitus, and Symbolic Violence in Clichy-sous-Bois and Regent Park," in *Reclaiming Canadian Bodies: Visual and Media Representation*, 179–200 (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2015): 180.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example: Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004): 10. See also: Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Washington: Bay Press, 1994); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002); Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents," *Artforum* 44, 6 (2006): 178–183; and Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Bishop, "The Social Turn," 180. See also: Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 11–40.

works that recruit marginalized communities, and to critically engage with these endeavors *as art*.<sup>94</sup> Once a marginalized subject in critical art discourse, participatory art scholarship has become important in the past couple of decades, particularly due to Claire Bishop's work on participation, Grant Kester's study of collaborative art, and Shannon Jackson's research on performative or social art practices.<sup>95</sup> Participatory art scholarship draws on the work of a number of other theorists such as Benjamin, Debord, Freire, Deleuze and Guattari, Bey, Foucault, Derrida, Agamben, and Badiou, to name a few.<sup>96</sup> Many scholars, such as Bishop and Jackson also point to the profound influence of theorist Jacques Rancière's recent works on politics and aesthetics, as he has paved the way for new modes of thinking about art, politics, and spectatorship.<sup>97</sup> This literature has greatly informed my work in a number of ways. For instance, Bishop's interest in creating a stronger presence for participatory art in art criticism, her desire for more balanced critiques of aesthetics and ethics in participatory work, and her willingness to critically engage with the troubling aspects of some collaborative work, helped to motivate this study. Furthermore, Bishop's work debunks the myth that participation is always "leftist," and helps to pave the way for more complex readings of how participatory photography practices are used to serve diverse political agendas.<sup>98</sup> While all of this research is deeply informative for my study, I still needed to navigate some significant gaps. As I have discussed, a number of scholars from different fields have examined Photovoice, but they have mostly considered issues of ethics. In a similar vein, participatory art is discussed in contemporary art criticism, but it does not always extend to the kind of community-

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<sup>94</sup> Bishop's emphasis. Bishop, "The Social Turn," 180. See also: Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Bishop (2006; 2012); Kester (2004). See also: Claire Bishop, ed., *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London & Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2006); Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (San Diego: Duke University Press, 2011); and Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>96</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 11; and Kester, *The One and the Many*, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 18; and Jackson, *Social Works*, 52–53. See: Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum* XLV, 7 (March 2007): 271–277; and Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

<sup>98</sup> Claire Bishop and Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Interview: Intelligent Discomfort," *Mousse Magazine* 35 (2012): <http://moussemagazine.it/issue.mm?id=41> (accessed 17 September 2013).

engaged photography projects that I study. My work necessarily bridges these separate fields and brings the critical lens of art, photography, and visual culture to the study of community-engaged photographic portrait projects. This is of course not to discount recent photography scholarship that does draw on theories of participatory art. For instance, recently Olin argued that photography gains power as a *relational art*, whose meaning is determined by the relationships it establishes.<sup>99</sup> As Olin demonstrates, new inroads are being made that apply the research and knowledge on participatory art to photographic practices, and I hope that my work contributes to this burgeoning area of research.

Finally, by considering the complex role that community-engaged photographic practice plays in relation to neoliberalism, I respond to recent calls for art historical scholarship that engages more actively with current politics.<sup>100</sup> As my study aspires to examine the relationship between emergent photographic practices and neoliberalism, I should note that I am preceded by several scholars who have investigated art and photography in relation to globalization, capitalism, neoliberalism, and activism. To date, art and performance scholars such as Jackson, Bishop, and Kester, Cronin and Robertson, as well as Stimson and Sholette, have addressed the relationship between neoliberalism and recent artistic practices.<sup>101</sup> In photography studies, scholar Alix Ohlin defined Andreas Gursky's photographs of grocery stores and stock exchanges as images of globalization.<sup>102</sup> Edward Burtynsky's unsettlingly striking images of industrialized and polluted global landscapes have been examined for the tensions that they create between their "aesthetic punch" and their "powerful political implications."<sup>103</sup> Art scholar Kirsty Robertson has considered the relationship between photography, the internet, and the Global Justice movement, to consider the potential and the challenges of protest

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<sup>99</sup> Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Cronin and Robertson, eds., *Imagining Resistance*, 5.

<sup>101</sup> Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Jackson (2011); Kester (2011); Cronin and Robertson (2011); and Bishop (2012).

<sup>102</sup> Alix Ohlin, "Andreas Gursky and the Contemporary Sublime," *Art Journal* 61, 4 (Winter 2002): 22–35; 24.

<sup>103</sup> Glen Helfand, "Edward Burtynsky," *Art Forum* 44, 3 (2005): 258.

photographs “to memorialize, spread, and activate resistance.”<sup>104</sup> Weiner has examined the relationship between contemporary photographic practice in the US and the recent economic downturn, by examining the exhibition, “More American Photographs,” curated by Jens Hoffman, the photo-blog *We Are the 99 Percent*, and Zoe Strauss’s *Under I-95* photography project in Philadelphia (2007).<sup>105</sup> Thus, building on this existing scholarship, I examine community-engaged photographic portrait projects within the contexts of urban neoliberalism, entrepreneurialism, and austerity politics. In the fourth chapter, I consider how *Toronto Inside Out* exhibited the city’s renewed political energy and how this project points to new roles for portraiture that have emerged in light of social networking technologies in a neoliberal era.

To help flesh out the political context in which my case studies were situated, I consulted a broad range of interdisciplinary research. I am deeply thankful for the work of urban studies professor Julie-Anne Boudreau, environmental studies professor Roger Keil, and social science professor Douglas Young, and in particular, their book, *Changing Toronto* (2009). This book is a critical resource that maps out the phases and stages of urban neoliberalism in the city by isolating how neoliberalism has manifested as different political economies and technologies of power, as well as in the forms of everyday urbanism and resistance in Toronto. I also drew on the work of communication studies scholar Barbara Jenkins, political science scholar Patricia Goff, and urban studies scholar Jamie Peck, who have mapped out the impact of Richard Florida’s creative city cultural policy on Toronto and other cities worldwide; geographer Doreen Massey and sociologist Saskia Sassen, who have looked at the impact of neoliberalism on cities, and art scholar Angela McRobbie, who has offered important studies of the role of artists as “pioneers of the new economy.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Kirsty Robertson, “Webs of Resistance: Photography, the Internet, and the Global Justice Movement,” in *Image and Imagination*, ed. Martha Langford, 147–158 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005): 147.

<sup>105</sup> Weiner, “Stimulus, Austerity, Economy,” 94–105. See also: Jens Hoffman, “More American Photographs (San Francisco: CCA Wattis Institute, 2011).

<sup>106</sup> See: McRobbie (2004); Jenkins (2005); Peck (2005); Sassen (2006); Jenkins and Goff (2006); and Massey (2007).

In summary, my work makes a unique contribution to photography studies by exploring the relationship between new approaches of photographic portraiture and the rise of neoliberalism. This dissertation interrogates an emergent trope for representing individuals and communities in a neoliberal era that has yet to garner a lot of critical attention. I investigate what portrait projects might reveal or conceal about the impact of neoliberal gender regimes, systemic inequalities, and the widening gap between economic classes on individuals and communities. I explore how photography as a social practice has galvanized communities in response to a context of “peril and opportunity” that has emerged in a neoliberal era.<sup>107</sup> I consider how these photographic projects exemplify new governmental roles for community and culture in a neoliberal era. I discuss the potential for these projects to present us with images of community that elicit feelings of affect and empathy, but also feelings of outright anger and derision, which I associate with harsh neoliberal worldviews about economic winners and losers. In short, I consider how this trope is central to the workings of urban neoliberalism.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is almost routine for studies of photographic portraiture to turn to the work of theorist Roland Barthes and his book, *Camera Lucida*, in which he painstakingly analyzes photographs of his late mother.<sup>108</sup> When reviewing this seminal work, I was struck by the passages that convey Barthes’ struggle to simply “recognize” his mother in the photographic images through which he sifted.<sup>109</sup> He describes one image in which his mother is dressed in the fashions of the time and he reflects on how the image presents his mother as if she was “caught in a History.”<sup>110</sup> He notes how this entrapment poses challenges for him as a viewer and in doing so Barthes testifies to the potential for deeply

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<sup>107</sup> Kester, *The One and the Many*, 6.

<sup>108</sup> Scholars Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu begin their book, *Feeling Photography*, by noting that since 1979, *Camera Lucida* has been one of the most cited works on photography. See: Brown and Phu, eds., *Feeling Photography*, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980; reprint, 2010): 66.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 64

personal and fraught engagements with photographic portraiture. Elsewhere in this book, Barthes describes his own struggle for authenticity as he poses for photographs.<sup>111</sup> Here, he discusses the portrait photograph as a “closed field of forces,” in which the subject represents: the person they think they are, the image that they want to project, the identity that the photographer assumes of them, and the representation that is used in the photographer’s art.<sup>112</sup> My investigation was primarily driven by questions that, in retrospect, relate to Barthes’ contemplation of how photographic portraits present us with images of people who perform a number of roles or who are “trapped” within specific social or temporal contexts. To what extent are the “faces of Toronto” representations of individuals “caught in a History” of urban neoliberalism in Toronto? How might my case studies reflect this history, either intentionally or unintentionally? To explore such questions, I needed to acknowledge the celebratory or advocacy aspirations of my case studies, while at the same time allowing myself to see beyond the surface images and discourses to root out the underlying politics and the driving forces of each project. To achieve this, my theoretical framework is informed by photographic studies that examine how visual representations produce discourse, power, and knowledge, scholarship that addresses the political dimensions of photography, and theories related to performativity, materiality, and affect.<sup>113</sup> I also turned to what geography and sociology scholar Wendy Larner describes as “neo-Foucauldian” theories of neoliberalism and to re-theorizations of “community,” “everyday life,” and “culture” in a global neoliberal era.<sup>114</sup>

First, looking at my case studies through the critical lens of photography studies, I was better able to identify how these projects produced knowledge about individual and collective identities and to consider the political dimensions of these projects. For example, photo historians John Tagg and Allan Sekula have applied Foucauldian theories to the study of mid-nineteenth century photography to show how photography was used

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 10–15.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>113</sup> For example: Sekula (1986); Tagg (1993); Hall (1997); Azoulay (2008; 2011); Levin (2009); Edwards (1999); and Brown and Phu (2014).

<sup>114</sup> Larner, “Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” 12. See also: Foucault (1978); Larner (2000); Rose (1999); Crary (2013); Braedley and Luxton (2010); and Yúdice (2003).



to regulate and surveille the social sphere.<sup>115</sup> As Tagg explains, every image belongs to a “distinct moment,” and it is our job to look beyond the apparent “naturalness” of the portrait photograph, to consider the conditions in which it was created and its intended meaning.<sup>116</sup> He notes, “from the mid-nineteenth century on, photography had its role to play in the workings of the factory, the hospital, the asylum, the reformatory [...] the school, [...] the army, the family, the press, [...] the expeditionary force,” and so on.<sup>117</sup> Thus, Tagg notes, photographic portraiture has long been associated with power and the production of “knowledge.”<sup>118</sup> Drawing on similar theories, Sekula has discussed how photography can play both “honorific” and “repressive” roles.<sup>119</sup> Portrait photography, Sekula argues, offer the most effective example of this “double operation” as it can elevate its subject or confine its subject to specific identities.<sup>120</sup> The honorific and repressive qualities of portraiture have been taken up by Tagg and a number of other scholars who have conducted nuanced critiques of how photographic portraiture has engaged with these qualities as they have related to a specific political contexts.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Ariella Azoulay’s book, *Civil Imaginations*, also offers an important precursor to my study of the relationship between community-engaged photographic portrait projects and larger systems of power. Azoulay considers what she describes as the political ontology of photography and reframes the photograph as one element of a greater event or an encounter.<sup>122</sup> This work is especially useful as it helps to foreground the political stakes involved in photography as a social practice.

For this dissertation, I also drew on important work on that has considered the relationship between photography, performativity, spectatorship, materiality, and affect. First, as noted in my literature review, the relationship between photography and performativity has been long-established, as photography has been used to perform a

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<sup>115</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 5; see also: Sekula, *The Body and the Archive*, 15–16.

<sup>116</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 35.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 77; 80.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 80.

<sup>119</sup> Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>121</sup> Cho, “Anticipating Citizenship,” 170–171. See also: Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 36.

<sup>122</sup> Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 23–27.

myriad of individual and collective identities. In addition to the work of the photo historians listed above, I also turned to the field of performance studies to help consider how the portrait projects inspired subjects to perform a range of neoliberal subjectivities. For example, performance studies scholar Laura Levin notes, “A number of theorists have argued [that] the ontology of photography is intrinsically linked to performance.”<sup>123</sup> In a review of recent publications by Ash, Azoulay, and Taylor, Levin argues that much scholarship up to this point has focused on the theatricality of posing for photographs, rather than the “performative encounter between spectator and image.”<sup>124</sup> Levin critiques the use of performance studies in photo-analysis by identifying some of the benefits and challenges of using performance to interpret affect in photography.<sup>125</sup> My work takes up Levin’s discussion of the performative encounter between image and spectator, when, in the fourth chapter, I discuss our visual encounters with street art portraits. As my case studies took place in an urban context, I was also inspired by performance studies scholar Bertie Ferdman’s writing about JR’s large wheatpaste portrait posters and his consequent *Inside Out Project*, as forms of urban dramaturgy.<sup>126</sup> Ferdman explains that not only is pasting one’s image in the city a way in which participants “perform the city,” but that the photographs themselves also “perform alternative narratives of city spaces by giving a voice through the medium of photography, to actors/inhabitants who are otherwise ignored by the mainstream media, and who often live in poverty.”<sup>127</sup> While the portraits that I explore most certainly “perform the city” or create alternative discourses, I am more interested in how the portraits capture people as they *performed neoliberal subjectivities* in the context of urban neoliberalism, not only through the portrait images in public space, but also through facilitation, participation, spectatorship, and even

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<sup>123</sup> Laura Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography,” *Photography and Culture* 2, 3 (November 2009): 327–336.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 328. See also: Susan Ash, “The Barnardo’s Babies: Performativity, Shame, and the Photograph,” *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 19, 4 (2005): 507–521; Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008); and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, New York, and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>125</sup> Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography,” 328.

<sup>126</sup> Bertie Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy: The Global Art Project of JR.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, 3 (September 2012): 12–26.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 13.

vandalism of certain projects. Additionally, Levin's work with English scholar Kim Solga on urban performance and the "fantasy of urban renewal" in Toronto has offered an exceptional model critiquing both official and alternative performances of Toronto.<sup>128</sup> Like Levin and Solga, I am interested in exploring not only the aspirations of these projects, but also their underlying politics, to expose some of the issues that portrait projects present in terms of capturing a true sense of the city and its inhabitants. Finally, performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson's book, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), provides a critical resource for considering the "performative turn" in socially engaged art practice, providing a thorough history of social practice, art, and performance.<sup>129</sup> This book is acclaimed for how Jackson seamlessly threads her "socially and historically situated self,"<sup>130</sup> and for how she, "reveals infrastructure, economics, and different forms of support as bridges that span projects."<sup>131</sup> As I hope my work demonstrates, I am very inspired by Jackson's methodologies and research questions. However, whereas Jackson explores case studies that use *performative structures* that reflect broader systems of power,<sup>132</sup> my work looks at how *new photographic practices* embody, sometimes unintentionally, the systemic mechanisms of neoliberalism.

Theories of photographic reproduction, as well as those that focus on photography and materiality, were central to my investigation, particularly because of the important role of photo-documentation in my research methodology and the ephemerality of the projects that I considered. Photo-documentation was critical for my analysis of these projects, as many of the case studies that I examined are no longer up in public space, such as the temporary exhibit by Maraval or the photo-based street art works by Bergeron and Manifesto Festival. Alternatively, many of the portraits no longer exist in their

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<sup>128</sup> Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 37–53.

<sup>129</sup> Jackson, *Social Works*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Sonja Arsham Kuftinec, "*Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Review)," *Modern Drama* 55, 2 (Summer 2012): 271.

<sup>131</sup> Patricia C. Phillips, "*Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Review)," in *Linked Fates and Futures* 1, 1 + 2, n.d., <http://public.imaginingamerica.org/blog/article/social-works-performing-art-supporting-publics-by-shannon-jackson/> (accessed 2 June 2015).

<sup>132</sup> Jackson, *Social Works*, 6.

original states, as is the case with *Impressions*. As art scholars have noted, particularly in discussions of graffiti and street art, photo-documentation has long played an important, albeit fraught, role in capturing and disseminating images of art in the public sphere.<sup>133</sup> For example, photography helps to preserve the visual legacy of ephemeral graffiti and street art, even if this process necessarily decontextualizes the “topo-sensitive” or site-specific works and converts them into a different medium.<sup>134</sup> To draw on theorist Walter Benjamin’s seminal work, through photography, these artworks are taken from their “unique existence at a particular place” and time, thereby diminishing the aura of the original object through mass reproduction, and now, online technologies.<sup>135</sup> As art scholar Anna Waclawek explains, while there are benefits of documenting street art using photography and disseminating it online, the pitfalls include the loss of its element of surprise, which is often fundamental to the performance of the work, and the distancing of the viewer from the original work and its site.<sup>136</sup> Yet, as cultural studies scholar Ella Chmielewska has discussed, photographic images enable us to “undertake close investigations of the incidental and the ephemeral,” by allowing us to document the changing material characteristics of these works over time.<sup>137</sup> Photography, Chmielewska explains, helps to capture “continuity and change,” and she notes that photographs can reveal processes that layer and transform the work, including the weathering, peeling, and overwriting.<sup>138</sup> Chmielewska’s discussion of the power of photography to document the life of a work of art in public space, as well as historian Elizabeth Edwards’ work on how materiality informs photographic meaning, helped to guide my discussion of how various

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<sup>133</sup> Ella Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality: Montreal Graffiti in Photography,” in *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Annie Gérin and James S. McLean (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 2009): 271–292; and Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2011): 179–184.

<sup>134</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality,” 272.

<sup>135</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (Cape, 1970; original 1936): 218–219; 220–221. See also: Douglas Davis, “The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction (An Evolving Thesis: 1991–1995),” *Leonardo* 28, 5 (1995): 381–386.

<sup>136</sup> Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 96; 178–179.

<sup>137</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality,” 272.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

stage and phases of these projects produced powerful, and sometimes conflicting, visual outcomes.<sup>139</sup>

For this dissertation, it was also important that I draw on recent photography scholarship that engages with theories of photography, feeling, and affect. This is because, on the one hand, the photo-documentation that I encountered presented me with inspiring and uplifting images of community action in Toronto. On the other hand, I confronted troubling images of the excavation of the photographic murals and their sites, their vandalism, or the way that some of the portraits were exposed to household garbage and street sludge. Recently, photo historians have been influenced by an “affective turn” in the humanities and social sciences, which has caused them to investigate how photographs make us *feel*, beyond our physical engagements with photographic images.<sup>140</sup> For example, Margaret Olin’s book, *Touching Photographs* (2011), explores how photographs create communities, how we both literally and figuratively *handle* photographs, and how photographs help us to make sense out of paradigm-shifting world events.<sup>141</sup> Photography scholars Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu published an anthology on the topic of photography, feeling, and affect, which offers a brief overview of feeling and affect in photography studies and encourages the reader to consider how feeling and affect impact the practices and politics of viewing photographs.<sup>142</sup> *Feeling Photography* includes the work of photo historians such as: Shawn Michelle Smith, Christopher Pinney, Lily Cho, Marianne Hirsh, and Leo Spitzer, among others. These scholars consider the relationship between photography and tactility, sentimentality, or intimacy, as well as the way photographic archives constitute affective experiences.<sup>143</sup> Thus, a number of studies that engage with the theories of photography, feeling and affect helped

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<sup>139</sup> Edwards (1999).

<sup>140</sup> Brown and Phu, *Feeling Photography*, 4. Here, Brown and Phu credit the term, “The affective turn,” to Patricia Ticineto Clough. Many of the essays in this anthology reference the “affective turn.” See also: Patricia Ticineto Clough, ed., *The Affective Turn* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>141</sup> Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 1–20.

<sup>142</sup> Brown and Phu, eds., *Feeling Photography*, 7.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–21. Here, Brown and Phu offer an overview of how the essays relate to these themes.

me to explore the powerful affective dimensions of some of the intended, and unintended, visual and material outcomes of the projects.

Today, as Braedley and Luxton explain, scholars such as myself are, “writing and living through neoliberal times,” as neoliberal governance, policies, and ideologies have saturated our world, and thus, understanding the theories of neoliberalism were critical to this study.<sup>144</sup> As noted, neoliberalism is a complex concept and scholars and theorists continue to work to define it, to periodize it, and to analyze its implications. As Larner discusses, neoliberalism has been described as policy, ideology, or governmentality.<sup>145</sup> As policy, neoliberalism is linked to the political administrations of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and is associated with the shift from Keynesian policies to those that prioritize the success of global capitalism by reducing the role of government, deregulating the market, reducing social spending, and promoting entrepreneurialism and individualism.<sup>146</sup> By looking at neoliberalism as a policy framework, we can see how the political tenets of neoliberalism, which centre on: “the individual, freedom of choice, market security, *laissez faire*, and minimal government,” drive policy reform and emergent political agendas.<sup>147</sup> An interpretation of neoliberalism as ideology broadens the scope of investigation to consider a wider range of institutions that have been impacted by neoliberal hegemonic thought, and helps to consider how neoliberalism manifests differently in different contexts.<sup>148</sup> However, neoliberalism as governmentality sees neoliberalism as political discourse *and* a set of governing practices, and it considers the unique, complex, contradictory, and sometimes unexpected, manifestations of neoliberal power in our lives.<sup>149</sup> Understanding neoliberalism as governmentality was critical to my study because my case studies emerged from, or at the very least relied on, the fields of art and/or community outreach (rather than politics *per se*) and each reflected

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<sup>144</sup> Braedley and Luxton, *Everyday Neoliberalism*, 10. See also: Raewyn Connell, “Understanding Neoliberalism,” in *Everyday Neoliberalism*, eds. Braedley and Luxton, 22–36 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 22.

<sup>145</sup> Larner, “Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” 5–25.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; 9–12.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

aspects of neoliberalism in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways. Thus, to better situate my case studies within the vast assemblages of power that reflect, support and/or contest neoliberalism, I drew on theories of neoliberalism as governmentality, as well as those that view neoliberalism as a “complex set of changing technologies of power.”<sup>150</sup>

“Governmentality” was a concept that was developed by philosopher Michel Foucault in the late 1970s and 1980s, to describe forms of government that circulate within society along any number of “downward” and “upward continuities.”<sup>151</sup> For Foucault, the concept of “government” is broadly defined as “the conduct of conduct,” which encompasses a range of activities that shape, manage, and regulate the ways that people conduct themselves and others.<sup>152</sup> As Larner explains, neo-Foucauldian literature on governmentality shows that neoliberalism may have resulted in the reduction of government through market deregulation and increased privatization and so forth, but it certainly has not meant that there is “*less governance*.”<sup>153</sup> Rather than analyzing neoliberal power as a top-down exercise in governance, wherein neoliberal politics, ideologies, and practices are solely imposed by those in power onto the rest of the population, neoliberalism as governmentality enables us to consider how neoliberalism has seeped into our everyday lives and have fundamentally altered how we are conducted and how we conduct ourselves. Sociologist and social theorist Nikolas Rose explains that early writing about government centered on analyses of state power and relied on a series of “constitutive oppositions,” including, “State/civil society, domination/emancipation, [and] public/private.”<sup>154</sup> In contrast, the concept of “governmentality” allows us to move away from this narrow approach by urging us to consider *how individuals and communities are governed* and by broadening our purview of *who executes*, and *who is*

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<sup>150</sup> Larner, “Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” 12.

<sup>151</sup> Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 91; 87–104.

<sup>152</sup> Colin Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” in *The Foucault Effect*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 1–51 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 2. See also: Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” 41.

<sup>153</sup> Larner, “Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” 12.

<sup>154</sup> Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” 37.

*impacted by, governmental activity.*<sup>155</sup> To answer these questions, we must move beyond the former binaries such as “State/civil society” to develop a more complex understanding of the multiple forces that work together to govern modern society.<sup>156</sup> For example, Rose explains that our modern experience of “power” is the result of “strategies of regulation” that connect “political” apparatuses with those that are generally considered “non-political,” but which nevertheless hold tremendous power over how we live our lives, such as our communities, homes, and art.<sup>157</sup> He notes that today, “power” is the result of strategies of regulation that are, “assemblages of diverse components—persons, forms of knowledge, technical procedures and modes of judgement and sanction.”<sup>158</sup> As Boudreau, et al., explain, neoliberalism as governmentality gives a “frame of reference” for better understanding the “contradictory discursive events that link the everyday life of individuals to the new world of ‘advanced liberalism.’”<sup>159</sup> Thus, this approach helps to demonstrate how power operates in a neoliberal era, as people are governed by their political institutions, their communities, and themselves.

Scholarship about neoliberalism as governmentality introduces two key concepts that I have applied to my analysis of the case studies: “technologies of power” and “neoliberal subjectivity.” Scholar Engin Isin notes that by looking at neoliberalism as a complex assemblage of technologies of power, we understand that neoliberalism is about, “shifting the techniques, focus and priorities of government.”<sup>160</sup> In other words, in a neoliberal era we see *new techniques* for imposing authority or shaping the conduct of individuals and communities. Both Isin and Rose have discussed neoliberal, or ‘advanced liberal,’ technologies of power, which include: new relationships between politics and knowledge, new roles for communities, and new political subjectivities that position individuals as enterprising agents who are solely responsible for their quality of life.<sup>161</sup> The establishment of new subjectivities, Rose explains, has relied on “the emergence of a

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<sup>155</sup> Gordon, “Governmental Rationality,” 2–7.

<sup>156</sup> Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” 37–38.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 28.

<sup>160</sup> Isin, “Governing Toronto Without Government,” 173.

<sup>161</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 28–29. See: Isin (1998) and Rose (1996).



range of novel practices which seek to shape and regulate individuality in particular ways.”<sup>162</sup> These practices stress the importance of individualism, expertise, self-sufficiency, entrepreneurialism, and ultimately encourage citizens to take care of themselves rather than relying on governmental support. Thus, the ideal neoliberal subject is, “active, prudent, autonomous, responsible, and entrepreneurial,”<sup>163</sup> and thrives in a competitive economic climate. In this way, the idea of neoliberalism as governmentality enables us to address our own complicity in the neoliberal project as we internalize and perform neoliberal subjectivities. These theories help us to see the potential for community-engaged portrait projects to: produce forms of knowledge within greater assemblages of power, capture emergent neoliberal subjectivities, and serve as technologies of power. They also help us to consider participatory photography as a technology of power that draws on the expertise of everyday people to convey messages about their lives, or to see how community-engaged portrait projects might capture individuals within the “heterogeneous communities of allegiance” in which they participate, and through which they are governed.<sup>164</sup>

To consider the potential of my case studies to serve as technologies of power, I also needed to revisit preconceptions of the term “community.” “Community” is generally understood as a group of people united by a similar cause, background, or belief system, or a term for marking out the boundaries of our geographical and virtual networks. Benedict Anderson’s seminal text, *Imagined Communities* (1983), often provides a point of departure for understanding the term “community” as a theoretical concept.<sup>165</sup> Anderson describes nations as communities that are:

[Imagined] because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet

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<sup>162</sup> Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” 45.

<sup>163</sup> Woolford and Nelund, “The Responsibilities of the Poor,” 292–293.

<sup>164</sup> Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” 41.

<sup>165</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983; 2006).

them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives  
an image of their communion.”<sup>166</sup>

While scholars have critiqued Anderson for his conception of the nation as a community that is limited in spatial and demographic terms, and one that is largely represented as a deep horizontal “fraternity,” his work helps to provide a theoretical language for understanding the process by which individuals identify with, or do not identify with, communities.<sup>167</sup> Scholar Louis Kaplan built upon Anderson’s ideas to explain the important role that photography has played in imagining, or better yet, *imaging*, communities.<sup>168</sup> Kaplan argues that “photographic images have externalized and realized how we imagine community, so it does not exist in the mind’s eye alone.”<sup>169</sup> Kaplan’s draws on a vast range of photographic genres to ascertain *how community is imagined through photography* and to understand how photography helps to raise questions about class, race, gender, and ethnicity as it is used to represent diverse communities.<sup>170</sup> These ideas offer a starting point for my discussion of how the different photographic projects make the “imagined communities” of Toronto visible and for considering the important role of women, people of different ethnicities, and marginalized people as symbolic capital in a neoliberal era. However, this dissertation is concerned with more than photography’s role in visualizing Toronto’s real and “imagined communities.” I am interested in *how neoliberal power is enacted through community via photographic portrait projects*. Furthermore, I aspire to complicate our understanding of these projects by analyzing their visual outcomes as complex manifestations of neoliberal power, or at the very least, important sites where this power is negotiated and contested.

To consider how Toronto communities were recruited to participate in spectacular portrait projects that helped to reproduce, rationalize, legitimate, engage with, or even contest hegemonic neoliberal polities, practices, and ideologies, I referred to new conceptualizations of the term “community,” such as Rose’s writing on “community” in

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<sup>166</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>167</sup> For example, see: Wexler (2005).

<sup>168</sup> Kaplan (2005).

<sup>169</sup> Kaplan, *American Exposures*, xvii.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

the context of advanced liberalism. Rose explains that on one hand, “community” represents a zone of human relationships which appears to develop and exist outside of the political realm.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, “community” is a governmental resource that is drawn on and utilized for a wide range of agendas.<sup>172</sup> Rose illustrates how “community” has served as both a “*moral field*” of human relationships within which individual and communal identities are constructed, as well as a *political field* that is expedient to diverse agendas.<sup>173</sup> As a result, Rose argues for a concept of “community” that acknowledges it as “the object and the target for the exercise of political power whilst remaining, somehow, external to politics and a counter weight to it.”<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, inspired by theories of governmentality, Rose explains that “community” is now a “governmental sector”—a sector in which:

Vectors and forces can be mobilized, enrolled, deployed in novel programs and techniques which encourage and harness active practices of self-management and identity construction, of personal ethics and collective allegiances.<sup>175</sup>

Thus, Rose’s concept of “community” is more than simply a field that was “colonized by agents, institutions, and practices of control” in a neoliberal era; it has become a form of “*government through community*.”<sup>176</sup> This theorization of community allows for more nuanced and complex interpretations of the community-engaged portrait projects, which function simultaneously as germane attempts to celebrate, represent, or advocate for communities, while often simultaneously serving as a kind of spectacular smokescreen for larger political projects, but one that is not only driven by political leaders, but by individual and community participation as well. If community itself has become a form of neoliberal governance, does it not follow that community-engaged art projects might offer visual evidence of these developments? In what ways do photographic portrait

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<sup>171</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 168.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 168; 175.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 172–173.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 167–168.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

projects present us with communities that are, as Rose describes, the target for the exercise of neoliberal political power, as well as a zone of relations through which neoliberal power is achieved?

For my research, it was also integral that I consider the re-theorizations of the term “everyday life” that have emerged in a global neoliberal era. “The everyday” is an important concept for critical studies of neoliberalism as numerous scholars explore the countless ways that neoliberalism has, “seeped into our social and political fabric and affected our daily lives.”<sup>177</sup> Changing conceptions of everyday life are critical to my research as the case studies that I explore recruited regular people and in some cases attempted to convey messages about their everyday lives through monumental presentations of photographic portraiture. The work of theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze, and Guy Debord and scholars such as Jonathan Crary, Susan Braedley, and Meg Luxton exposes how global neoliberalism has fundamentally transformed our understandings and experiences of everyday life.<sup>178</sup> As Crary explains, neoliberalism has effectively emptied out our previous conceptions of everyday life as a time and space set apart from work, leisure, or consumption, due to 24/7 capitalism, new technological advancements, and the increased privatization of goods and services.<sup>179</sup> This has had a significant impact on our understanding of what was once considered our “free time” and even on how we conduct our interpersonal relationships.<sup>180</sup> In Debord’s words, we are now fully consumed by the “global integrated spectacle,” meaning that there is no escape

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<sup>177</sup> Braedley and Luxton, eds., *Everyday Neoliberalism*, back cover.

<sup>178</sup> See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life* (London & New York: Verso, 2014; orig. 1947); Guy Debord, “Unity and Division within Appearance,” in *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983; original publication date: 1967); Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988). The copy that I accessed was translated by Malcolm Imrie and I accessed online at:

<http://www.libcom.org/files/Comments%20on%20the%20Society%20of%20the%20Spectacle.pdf> (accessed 3 December 2014); and Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (1992): 3–7. See also: Braedley and Luxton (2010); and Crary (2014).

<sup>179</sup> Crary, 24/7, 70.

<sup>180</sup> Crary, 24/7, 70–71. See also: Nicholas Lezard, “24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep—Review*,” *The Guardian*, 22 July 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/22/24-7-late-capitalism-ends-sleep-jonathan-crary-review> (accessed 4 March 2014).

from capitalist power.<sup>181</sup> Crary's discussion of Debord helps to illustrate that in a neoliberal era, the moments, relationships, and activities that compose our everyday lives are widely considered money-making opportunities.<sup>182</sup> In light of the capitalist spectacle that has taken the reigns of our "everyday" lives, my work needed to look past the spectacular qualities of many of these photographic portrait projects to consider the following questions: How are these projects present us with neoliberal forms of spectacle that are associated with capitalist agendas? How might they co-opt the lives and experiences of everyday people for strategies that encourage mass consensus and consumption? And finally, how are the fields such as art and politics, everyday life and capitalism, or advocacy and advertising, conflated through these projects?

Just as "everyday life" has been fundamentally altered by neoliberal developments and the ceaseless pursuit of capital, our ideas of "culture" have also been thoroughly transformed by the all-consuming power of global neoliberalism and capitalism. There is considerable scholarship focused on the impact of globalization, neoliberalism, and the rise of urban entrepreneurialism, on our understandings and uses of culture.<sup>183</sup> As scholars such as Sharon Zukin and George Yúdice explain, culture has become the "business of cities" and it is used as a resource in a fiercely competitive global climate.<sup>184</sup> While there have long been connections between culture, politics, and economics, Yúdice argues that in a global neoliberal era, culture has an *expanded* role, which is based on the belief that culture can resolve political, social and economic challenges.<sup>185</sup> In a global neoliberal era, culture is valued for its expediency, it is re-conceptualized as a multi-purpose problem-solver, and it is expected to yield positive economic and social returns.<sup>186</sup> On the one hand, as Yúdice explains, culture has gained a new sense of legitimacy in the eyes of global leaders, but on the other hand, this new

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<sup>181</sup> Debord (1988).

<sup>182</sup> Crary, 24/7, 71.

<sup>183</sup> See: Yúdice (2003); Zukin (1995; 2004); Cronin and Hetherington (2008); and McClellan (2008). See also: Greg Richards and Robert Palmer, *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., 2010).

<sup>184</sup> Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 2. See also: Yúdice (2003).

<sup>185</sup> Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 10–11.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

conception of culture upsets and displaces traditional notions of culture, such as ideas of “art for art sake” or “culture for culture’s sake.”<sup>187</sup> This has had a significant impact on how cultural institutions, festivals, and projects are conceptualized, funded, and administered. As a result of the new ways in which culture is appropriated, invested in, managed, and distributed, Yúdice challenges the idea of cultural agency in a global era and urges us to consider how works of cultural expression are also caught up in complex mechanisms of power and diverse socioeconomic agendas.<sup>188</sup> This scholarship helps to illustrate that within the context of urban neoliberalism, cultural projects, such as the case studies that I selected, have significant political, social, and economic roles to play. Today, visual celebrations are no longer merely celebrations; advocacy projects simultaneously serve as institutional public relations strategies, and grassroots community outreach projects also function as exercises in neoliberal subjectivity. By using the theoretical frameworks of photography studies and of neoliberalism as governmentality, and by drawing on new theories of community, the everyday, and culture in a global neoliberal era, my research investigates the complexities of these seemingly straightforward, and often celebratory, photographic portrait projects.

## METHODOLOGIES

I used a number of methodologies for this study, including consulting primary and secondary sources and conducting interviews, as well as drawing on my own experiences, analyzing photo-documentation, and making multiple site visits whenever possible. As there is very little scholarship about my specific case studies, I searched for primary resources such as project websites, press releases, and blog posts to begin to sketch out the goals, parameters, and visual outcomes of each project. To flesh out the political or social context of my case studies, I examined civic documents, maps, census data, and reports on topics such as diversity, tourism, art and culture, and poverty and homelessness in Toronto. To see how the projects were linked to contemporary urban

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 1; 9; 15.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 2–3.

events or how they were taken up in the media, I sought related articles in the Toronto press and in popular magazines and tourism blogs. In terms of secondary sources, I looked to scholarship on the history of Toronto and literature on urban neoliberalism in the city to better understand the context within which these projects took place. I also referred to interdisciplinary writing on global neoliberalism, and in particular, scholarship about neoliberalism and its contestations, neoliberalism as governmentality, and the impact of neoliberalism on everyday life, personal subjectivities, community, and culture. Finally, to situate these projects within the greater history of art and visual culture, I referenced scholarship on art, activism, culture, and participation in a global neoliberal era. To better understand the kinds of interventions these works made in urban space, I looked to work on art and the city, public art, graffiti, and street art. As my case studies all used photographic portraits and community-engagement, I considered how they were linked to the histories of photography by researching portraiture, Photovoice, and photography as a social practice. I also drew on photographic theory to explore how my case studies constituted messages about identity and community through discourse, framing, performativity, affect, and materiality.

Many of the case studies I explore in this dissertation did not have the human resources or funding in place for comprehensive post-project reporting or long-term archiving of their visual outcomes. I found that much of the discourse that is available for the projects in this study is limited to brief promotional press releases, short news reports, or posts on artist websites, blogs, social media, and photo-sharing sites. To fill in the gaps regarding the frameworks for participation, I secured interviews with some of the facilitators, artists, and organizers of these projects. I certainly did not wish to undermine the agency of the participants by excluding their voices in this study. However, due to the scope of this dissertation, as well as some of the practical and ethical issues that I faced in terms of obtaining access to the participants, my interview process focused on the people who were the primary decision-makers in these community-engaged initiatives. Thankfully, the interviewees also shared anecdotes that offered glimpses of the sociological impacts of the projects. I could not weave all of these stories into my dissertation as I have largely focused on the visual impacts and artistic outcomes of the

projects, as well as their relationships to specific political, cultural, and economic agendas. Still, to capture a sense of what it might mean to participate in a portrait project, I reflect on my own experience as one of the photographic subjects for *Mille Femmes* in the first chapter. This chapter also helps to establish the framework for viewing the portraits that I use throughout the dissertation by marking some distinctions between subjective and art historical accounts. I examine the projects with a decidedly academic lens informed by the histories and theories of art, photography, and visual culture in the chapters that follow. At times, my interpretations are inflected with my own experiences as an arts and culture worker and as a Toronto citizen. I also try to recognize how the images attracted many kinds of gazes, including but not limited to, those of facilitators, participants, civic leaders, sponsors, everyday citizens, and tourists. As scholars Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins have argued, by acknowledging the multiple gazes that may fall upon photographs we can better understand their contradictions, complexities, and power.<sup>189</sup>

For this dissertation I examined a range of photo-documentation, including my own photographs, as well as those taken by artists, photographers, citizens, or public servants. I relied on the help of many photographers who generously shared their images with me so that I could reflect on the phases of the portrait projects, from the community meetings and installations, to the official launches of the artworks and, in some cases, their destruction over time. I am particularly indebted to Dan Bergeron, Kate Young, and Anna Keenan in this regard. As a participant in *Mille Femmes*, I could draw on my first-hand experiences attending the exhibition, refer to my own digital photographs, or consult the images on Maraval's website or the catalogue.<sup>190</sup> In the case of *Impressions*, which is still in public space, I drew on Chmielewska's aforementioned methodology by taking photographs of the installation on a number of occasions to document its visual

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<sup>189</sup> Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells, 354–375 (New York: Routledge, 2003): 371.

<sup>190</sup> See: Pierre Maraval, *Toronto's Mille Femmes* (Montreal: Quadriscan, 2008); or Pierre Maraval, "Mille Femmes Toronto," in *Pierre Maraval Productions*, 2008, <http://www.maraval.org/spip.php?article213> (accessed 3 December 2014).



effects in different seasons and over the course of time. One of my most vivid memories of this research process is when I spontaneously hopped in my car in the aftermath of a snowstorm to revisit the Jameson Avenue project. I had to laugh at the absurdity of trudging through the snow, bundled up in a bright yellow, down jacket, shivering as I took photographs of what were essentially just snowbanks. I compared these images to those taken at the launch of *Impressions* in 2009, which are available on a number of blogs and photo-sharing sites. Finally, in the instances where I was not able to see the original work in public space, I tried to connect to the original sites in one way or another to grasp their “place sensitivity,”<sup>191</sup> whether it be by mapping out where the works were once situated, visiting the locations, reading census data, experiencing community events, or observing firsthand how the urban landscape has changed. For the latter, I found that site visits combined with analyzing photo documentation and searching the sites on Google Maps offered the best way to glean a sense of urban transformation. Google Maps is a helpful, albeit imperfect, tool. Its Street View images are not always the most up-to-date; however, the Google Maps images enabled me to compare the present to the not-so-distant past and to get a sense of how quickly many urban neighbourhoods change in the context of urban neoliberalism and increased privatization.

Bishop argues that there are limitations to understanding art that engages with individuals and communities or that uses social practices through visual documentation alone, and thankfully, as I have noted, not all of my experiences were restricted to photo analysis.<sup>192</sup> One of my goals throughout this project was to present a fair and balanced critique of these projects in a way that would not undermine the spirit or energy that was put into the projects. To glean a sense of what Bishop calls, “the affective dynamic that propels artists to make these projects and people to participate in them,”<sup>193</sup> I listened to my interviewees as they responded to my questions about their intentions and interactions. I posed questions about the challenges that they might have faced, the discoveries that they made, and the successes that they celebrated. I tried to be self-reflexive and to identify

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<sup>191</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality,” 272.

<sup>192</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 5.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

my own biases as I conducted my research. For example, often I disclosed my own participation in civic events, be it as an arts worker, as a citizen stumbling upon an art work in public space, or even as the wife of someone fighting for better childcare funding at the public deputations that took place at City Hall in 2011. Additionally, I shared iterations of my work with outreach workers, volunteers, artists, and community workers to obtain feedback from people who are “on the floor” doing important work every day. To remind myself about the realities of working in outreach, I embraced opportunities to work as an arts facilitator with a diverse range of groups.<sup>194</sup> To experience how these exhibitions are celebrated within communities and to join in the celebrations, I attended the openings of new portrait projects such as Colin Shafer’s *Cosmopolis Toronto* (2014) and Robert van Waarden’s *Along the Pipeline* project (2014). If, in my efforts to conduct a rigorous analysis of some of the troubling politics, rigid systemic frameworks, or unintended visual outcomes of the projects, it seems that I cast a shadow over the *good* intentions or the *positive* sociological impacts of the projects, I assure the reader that this was not my goal. As a scholar of community-engaged art, I will continue to strive to produce nuanced research that considers the many experiences that such collaborative projects engender.

To explore how I might better situate my work within emerging scholarship, I participated in a number of conferences throughout my tenure as a doctoral candidate. I was fortunate to present on panels addressing topics including: art and urbanism in Canada, art in the era of civil society, the role of photography in forming new identities in Canada, public portraiture, and the diverse histories of photography. I left each experience with new ideas, questions, and resources to explore. When presenting my research at conferences, one of the most common questions I have received is: How might I have done these projects differently? I have learned so much by examining my case studies and these lessons are certainly applicable to my own work moving forward.

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<sup>194</sup> None of this outreach work is reflected in this dissertation, as per the guidelines of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Western Ontario. This work was entirely separate from my research project, though the experiences informed my approach to writing about community-engaged art projects.

However, this dissertation is not a proposal on how I could have done any of these projects in a better way. Firstly, my background as an arts facilitator has taught me that despite the original intentions of any community-engaged project, there are limitations and setbacks, there are negotiations and compromises that must be made, and, most importantly, there are opportunities to reflect, learn, and evolve. As my interviews revealed, some of the best suggestions for alternative approaches to these particular case studies are from those individuals who had firsthand experience of the projects—the people who made decisions within specific, often pre-determined, parameters. Secondly, looking at these case studies in hindsight and proposing new approaches is not necessarily the most fruitful, or frankly, fair approach. Instead, I have aspired to create a study that will be informative to people who are researching or producing such projects, by offering a much overdue critical analysis of this visual strategy.

As I have chosen the integrated-article format, what follows are chapters that may stand alone as in-depth investigations of isolated case studies, which are organized chronologically. The chapters explore the sometimes subtle or overt distinctions of these projects, acknowledge their unique goals and achievements, and reflect on their respective outcomes. Despite their differences, the chapters are drawn together as I explore the common threads that unite the case studies, including: photographic portraiture, photography as a social practice, urban neoliberalism, and of course, representations of identity and community in Toronto. Together, the chapters reveal the greater depths of the seemingly straightforward visual trope of portraiture in community-engaged photographic projects in Toronto. Specifically, this study shows how community-engaged portrait projects variously support and challenge neoliberalism. By looking at how photographic portraiture has been used in Toronto to capture creative women, people from community housing neighbourhoods, people experiencing homelessness, immigrants and newcomers, and concerned citizens, this project examines how photographic portraiture is used to constitute communities that are simultaneously the *public face* of the diversity of the neoliberal city and the *targets* of neoliberal rationality, policies, and procedures that further marginalize or exclude these groups. Furthermore, this research illustrates how portrait projects variably demonstrate the intensified inequality of neoliberalism, while, at the same time, their focus on identity and

community obscures the systemic causes of exclusion, discrimination, and poverty that many communities face.

## CHAPTER 1

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### 1 FACE VALUE: SPECTACULAR PORTRAITS AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY

In 2008, I was approached via email to participate in a monumental portrait exhibition by photographer Pierre Maraval entitled, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*.<sup>195</sup> Part of the second annual Luminato Festival (henceforth Luminato), this project aspired to create a “human landscape” composed of 1,000 large-scale, colour portraits of female arts and culture workers living and working in Toronto.<sup>196</sup> Of the thousand *Mille Femmes* participants, 500 women had the opportunity to secretly nominate a young woman who she felt would “contribute to the future of the arts” in the city so that the exhibition would reflect the intergenerational network of Toronto’s creative women.<sup>197</sup> At this time, I was working as the Education Manager for Soulpepper Theatre Company and one of my mentors put my name forward for the exhibition. Feeling humbled, I accepted the invitation to be photographed and arranged a time for my photo session.<sup>198</sup>

When I arrived for my photo shoot at the L’Oréal Academy in downtown Toronto, I was intimidated by the posh studio. I was somewhat embarrassed during my pre-photograph mini-makeover, but I must admit that I was a little giddy about the tiny loot bag of Lancôme beauty products that I received.<sup>199</sup> I remember sitting on a bench, waiting to be photographed beside a couple of other women whom I had never met. For this project, each participant was asked to share a word that was meaningful to them,

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<sup>195</sup> See: Pierre Maraval, *Toronto's Mille Femmes* (Montreal: Quadriscan, 2008); and Pierre Maraval, “Portraits x 1000/ ‘1000 Women Toronto,’” in *Pierre Maraval Productions*, 2008, <http://www.maraval.org/spip.php?article193> (accessed 7 November 2014).

<sup>196</sup> Janice Price in: Maraval, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, 11.

<sup>197</sup> Tony Gagliano in: *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>198</sup> Participants were nominated by their peers and had to meet specific criteria. Participants needed to be: from Toronto (or living in Toronto), affiliated with the city’s creative community, and “part of this network woven over time.” See: Heidi Strohl in: Maraval, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, 17.

<sup>199</sup> Lancôme is a division of L’Oréal.

which would be printed on their portrait. As we sat waiting, we filled out our consent forms and shared our words with one another. If a word had been used several times before, the project coordinator gently urged us to consider other options. When it was my turn to be photographed, I was whisked into a dimly lit studio. After a cursory exchange with Maraval, I was propped up on a stool in front of a bright white backdrop and after a few clicks, I was excused and I returned to work [Fig. 1.1].<sup>200</sup>



Figure 1.1: Pierre Maraval, Portrait of Jennifer Orpana, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, 2008. Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval.

On June 11, 2008, the exhibit, *Toronto's Mille Femmes* (henceforth *Mille Femmes*), opened in the stunning Allen Lambert Galleria located in Brookfield Place, a commercial office building in the heart of the financial district. The colourful portraits hung from the soaring ceiling of glass and steel in the centre of the galleria [Figs. 1.2 & 1.3]. The images appeared to float as they hung from nearly invisible metal wires in a vast, grid-like installation that measured 16 feet high by 328 feet long.<sup>201</sup> *Mille Femmes* was composed of a thousand faces—many smiling, some smirking, and some quite

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<sup>200</sup> To view the spaces and the process that I describe here, see this video: Stephen Cocke, dir., *The Creation of Toronto's Mille Femmes*, in *YouTube.ca*, 8 May 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA53XVjyYZA> (accessed 18 November 2014).

<sup>201</sup> The portraits were digital prints that were printed on pieces of cardboard that were roughly 3 feet by 4 feet in size. See: Maraval, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, 137.

serious—representing a plethora of arts and culture professions in Toronto. Among the photographic subjects were artists, musicians, writers, dancers, arts administrators, and media personalities. As viewers walked around to examine both sides of the portrait installation, a thousand words washed over them including positive words such as, “passionate,” “flexible,” “optimistic,” “creative,” and “celebrate,” and playful words, including, “feisty,” “ballsy,” and, “disruptor.” The installation inspired viewers to oscillate between recognizing each individual and beholding the scope of this, albeit partial, view of Toronto’s diverse community of creative women. As I enjoyed the exhibit, I felt proud to see my face among so many women whose work I respected and admired.



Figure 1.2: Installation of Pierre Maraval's, *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval.



Figure 1.3: Installation view of Pierre Maraval's, *Toronto's Mille Femmes* (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of Pierre Maraval.

As a participant of *Mille Femmes* at that time, I was not concerned with the same things that currently interest me as a scholar of art and visual culture. Issues such as how the exhibit would be framed through discourse, why the exhibit was mounted in the heart of the financial district, or how an exhibition of 1,000 creative women served Lancôme, and subsequently L'Oréal, as a successful marketing piece, were not at the forefront of my mind. I did not think about the potential issues of exclusion that might have arisen based on the complexities of gender identities, which may have impacted who was and who was not represented in *Mille Femmes*, or about how, through its association with makeovers and beauty products, this exhibition may have perpetuated gender inequalities such as the arguably more pronounced beauty and grooming expectations of female professionals, as compared to those of men.<sup>202</sup> Nor did I consider how the framework for participation shaped the conceptual or visual outcomes of the project. I certainly did not spend a lot of time wondering about how *Mille Femmes* was situated within a context of urban entrepreneurialism or how it served Toronto's creative city agenda. Frankly, the question of my involvement in this project did not centre on whether I *should* participate, so much as, whether I had the *time*. Wrapped up in my own work for the festival on behalf of Soulpepper Theatre Company, I was living in a fog of emails, events, and administrative tasks.<sup>203</sup>

My personal experience of the exhibit was predominantly shaped by the honour of being selected, the novelty of participating in a massive art project, and the excitement that I shared with my family and friends upon seeing the exhibit. For me, the photographs helped to recognize the often overworked, and sometimes undervalued, women who

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<sup>202</sup> The latter is an issue that has recently exploded in global media. See: Tracey Spicer, "Tracey Spicer: This is What I Look Like without Make-Up," *Daily Life*, 16 November 2014, <http://www.dailylife.com.au/dl-beauty/tracey-spicer-this-is-what-i-look-like-without-makeup-20141115-3kfbl.html> (accessed 3 December 2014); or Bim Adewunmi, "Male TV Presenter Wears Same Suit for a Year—Does Anyone Notice?" *The Guardian*, 17 November 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2014/nov/17/male-tv-presenter-same-suit-year-female-colleagues-judged> (accessed 3 December 2014).

<sup>203</sup> For the 2008 Luminato Festival, I curated a community art exhibit, *My Wish, My Journey* at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts and I served as the advisor and co-curator for a youth theatre festival, *From the Ground Up*, while also managing my portfolio as the Education Manager of Soulpepper Theatre Company.



played, and continue to play, a significant role in upholding Toronto's arts and culture institutions with their hard work and dedication. For this reason, above my smiling face there was the word, "caryatids," referring to ancient Greek architectural columns that were carved in the shape of women. In retrospect, my choice reeks a little of a sense of martyrdom as it conjures the image of stalwart female figures who literally bear the weight—they are the supports, the infrastructure, and the faces—of institutions, while maintaining somber expressions of resignation. Nevertheless, working in an industry where the vast majority of my colleagues were tireless women striving to keep everything balanced and to support the soaring creative aspirations of predominantly male figureheads (the apexes of many organizational charts), it was a word that I felt reflected the "human landscape" of Toronto's arts and culture sector at this time.<sup>204</sup> The sheer number of women who selected words that describe qualities of resilience, perseverance, fortitude, and strength suggests that I might not have been alone in this view. Nevertheless, like many Torontonians, I was swept up with the excitement of Luminato and I was not fully engaged with what scholars Laura Levin and Kim Solga have since discussed as some of the more troubling politics that existed beneath the surface of the festival.<sup>205</sup> In large part, I blindly and happily played a role in the spectacle.

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<sup>204</sup> See, for example: Joyce Zemans and Amy C. Wallace, "Where Are the Women? Updating the Account!" *RACAR XXXVIII*, 1 (2013): 1–29; Rebecca Burton, *Adding it Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre* (Ottawa: Canada Council for the Arts, 2006); and Amanda Coles, *On Women: A Report on Gender (In)Equality in the Canadian Independent Screen-Based Production Industry* (Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen, 2013). One US museum blog post states, "[T]here are more men than women in directors in museums with budgets over \$3M, and female directors earn only 71 cents for every dollar earned by male directors." Source: Center for the Future of Museums, "Let's Talk Money: How Much Do You Make?" in *Center for the Future of Museums Blog*, 2 December 2014, <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.ca/2014/12/lets-talk-money-how-much-do-you-make.html> (accessed 3 December 2014). See also: Library of Parliament, "Wage Gap between Men and Women," in *Parliament of Canada*, 2010, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/2010-30-e.htm> (accessed 2 June 2015); and Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, "Neoliberalism and the Challenges of Everyday Life," in *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, eds. Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, 3–21 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010): 13.

<sup>205</sup> Laura Levin and Kim Solga, "Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto," *The Drama Review* 53, 3 (Fall 2009): 42.

In this chapter, I reconsider the role that spectacular community portrait projects played in the 2008 Luminato Festival as I focus on international artist Pierre Maraval's *Mille Femmes* and Toronto street artist Dan Bergeron's *Regent Park Portraits*. Both of these projects produced visual celebrations of Toronto communities by placing portraits of everyday people in the urban landscape. While each initiative had the potential to inspire a range of positive personal and sociological effects, here I focus on their political and economic power.<sup>206</sup> I situate the festival within the broader context of urban entrepreneurialism and I consider how, in addition to putting the spotlight on Toronto communities, both *Mille Femmes* and the *Regent Park Portraits* served as vital marketing pieces for everything from the festival and its sponsors to the city itself. Furthermore, drawing on theories of “the spectacle” in neoliberal era, I discuss how these portrait projects harnessed—and in the case of the *Regent Park Portraits*, later subverted—the power of the spectacle to visualize support, to redirect detractors, to guide behaviour, and to obfuscate prevalent issues related to the developments of urban neoliberalism in Toronto.

## 1.1 The Spectacle as a Technology of Power

As I will assert that Maraval's and Bergeron's projects created spectacular images of community for the Luminato Festival, it is important to offer a brief overview of the spectacle as a theoretical concept and to introduce a more recent, neoliberally inflected

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<sup>206</sup> Sociologists tend to focus on the personal and sociological impact of such projects, intentionally eschewing critical discussions of the artistic outcomes of these projects. Similarly, as art scholar Claire Bishop has famously noted, there has been a tendency for art and visual culture scholars to focus on the ethics of such projects. Bishop notes that while she understands the importance of considering the ethics of participation in participatory art projects, she believes in discussing participatory works, “critically as art,” so as to avoid the continued marginalization of participatory visual art projects in the art world and in scholarship. Through my experience and interviews, it is evident that the case studies I explore in this chapter inspired some positive personal outcomes. Here, I am more interested in exploring what these projects can tell us about the role of these community-engaged portrait projects in the context of urban entrepreneurialism. See: Bishop, 2004; 2011, and Jackson, 2012.

conception of the spectacle, which I use in the remainder of the chapter.<sup>207</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, Debord and the Situationist International (SI) described modern society as a “spectacle” because of the “fantastic, overwhelming, media saturation that defined [the] time [...]”.<sup>208</sup> Their theories were developed in response to the move away from 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism that was driven by production toward a powerful new form of capitalism that was “organized around consumption, media, information, and technology.”<sup>209</sup> Debord and the Situationists drew on and adapted aspects of Marxist thought to critique capitalism and consumer society and to identify how these developments brought about “new forms of alienation and oppression.”<sup>210</sup> Inspired by distinctive political and economic contexts, Debord also identified two types of spectacular power: the “concentrated” and the “diffuse.”<sup>211</sup> The former was associated with totalitarian governments of Germany and Russia, and the latter was linked to the United States, the “Americanization of the world,” and the global circulation of

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<sup>207</sup> The term “technology of power” is drawn from theorist Michel Foucault’s discussion government as “governmentality,” which is composed of both political rationality and technologies of power. Whereas the former refers to a kind of “intellectual machinery,” the latter refers to the strategies through which those in power, “enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered.” This definition is drawn from scholar Nikolas Rose’s interpretation of Foucault’s work, in: Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, edited by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996): 37–64. For Foucault’s discussion of “governmentality,” see: Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 87–104 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>208</sup> Benjamin Walker, “The Big Ideas Podcast: Guy Debord’s ‘Society of the Spectacle,’” in *The Guardian*, 28 March 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/audio/2012/mar/28/big-ideas-podcast-debord-society-spectacle> (accessed 3 December 2014).

<sup>209</sup> Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, “Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle,” *SubStance* 28, 3, Iss. 90: Special Issue: Guy Debord (1999): 130.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>211</sup> See: Guy Debord, “Unity and Division within Appearance,” in *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983; orig. 1967): #54–#72. Debord reiterates this theory, in: Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988), IV. The copy that I accessed was translated by Malcolm Imrie and I accessed it online at: <http://www.libcom.org/files/Comments%20on%20the%20Society%20of%20the%20Spectacle.pdf> (accessed 3 December 2014).

commodities.<sup>212</sup> Thus, through Debord and the SI's work, "the spectacle," was introduced as a complex theoretical term that was bound up with forms of visual imagery, capitalism, consumption, and power.

Debord and the SI believed that in modern society, social control and power are not so much forceful or coercive, as they are achieved through spectacular strategies that incite mass consensus and consumption.<sup>213</sup> As philosophy scholars Steven Best and Douglas Kellner explain, on one hand the society of the spectacle is "a [...] consumer society, organized around the consumption of images, commodities, and staged events."<sup>214</sup> On the other hand, the society of the spectacle is a "vast institutional and technical apparatus of contemporary capitalism."<sup>215</sup> Spectacular society produces countless forms of spectacle, including art shows, advertisements, sporting events, political campaigns, and architectural projects, through which "all communication flow[s] [...] from the powerful to the powerless."<sup>216</sup> Key to this form of spectacular power is its neutralizing or depoliticizing potential. Scholar Jonathan Crary notes that the spectacle is a "new kind of power of recuperation and absorption, [and it has] a capacity to neutralize and assimilate acts of resistance by converting them into objects or images of consumption."<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, everyone has a role to play in spectacular society, whether they are aware of it or not. In the words of education scholar John Trier, "'passivity' and 'social control' are the depoliticizing aims of spectacular society and [...] most people willingly, even desirously, accept passive roles (without realizing it)."<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Debord, *Comments*, IV.

<sup>213</sup> Best and Kellner, "Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle," 132; and James Trier, "The Spectacle and *Détournement*," *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 51, 3 (November 2007): 274.

<sup>214</sup> Best and Kellner, "Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle," 132.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> G. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989): 99. See also: Trier, "The Spectacle and *Détournement*," 274.

<sup>217</sup> Jonathan Crary, "Spectacle, Attention, Counter Memory," *October* 50 (Autumn 1989): 100.

<sup>218</sup> Trier, "The Spectacle and *Détournement*," 274–275.

Debord and the SI saw the spectacle as a mechanism of power that worked through and had tremendous impact on individuals and communities. In Debord's seminal work, *La Société du Spectacle* (*Society of the Spectacle*, 1967), he wrote that the spectacle is a form of "social relations among people, mediated by images."<sup>219</sup> Debord explained that the spectacle permeates society on multiple planes, as "all of society, as part of society [the part that is centred on "all gazing and consciousness"]", and as an *instrument of unification*."<sup>220</sup> Writer John Harris notes that Debord described the spectacle as a process through which we are "fundamentally transformed" as a result of media saturation.<sup>221</sup> The spectacle was envisioned as something that we consume as viewers, as well as a *process* through which our "authentic" experiences are deeply altered and even falsified.<sup>222</sup> Events that were once "directly lived," were now mediated by representational practices; everyday life became an "immense accumulation of spectacles."<sup>223</sup> Best and Kellner explain that in the society of the spectacle, we consume experiences that are pre-fabricated for us, rather than creating our own experiences.<sup>224</sup> Thus, according to Debord and the SI, the spectacle commodifies our lives; it alienates us, and it renders our social interactions inauthentic.<sup>225</sup>

Over time, Debord's writing about the society of the spectacle became even more cynical, and he was criticized for demonstrating a growing sense of paranoia.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless his later work is especially useful for considering the growing role of the

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<sup>219</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, #4.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., #3.

<sup>221</sup> John Harris in conversation with Benjamin Walker, "The Big Ideas podcast."

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, #1. See also: Best and Kellner, "Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle," 132.

<sup>224</sup> Best and Kellner, "Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle," 132.

<sup>225</sup> See, for example: Harris and Walker, "The Big Ideas Podcast."

<sup>226</sup> These critiques have been noted in: Crary "Spectacle, Attention, Counter Memory," 96–107; or Tom McDonough, "Unrepresentable Enemies: On the Legacy of Guy Debord and the Situationist International," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 28 (Autumn/Winter 2011): 42–55.

spectacle in light of changing conceptions of everyday life.<sup>227</sup> As Crary notes, in the 1960s, Debord expressed the belief that some aspects of our daily lives were protected from the influence of capitalist spectacle.<sup>228</sup> However, since that time Debord saw the few remaining barriers between everyday life and spectacular power erode.<sup>229</sup> In his *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988), Debord argued that the previous two forms of spectacular power, which he had once identified as “concentrated” and “diffuse,” had turned into what he called the global “integrated spectacle.”<sup>230</sup> This new form of spectacular power is characterized by: constant technological renewal, integration of state and economy, secrecy, the drive to eliminate public opinion (through “unanswerable lies”) and the desire to manufacture an “eternal present,” thereby eliminating a sense of the past.<sup>231</sup> According to Debord, this emerging form of power is all-encompassing: it is both concentrated *and* diffuse, and quite frankly, inescapable.<sup>232</sup> He argued, “When the spectacle was concentrated, the greater part of surrounding society escaped it; when diffuse, a small part; today, no part.”<sup>233</sup> Debord explained there is no known power centre for the integrated spectacle; it “permeates all reality.”<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, he argued that spectacular discourse has the power to, “isolate all it shows from its context, its past, its intentions, and its consequences,” and to silence any form of critical response.<sup>235</sup>

Well before Debord’s *Comments*, it was thought that “the everyday” referred to idle or unprofitable times, spaces, and activities that took place outside of the world of work, leisure, or consumption.<sup>236</sup> Beginning in the 1950s, the work of theorists such as

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<sup>227</sup> Crary discusses Debord’s work alongside other theories of everyday life by theorists Henry Lefebvre and Gilles Deleuze. See: Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London & New York: Verso, 2013): 71–74.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. See also: Debord, *Comments*, IV.

<sup>230</sup> Debord, *Comments*, IV.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, V.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, X.

<sup>236</sup> Crary, *24/7*, 70.

Henri Lefebvre and Debord revealed a greater interest in the way that the realm of everyday life was invaded by “consumption, organized leisure, and spectacle.”<sup>237</sup> By the 1980s, Debord, as well as theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, started to reconsider theoretical models of what was once known as “everyday life.” For Deleuze, these developments took the wrecking ball to concepts of disciplinary society and its powerful institutions, paving the way for the more all-encompassing and continuous processes of “societies of control.”<sup>238</sup> For Debord, as noted, these developments changed the nature of the spectacle, giving spectacular power entrée into all aspects of our lives. These theories reveal that in contemporary society, traditional notions of “everyday life” had been “hollowed out” by the pursuit of capital.<sup>239</sup> Thus, in light of the ceaseless processes of capitalism, media cycles, and consumption habits that have emerged out of globalization, neoliberalism and late capitalism, Debord’s later work framed the integrated spectacle as an ever-more pervasive mechanism of power.

Crary contextualizes Debord’s intensified views on the spectacle within the rise of neoliberalism and late capitalism, as well as the emergence of new technologies, through which “the assault on everyday life assumed a new ferocity.”<sup>240</sup> As many scholars have noted, neoliberalism and globalization have restructured our governments, our cities, our communities, our conceptions of culture, and even how we envision ourselves.<sup>241</sup> The attack on everyday life worsened in the context of neoliberalism and globalization after the 1980s, due, in part, to free market capitalism, new forms of governance, persistent discourses of entrepreneurialism and individualism, emergent technologies, new forms of surveillance, and the growing interrelationship between neoliberalism and its contestations, as well as the unprecedented privatization and/or commodification of a vast

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 71–74. See: Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (1992): 3–7.

<sup>239</sup> Crary, 24/7, 73.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 68; 70–74.

<sup>241</sup> For example, see: Rose (1999); Sassen (2001); Brenner and Theodore (2002); Yúdice (2003); Isin (1998); Massey (2007); and Hardt and Negri (2004).

array of goods and services.<sup>242</sup> Of the latter, scholar explains, “neoliberals have had astonishing success in creating markets for things whose commodification was once almost unimaginable: drinking water, body parts, and social welfare among them.”<sup>243</sup> Today, we are not only encouraged to consume a wider range of goods and services, but thanks to technologies that emerged out of the global neoliberal era, such as the Internet, home computers, and cellphones with data plans, we have the freedom to be round-the-clock consumers, provided we have “enough bars.”<sup>244</sup> However, as Crary’s book, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, explains, with this new-found “freedom” came our constant exposure to marketing and media in our everyday lives.<sup>245</sup> He notes that as society embraced the 24/7 capitalist way of life, the previous distinctions between “work and non-work time, between public and private, and between everyday life and institutional milieus,” were completely obliterated.<sup>246</sup> In this context, nothing could be considered idle or unprofitable because everything was assigned economic value—as Crary puts it, “time [...] was monetized, and the individual [was] redefined as a full-time economic agent.”<sup>247</sup>

Today, many scholars have appropriated, contested, and/or re-conceptualized, theories of the “spectacle” to analyze a range of global neoliberal developments. For example, art scholar Claire Bishop notes that leftist artists and curators draw on Debord and the SI’s theories as they seek to re-humanize communities of people whose “social

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<sup>242</sup> See, for example: Crary, *24/7*, 70–71; Nicholas Gane, “The Governmentalities of Neoliberalism: Panopticism, Post-Panopticism, and Beyond,” *The Sociological Review* 60, 4 (November 2012): 611–634; and Raewyn Connell, “Understanding Neoliberalism,” in *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, eds. Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 22–36. See also: Rose (1996); Larner (2000); Keil (2002); Giroux (2005); Leitner et al. (2007); and Harvey (2012).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>244</sup> Crary, *24/7*, 70–71. See also: Nicholas Lezard, “24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*—Review,” *The Guardian*, 22 July 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/22/24-7-late-capitalism-ends-sleep-jonathan-crary-review> (accessed 4 March 2014). Inspired by Crary’s work, Lezard comments, “Today we are willing connivers in our own sleeplessness, as we find ourselves continually diverted and invited to consume at any time of day or night.”

<sup>245</sup> Crary (2013).

<sup>246</sup> Crary, *24/7*, 74.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.



bonds” have been torn asunder by the repressive power of capitalism through participatory art.<sup>248</sup> Bishop also recalls theorist Jacques Rancière’s comments that, “the ‘critique of the spectacle’ often remains the alpha and omega of the ‘politics of art.’”<sup>249</sup> Social science scholars have also considered theories of the spectacle as they re-examine how neoliberalism manifests in urban contexts. For instance, sociologist Anne M. Cronin and geography scholar Kevin Hetherington argue that while they challenge some uses of Debord’s theories today, these theories offer important inroads for understanding contemporary forms of spectacle in the city.<sup>250</sup> Referencing Debord, they explain that the:

[Spectacle] inscribes the dominant characteristic of the social relations of power found in the entrepreneurial city and defines the *conditions of possibility* for practices associated with consumption, heritage, regeneration, place-marketing and tourism.<sup>251</sup>

Cronin and Hetherington use the concept of the spectacle to “understand the importance that image plays in representing the concerns of entrepreneurship within the city”<sup>252</sup>—an approach that is certainly relevant to this chapter on photographic portraits in the entrepreneurial city. Reflecting on the recent use of the term, “spectacle,” in critical studies, architecture historian Anne-Marie Broudehoux argues that it is “broadly understood as a palliative mode of distraction and a theatric technology that camouflages, rationalizes, and legitimates power.”<sup>253</sup> She adds that for better or for worse the term “spectacle” has become code for manufacturing power.<sup>254</sup> Broudehoux explains that as a conceptual tool, the spectacle offers a productive lens through which we can explore

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<sup>248</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012): 11. See also: Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: *Les presses du réel*, 2002): 11–17.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 12. See also: Jacques Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art,” *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 2, 1 (Summer 2008): 7.

<sup>250</sup> Anne M. Cronin and Kevin Hetherington, eds., *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City: Image, Memory, Spectacle* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008): 8.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Anne-Marie Broudehoux, “Images of Power: Architectures of the Integrated Spectacle at the Beijing Olympics,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 63, 2 (2010): 52.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

structures of power and examine how these structures “co-opt the material landscape to build, consolidate, and reproduce hegemony.”<sup>255</sup> Whereas Broudehoux looks at how spectacular *architecture* is “a participant” in the “machinery of power,”<sup>256</sup> I consider how Toronto *communities* were recruited to participate in spectacular portrait projects that similarly helped to reproduce, rationalize, and legitimate power. If the spectacle is a form of social relations and if neoliberally inflected forms of spectacular power have integrated into all aspects of our daily lives, then perhaps it will not be surprising to see how it operated *through* interpersonal relationships and community engagement in the case studies that I explore. Furthermore, if we are all “full-time economic agents,”<sup>257</sup> then it is certainly justifiable to consider how the photographic subjects of these recent celebratory community arts projects were also caught up in the processes of capitalism, consumption, and social control.

## 1.2 Cultural Spectacles and the Entrepreneurial City

The projects that I examine in this chapter were part of the Luminato Festival, which is a cultural spectacle that emerged out of entrepreneurial Toronto. Many scholars have noted how globalization and neoliberalism have made cities increasingly entrepreneurial over the past few decades.<sup>258</sup> In part due to globalization, the city is a site that attracts “unprecedented global flows of people, capital, and information.”<sup>259</sup> To compete for these profitable global flows, many civic leaders have shifted from the managerialism (of the 1960s), which aspired to provide services, facilities, and other such benefits to urban

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>257</sup> Crary, 24/7, 71.

<sup>258</sup> See: Dennis R. Judd, ed., *The Infrastructure of Play: Building the Tourist City* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003); Anne M. Cronin and Kevin Hetherington, eds., *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City: Image, Memory, Spectacle* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001); Saskia Sassen, “The Global City: Introducing a Concept,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* XI (Winter/Spring 2005): 27–43; or C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, *Local Government in Canada* (Toronto: Nelson Education Ltd., 2009): 1–21.

<sup>259</sup> Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 1.

citizens, to an “intensified entrepreneurialism” (since the 1970s).<sup>260</sup> At the same time, cities have been deeply impacted by federal and provincial forms of “roll-back” neoliberalism, which has been described as a form of neoliberalism that replaces Keynesian economics with strategies of downloading, deregulation, privatization, and the reduction of government-funded social services.<sup>261</sup> These cutbacks place municipalities in a particularly challenging economic position. As federal and provincial governments reduce funding for municipal governments, civic leaders need to find ways to make up for the economic shortfall.<sup>262</sup> However, taxing corporations to boost depleted civic budgets is generally frowned upon because the ultimate goal of cities is to *attract* global companies, not to *deter* them, which heavy taxation would do.<sup>263</sup> Civic leaders are left with the options of cutting back on public services and/or developing entrepreneurial strategies to resolve their financial issues. Thus, as Cronin and Hetherington argue, the “entrepreneurial city” is a “key feature of neoliberal capitalist societies.”<sup>264</sup>

As many scholars argue, globalization, neoliberalism, and consequently, the rise of urban entrepreneurialism have had a considerable impact on our understanding and use of culture.<sup>265</sup> Urban entrepreneurialism is influenced by the private sector and as such it encourages municipal governments to create business plans, to embark on public/private partnerships or resort to full privatization, and to promote cities through place marketing

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid. See also: David Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism,” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 71, 1 (1989): 3–17. The definition for managerialism that is used here is drawn from page 3 of this article.

<sup>261</sup> For a seminal article on “roll-back neoliberalism,” see: Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” *Antipode* (2002): 380–404.

<sup>262</sup> Tindal and Tindal, *Local Government in Canada*, 18.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 1. Doreen Massey also notes that cities are “central to neoliberal globalization. The increasing concentration of humanity within them is in part a product of it. Their internal forms reflect its market dynamics (the shining spectacular projects, the juxtaposition of greed and need).” See: Doreen Massey, *World City* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007): 9.

<sup>265</sup> See: Yúdice (2003); Cronin and Hetherington (2008); Zukin (1995; 2004); McClellan (2008); and Richards and Palmer (2010).

strategies.<sup>266</sup> In this context, culture—including architecture, cultural activities, and even creative workers and ethnic communities—has increasingly become central to what scholar Sharon Zukin has called, the “symbolic economy” of cities.<sup>267</sup> Culture has become a resource that is used to generate wealth in a fiercely competitive global climate; it is now the “business of cities,” and it provides cities with their attractions and their “competitive edge.”<sup>268</sup> Of course, as scholar George Yúdice explains, the relationships between culture, politics, and economics are not new, as many scholars have cited 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century examples of how culture was used to exert social control, to promote specific ideologies, or to generate capital.<sup>269</sup> However, Yúdice argues that in a global era, culture has an *expanded* role, which is linked to a pervasive belief in its capacity to resolve a vast range of political, social, and economic challenges.<sup>270</sup> Yúdice’s research illustrates that in a global neoliberal era, “culture-as-a resource” is more than a mere commodity.<sup>271</sup> Culture is managed, invested in, distributed, used as an attraction, and mobilized for tourism and promotion; it has shifted to what Yúdice calls a “linchpin in an [new] epistemic framework.”<sup>272</sup>

In a global neoliberal era, culture is repositioned as a multi-purpose problem-solver and it is expected to yield a vast range of (largely quantifiable) returns.<sup>273</sup> Investments in culture have been appealing to government leaders because cultural initiatives are relatively easy and inexpensive, as compared to, for example, improving

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<sup>266</sup> George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003):18–19. See also: Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 3.

<sup>267</sup> Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1995): 2. See also: Greg Richards and Robert Palmer, *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., 2010): 1.

<sup>268</sup> Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 2.

<sup>269</sup> Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*: 10. Yúdice, notes the work of Bennett (1995) and Fitzpatrick (1992).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

hard infrastructure or increasing social welfare funding.<sup>274</sup> The positive outcome of these philosophies is that *some* arts and culture institutions have received new funding.

However, Yúdice argues that the recent expediency of culture has significantly altered, if not, “emptied out,” our traditional understanding and use of culture (for example, we have moved away from notions of “culture for culture’s sake”).<sup>275</sup> As a result, Yúdice cautions us about our faith in cultural agency in a global era and urges us to consider how works of cultural expression are also caught up in complex mechanisms of power and diverse socioeconomic agendas.<sup>276</sup>

One of the more prominent ways that civic leaders have utilized culture to garner international attention has been through the spectacularization of urban landscape through beautification projects or by commissioning eye-catching architectural designs by leading architects.<sup>277</sup> The latter is often referred to as the “Bilbao Effect” because of the success of architect Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997), which attracted a remarkable number of tourists due to its unique design.<sup>278</sup> These public-private architectural programs reflect an “if-you-build-it-they-will-come” tourism philosophy that has been shared by institutions and all levels of government.<sup>279</sup> In her discussion of the Guggenheim Bilbao, performance artist and writer Andrea Fraser argues that such “museum-driven urban revitalization plans” are less the outcome of *cultural* policy so much as out of *economic* policies that are geared toward tourism and civic-rebranding

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<sup>274</sup> Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 4 (2005): 740–770.

<sup>275</sup> Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 9; 15. Similarly, Angela McRobbie has discussed how the “entrepreneurialisation of arts and culture has become more normative” in recent years. See: Angela McRobbie, “‘Everyone is Creative’: Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?” in *Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life*, eds. Elizabeth B. Silva and Tony Bennet, 186–202 (Durham: Sociology Press, 2004): 186.

<sup>276</sup> Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 2–3.

<sup>277</sup> Broudehoux, “Images of Power,” 52–62; and Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 3–4; 9–39.

<sup>278</sup> Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008): 2; 53; and Broudehoux, “Images of Power,” 54.

<sup>279</sup> McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, 90; and Barbara Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 30 (2006): 171.

with the hopes of turning around a struggling city's economic outlook.<sup>280</sup> Not only do these building programs promise ticket sales, but as art scholar Andrew McClellan notes, they also boost donation revenue from wealthy patrons and collectors.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, Broudehoux argues, spectacular architecture is now considered, "essential to the survival of twenty-first century cities," as urban planners and civic leaders rely on stunning architectural images to market their cities.<sup>282</sup> Through the circulation of these images, tourists are inspired to experience the spectacle of the city by attending its architectural hotspots, or rather, by visiting the now "iconic emblems [that are] carried in popular imagination."<sup>283</sup> Appropriating journalist Sarah Milroy's pithy title for Frank-Gehry-inspired cultural buildings, scholar Kirsty Robertson discusses how these "titanium motherships"<sup>284</sup> are "neoliberalism made concrete."<sup>285</sup> Robertson explains that this is, in part, because of the way that the new architecture, which is surrounded by "neutral and progressive economic discourses," may overshadow, or at the very least be distanced from, the forms of cultural resistance and contestation found *inside* the institution.<sup>286</sup> Museums, as Robertson argues, are becoming architectural representations of new economies that are based on "privatization, downsizing, flexibility of labour, and deregulation," which "coloniz[e] articulations of 'creativity' and translate the formerly immaterial and non-material into profit."<sup>287</sup> As this helps to illustrate, museum-driven urban redevelopment has become an important aspect of the cultural economy in a global neoliberal era and the outcomes of this trend have been fiercely debated.<sup>288</sup> Some critics express practical concerns, warning that as the excitement about spectacular museums

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<sup>280</sup> Andrea Fraser, "Isn't This a Wonderful Place? (A Tour of a Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, eds. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frauto, 135–160 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006): 147.

<sup>281</sup> McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, 92.

<sup>282</sup> Broudehoux, "Images of Power," 53–54.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>284</sup> Sarah Milroy, "The Bilbao Effect," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 January 2004, R4.

<sup>285</sup> Kirsty Robertson, "Titanium Motherships of the New Economy: Museums, Neoliberalism, and Resistance," in *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, eds. J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011): 197–214; 202.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, 93.

fizzles out, the new facades will fail to bring in ongoing revenue.<sup>289</sup> Others criticize these plans for shifting the priorities of museums to their architectural exteriors and away from the collections and potential viewing experiences found within them.<sup>290</sup> Robertson argues that as the “very object of the museum” has transformed, so too has its capacity to present works of resistance.<sup>291</sup> Finally, critics and citizens alike have expressed concerns about how these building programs prioritize the interests and experiences of tourists over those of local citizens or the cultural communities that they aspire to represent.<sup>292</sup> Nonetheless, within urban communities, when spectacular buildings yield positive economic returns, it is not uncommon for opposition to shift to feelings of acceptance and pride.<sup>293</sup>

As recent history has demonstrated, the goal of spectacularizing Toronto’s urban landscape to maintain a thriving urban economy has been important to the city’s civic leaders, as well as to the provincial and federal governments. For example, in 2001 the federal and provincial governments invested \$110 million for cultural infrastructure and recreation projects in Toronto, and then later, \$233 million for Toronto arts institutions through SuperBuild plan.<sup>294</sup> This latter funding brought about the dramatic overhaul of eight cultural institutions by world-class architects, including renovations to the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum, as well as the building of the new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.<sup>295</sup> Scholar Barbara Jenkins explains these building plans were, “intended to bolster the city’s reputation as an international economic and cultural capital,” and that they were executed with the hopes of attracting, “hordes of cultural tourists and their attendant (preferably American) dollars.”<sup>296</sup> Jenkins

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. See also: Milroy, “The Bilbao Effect,” R4. Here Milroy offers a critique of this viewpoint.

<sup>291</sup> Robertson, “Titanium Motherships of the New Economy,” 203; 201.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. See also: Fraser, “Isn’t This a Wonderful Place?” 135–160; or Carol Becker, “The Romance of Nomadism: A Series of Reflections,” *Art Journal* 58, 2 (Summer 1999): 22. In Toronto, responses to the ROM and the AGO were covered in the press. See, for example: Christopher Hume, “Build It, and They Will Shun,” *The Toronto Star*, 27 May 2007.

<sup>293</sup> Fraser notes how this shift in opinions occurred in the context of the Guggenheim Bilbao. See: Fraser, “Isn’t This a Wonderful Place?” 150.

<sup>294</sup> Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” 178.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 169–170 & 177.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 170.

also notes that Toronto turned to spectacular architectural design as a way to attract cultural industries and creative workers that are integral to achieving global city status.<sup>297</sup> Here, Jenkins is referring to the “Creative Class,” a term that has gained prominence through the work of urban planner and self-proclaimed “thought-leader,” Richard Florida. Florida’s “Creative Capital Theory,” argues that creative cities with a substantial creative class have human capital that generates growth and prosperity.<sup>298</sup> The creative class, as defined by Florida, is composed of highly-educated people in creative professions or “knowledge-intensive” industries, who seek to live in cities that are inclusive, prosperous, diverse, and rich with job opportunities in creative industries and technology.<sup>299</sup>

In recent years, the leaders of entrepreneurial cities have also turned to spectacular cultural events with the hopes of boosting the local economy.<sup>300</sup> Referencing Zukin’s earlier work, scholars and arts professionals Greg Richards and Robert Palmer explain that many cities have responded to the “pressures of globalization and problems caused by economic restructuring,” as well as to “the need to establish new civic identities,” by producing spectacular urban events and festivals that draw on the city’s “‘cultural’ assets and resources.”<sup>301</sup> Cultural events are seen as powerful economic drivers and image makers that promote a city’s thriving arts and culture sector on the global stage.<sup>302</sup> Spectacular festivals, associated with “sociability, joviality and playfulness,” are the ideal frameworks within which city marketers can package and produce positive city images.<sup>303</sup> The marketing of such global events helps to raise the visibility of urban centres and to attract flocks of attendees who are eager to experience the spectacular exhibition, conference, festival, parade, or sporting event.<sup>304</sup> As a result,

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>298</sup> Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (London: Routledge, 2005); and Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002). See also: Florida, 2005 & 2001.

<sup>299</sup> Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 34–35.

<sup>300</sup> Bernadette Quinn, “Art Festivals in the City,” *Urban Studies* 42, 5/6 (2005): 927–943.

<sup>301</sup> Richards and Palmer, *Eventful Cities*, 2.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. See also, Broudehoux, “Images of Power,” 54; Quinn, “Art Festivals in the City,” 927–928.

<sup>303</sup> Quinn, “Art Festivals and the City,” 932–933.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 932.



these events are sometimes criticized for being more geared toward festival tourism than representative of the local area or culture it seeks to celebrate.<sup>305</sup> Some critics have argued that global events present a sanitized image of a city and that they tend to miss “opportunities for genuine engagement with the culture and multiple realities of the place.”<sup>306</sup> At home, spectacular events are intended to elicit excitement and civic pride, which is often achieved by offering local citizens opportunities to participate, be it as a presenters, volunteers, or attendees. Broudehoux explains that spectacular cultural events may help to distract citizens from existing economic or social issues or to legitimize municipal plans such as urban redevelopment that may otherwise garner public criticism.<sup>307</sup> Despite the fact that many spectacular events have been critiqued for commodifying culture, serving as marketing vehicles, displacing communities, or creating inauthentic representations of community, their allure has the power to transform many citizens into willing participants.<sup>308</sup> These highly visible and often dazzling urban events have the power to inspire mass consensus and consumption.

In the past couple of decades, Toronto has certainly become an “eventful city”<sup>309</sup> and has attracted droves of tourists through spectacular, annual, multi-venue celebrations of the arts, culture, and architectural design. Festivals that have emerged out of entrepreneurial Toronto include: Hot Docs (1993–present), Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival (1997–present), Great Gulf Doors Open Toronto (2000–present), Scotiabank *Nuit Blanche* (2006–present) and, most recently, Luminato (2007–present). As some of the titles help to indicate, the funding structure of these festivals represent the kind of “private-public partnerships” on which the entrepreneurial city relies.<sup>310</sup> Although each is funded differently, these events are generally backed in one way or another by corporate sponsors, by the municipal government as it has embarked on Florida-inspired

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 933–939.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 936.

<sup>307</sup> Broudehoux, “Images of Power,” 54.

<sup>308</sup> See, for example: Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 740–770; and Quinn, “Art Festivals in the City,” 927–943.

<sup>309</sup> I am borrowing the term, “eventful city,” from Richards and Palmer’s publication entitled, *Eventful Cities* (2010).

<sup>310</sup> Richards and Palmer, *Eventful Cities*, 11.

creative city agendas, and in some cases by provincial and/or federal governments. Thus, like many global entrepreneurial cities, Toronto has embraced the expanded role of culture in a global era. The city has produced a number of spectacular displays with the hopes of yielding a range of positive outcomes, including everything from an increase in patron donations and tourist revenue, to a surge of civic pride and participation.

### 1.3 Luminato Festival, Toronto's Festival of Arts and Creativity

The idea for Luminato developed in response to the devastating drop in tourism that occurred after 2003. As Statistics Canada reports, 2003 was “a bad year for tourism” worldwide, and in Canada, this drop was especially troubling for urban centres such as Vancouver and Toronto.<sup>311</sup> This is not surprising because, as noted, the financial success of urban centres after “roll back” neoliberalism relies greatly on tourist dollars which support the sectors that comprise the tourism industry, such as accommodations, recreation, attractions, food and beverage services, and transportation, as well as the arts and culture sector. Explaining the decrease in travel and tourism in 2003, Statistics Canada points to events that had made “travel less attractive,” specifically those that contributed to a growing culture of fear at this time, such as September 11 (2001), the conflict in Iraq (which began in March 2003), and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS (February 2003).<sup>312</sup> The latter had a profound social and economic impact on Toronto. Environmental health specialists note that Toronto was the only city “outside of Asia” to be hit so hard by the disease with a toll of 44 deaths, 400 people who contracted SARS, and 25,000 people who were quarantined.<sup>313</sup> Media outlets struggled to keep on top of the developments pertaining to SARS and as a result, news

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<sup>311</sup> Statistics Canada, “2003: A Bad Year for Tourism,” in *Statistics Canada*, 2007, [http://www41.statcan.gc.ca/2007/4007/ceb4007\\_002-eng.htm](http://www41.statcan.gc.ca/2007/4007/ceb4007_002-eng.htm) (accessed 7 November 2014).

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> “SARS Outbreak in Canada,” in *Canadian Environmental Health Atlas*, n.d., <http://www.ehatlas.ca/sars-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome/case-study/sars-outbreak-canada> (accessed 3 March 2015).

reports fueled feelings of confusion and fear and presented divided views about Toronto in the face of the crisis.<sup>314</sup> On April 23, 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) controversially added Toronto to its travel advisory list, cautioning travelers against any unnecessary travel to the city, which due to intense public scrutiny, was rescinded seven days later.<sup>315</sup>

For the City of Toronto, a lack of income from leisure and tourism was a huge cause for concern. For example, both prior to and especially after the WHO travel advisory, Toronto experienced a number of hotel, bus tour, and convention cancellations, as well as fewer restaurant and theatre patrons, which led to millions of dollars of lost revenue.<sup>316</sup> With most Toronto cultural institutions relying on tourist dollars to pay a significant portion of annual bills, strategies to encourage tourism were needed. Such plans were especially important in light of the aforementioned ambitious cultural renovation program slated for Toronto that was announced by the provincial government in 2003. As part of this “SuperBuild” plan, which was an economic strategy that was in the works since 1999, the provincial and federal governments invested approximately \$233 million into several of Toronto’s leading arts organizations to help Toronto play catch-up in branding itself as a global city and to rectify what was perceived as an already (as in pre-SARS) struggling tourism industry.<sup>317</sup> This funding was divided among the

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<sup>314</sup> Andrew Galley, “City of Plagues? Toronto, SARS, and the Anxieties of Globalization,” *Explorations in Anthropology* 9, 1 (2009): 133–142. See also: Seth Feldman, Daniel Drache, and David Clifton, “Media Coverage of the 2003 Toronto SARS Outbreak: A Report on the Role of the Press in a Public Crisis,” *Robarts Centre Research Papers* (Toronto: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, York University, (29 October 2003): 1–18.

<sup>315</sup> World Health Organization, “WHO Extends its SARS-Related Travel Advice to Beijing and Shanxi Province in China and to Toronto, Canada,” in *World Health Organization*, 23 April 2003, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2003/np7/en/> (accessed 10 November 2014). For the controversy surrounding the WHO statement, see: Galley, “City of Plagues,” 136–138.

<sup>316</sup> “In-depth: The Economic Impact of SARS,” in *CBC News*, 8 July 2003, <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/background/sars/economicimpact.html> (accessed 14 November 2014).

<sup>317</sup> Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” 169–186. For a description of the Tourism action plan, see also: City of Toronto Tourism Division Department of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, “Five Year Tourism Action Plan,” (Toronto: City of Toronto, with Cameron Hawkins and Associates Inc., the Tourism Company, KPMG, and Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 30 May 2003), 2003, [http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/edct\\_tourism\\_consultant\\_report\\_may3003.pdf](http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/edct_tourism_consultant_report_may3003.pdf) (accessed 10 November 2014).

organizations to put towards rebuilding a dazzling cultural landscape on what was billed as the “Avenue of the Arts” along University Avenue.<sup>318</sup> Despite the significant “advertising power”<sup>319</sup> that these spectacular new architectural facades would have, the government funding only covered a fraction of the renovation costs, leaving the cultural organizations with the daunting tasks of raising millions of dollars through private donations, sponsorships, and ticket sales not only to complete the building projects, but also to meet ongoing operating costs.<sup>320</sup> The dazzling figure of \$233 million belied the fact that these government payouts came with staggering fiscal responsibility and the need to somehow eke approximately \$470 million dollars of funding out of an already competitive fundraising landscape.<sup>321</sup> Considering the existing financial pressures on arts and cultural organizations and the lack of a thriving tourism economy, the future success of arts and culture in Toronto seemed uncertain at best.

While the current iteration of the Luminato website states that the event was “born out of the cultural and creative energy of the city of Toronto,”<sup>322</sup> the festival concept was first conceived in 2003 as a strategic response to the economic and cultural crisis in Toronto.<sup>323</sup> As Cronin and Hetherington argue, in the face of an image crisis that puts pressure on an already perceived economic crisis, cities “respond in an aggressively entrepreneurial mode to events that threaten their status as tourist and consumer centres.”<sup>324</sup> The festival idea was inspired by two corporate magnates—Tony Gagliano of St. Joseph Communications and the late David Pecaut of the Boston Consulting Group (also the Chair of the Toronto City Summit Alliance). Importantly, the Toronto City

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<sup>318</sup> Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” 177.

<sup>319</sup> Broudehoux, “Images of Power,” 52–62. For more on spectacular architecture and its use in image-making in the new economy: Judd, *The Infrastructure of Play*, 3–16; or Jenkins “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” 177–179.

<sup>320</sup> Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” 182.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>322</sup> Luminato Festival, “About the Luminato Festival,” *Luminato Festival*, 2014, <http://www.luminatofestival.com/pages/luminato-festival/history/> (accessed 14 November 2014).

<sup>323</sup> Kate Taylor, “From Zero to \$22.5-Million in 2 Years,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 24, 2008.

<sup>324</sup> Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 9. This quote is in reference to: Miriam Greenberg, “Marketing the City in Crisis: Branding and Restructuring New York City in the 1970s and the Post-9/11 Era,” in *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 19–44.

Summit Alliance is a non-profit organization that was established in 2002 to address the economic decline in Toronto, St. Joseph Communications is a prominent marketing firm, and the Boston Consulting Group is a business strategy consulting firm.<sup>325</sup> With scant explanation about the goals and corporate interests of the Toronto City Summit Alliance or their respective firms, the festival website tells the story of two men who bonded over Italian food and “their mutual belief in the transformative power of the arts.”<sup>326</sup> With the help of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, Pecaut and Gagliano then embarked on a consultation process with arts leaders, after which, the festival’s core values of collaboration, accessibility, diversity and transformation were selected.<sup>327</sup> At the end of this process, the festival framework was designed, which saw Luminato commissioning various Toronto arts and culture organizations (both not-for-profits and for-profit companies) to act as producers for the annual event. Furthermore, Luminato’s mission was born: to present local, national, and international, as well as interdisciplinary, arts programming in the city’s downtown core for ten days each year in June.<sup>328</sup> Luminato promised to boost Toronto’s leisure and tourist economy with the allure of limited-run or one-time-only performances that were not to be missed. Thus, Luminato emerged as a city-wide spectacle that relied on, and worked through the arts community, with the ultimate goal of creating a phenomenal, entrepreneurial display that would encourage consumption and generate capital, particularly in the culture, tourism and service industries.

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<sup>325</sup> The Toronto City Summit Alliance is now called the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance, or just, CivicAction.

<sup>326</sup> Luminato Festival, “About the Luminato Festival.”

<sup>327</sup> Luminato’s accessibility is contestable. On the one hand, Luminato presents several free events, particularly art exhibitions, talks, or some music performances. On the other hand, many performances are ticketed through the *Ticketmaster* website. Ticket prices are not always affordable and some only offer limited seating. Levin and Solga also address issues of accessibility in a range of urban performances, including Luminato, in: Levin and Solga, “Building Utopia,” 37–53.

<sup>328</sup> For a description of Luminato’s mission, see: Luminato Festival, “Mission + Vision,” in *Luminato Festival*, 2014, <http://www.luminatofestival.com/pages/luminato-festival/mission-and-vision/> (accessed 14 November 2014).

Luminato's funding history is a veritable Cinderella story, as the festival triumphantly rose out of the ashes of the post-SARS economic crisis and the previous years of arts and culture downsizing and limited arts funding.<sup>329</sup> In 2005 Luminato received its start-up funding from the Ontario government as well as from various corporate sponsors. Then, in 2007, which was both the year that it secured status as a charitable organization and the year of its debut, Luminato received a promise of \$7.5 million dollars for its first three years from the Ontario government. This was followed by an astounding gift—which receives no mention in the origin story on the Luminato website—of a \$15 million grant from the province in 2008.<sup>330</sup> In the words of *Globe and Mail* reporter Kate Taylor, Luminato had grown “from zero to \$22.5 million in two years,”<sup>331</sup> which is a head-spinning rate of financial growth for a single arts organization. As Taylor notes, the financial support of a fledgling arts festival was unprecedented in Toronto and it was likely the envy of development departments across Toronto.<sup>332</sup> Typical of large-scale, cultural events in the era of urban entrepreneurialism, Luminato quickly captured the imaginations of both private and public funding partners.<sup>333</sup>

The extravagant funds being channeled to Luminato instead of other Toronto arts organizations had a great deal to do with its powerful founders, as well as the festival's potential to serve as a spectacular promotion of Toronto as a creative city and to attract a diverse audience. First, as Taylor explained, the success of the festival was the result of

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<sup>329</sup> Jenkins, “Toronto's Cultural Renaissance,” 176.

<sup>330</sup> Taylor, “From Zero to \$22.5-Million in 2 Years.”

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> In Luminato's formative years the Toronto civic government was “cash poor” and thus its support of the festival involved helping to advertise the festival and helping to find corporate sponsors for the festival. See: Michèle Anderson, “Democratizing Luminato: Private-Public Partnerships Hang in Delicate Balance,” in *York University: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies*, 1–87 (Toronto: Roberts Centre for Canadian Studies, York University, 2009): 11; 18–20. Today, all three levels of government are listed as festival partners: The City of Toronto is listed as a “Presenting Partner,” the provincial government is listed as a “Founding Government partner,” and the federal government is listed as a “Major Partner.” These partners are listed among several corporate partners. See: Luminato Festival, “Festival Partners,” in *Luminato Festival*, 2014, <http://www.luminatofestival.com/pages/festival-supporters/festival-partners/> (accessed 3 December 2014).

<sup>333</sup> Richards and Palmer, *Eventful Cities*, 11.

strategy, timing, and most of all, the political and corporate ties, if not the influence, of Gagliano and Pecaut.<sup>334</sup> Secondly, the funds in support of the festival were linked to the government's belief in Richard Florida's theories that creativity and culture are the new economic drivers.<sup>335</sup> Through the festival, civic leaders and cultural institutions could better market Toronto as a thriving, creative city, both at home and abroad. As a result, the creative city discourse of prosperity, opportunity, diversity, and creativity can be found in many of Luminato's marketing and promotional materials.<sup>336</sup> For instance, Luminato's website acknowledges Toronto's "creative spirit" and asserts that the festival, "embraces and celebrates Toronto's diversity."<sup>337</sup> Thirdly, by presenting a broad range of art events, Luminato promised to attract a larger, more diverse audience than some of the more specialized Toronto arts organizations at this time.

Despite the perceived economic potential of the festival by city leaders, the government's choice to funnel public funds to Luminato stirred up an arts funding controversy in Toronto. Taylor's article summarized just a few of the questions that arose in the arts and culture sector at the time of the \$15 million grant, including:

How did a 10-day Toronto arts festival, which had completed only one season, win a direct provincial grant of a kind usually reserved for established government agencies? How did Luminato, that ill-defined grab bag of splashy public spectacles and pricey international performances [...] come out of nowhere so fast?<sup>338</sup>

Today, many institutions such as the Toronto Arts Foundation and the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) proudly report the positive economic impact of government investments

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<sup>334</sup> Taylor, "From Zero to \$22.5-Million in 2 Years."

<sup>335</sup> Ibid. See also: Authenticity, "Creative City Planning Framework—A Supporting Document to the Agenda for Prosperity: Prospectus for a Great City" (Toronto: Authenticity, February 2008): 21.

<sup>336</sup> Levin and Solga also note Luminato's "unabashed deploying of Florida's creative city vocabulary" in: Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 41.

<sup>337</sup> Luminato "Mission + Vision."

<sup>338</sup> Taylor, "From Zero to \$22.5-Million in 2 Years."

in the SuperBuild program and Luminato.<sup>339</sup> However, in 2008 the infusion of public money to support the largely private, interdisciplinary art festival drew fierce criticism from some members of Toronto's struggling arts community. Disapproval of the mammoth provincial grant manifested online in a variety of blogs and articles. For example, theatre professional Michael Wheeler's 2008 blog posts urged readers to "Lumi-not-go,"<sup>340</sup> calling an arts festival run by corporate figureheads "a recipe for disaster."<sup>341</sup> Additionally, Wheeler criticized the absurdity of the government giving such a sizable grant to Luminato (which funds arts programming that runs a little over a week) rather than to the TAC (which funds arts programming year-round).<sup>342</sup>

Funding inequities aside, based on the underwhelming critical response to Luminato's 2007 season, it might have seemed unwarranted to continue directing extravagant funds to the new festival rather than to other, more established arts organizations in Toronto. For example, *Toronto Star* columnist Christopher Hume offered his view on the 2007 festival's shortcomings in an article entitled, "A Businessperson's Notion of a Festival."<sup>343</sup> According to Hume, Luminato's inaugural season lacked authenticity, and even worse, it appeared to be a "top-down exercise in arts manipulation."<sup>344</sup> Hume described the festival as a kind of formless behemoth that posed as a celebration of creativity while essentially inhaling all smaller arts and culture events in its path and prioritizing the "bottom line."<sup>345</sup> In a similar vein, scholars Laura Levin and Kim Solga argued that in Luminato's inaugural year, the festival was "effectively laid on top of Toronto's existing performance and visual arts landscape" and that it did

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<sup>339</sup> Jini Stolk with Kathleen McLeod and Kasia Gladki, *Toronto Arts Facts* (Toronto: Toronto Arts Foundation, 2014): 5 & 7. I accessed this document at: Toronto Arts Council, "Toronto Arts Facts," in *Toronto Arts Council*, 2014, <http://www.torontoartscouncil.org/news/toronto-arts-facts> (accessed 14 March 2015).

<sup>340</sup> Michael Wheeler, "Lumi-not-go," in *Praxis Theatre*, 10 June 2008, <http://praxistheatre.blogspot.ca/2008/06/lumi-not-go.html> (accessed 14 November 2014).

<sup>341</sup> Michael Wheeler, "How Luminato Failed Toronto," in *Praxis Theatre*, 9 July 2008, <http://praxistheatre.com/2008/07/how-luminato-failed-toronto/> (accessed 6 November 2014).

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Christopher Hume, "A Businessperson's Notion of a Festival," *The Toronto Star*, 11 June 2007.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.



not result in very many *new* creative works.<sup>346</sup> Thus, Luminato was thought to be a powerful capitalist spectacle that co-opted the city's creative capital to promote a vision of Toronto's thriving cultural economy.

However, these contestations were largely cast in the shadows of what was now a spectacular marketing giant working for the entrepreneurial city. Due to the festival's goal to better Toronto's economy by infusing money into the arts community, those aspiring to critique the festival *as art* may have felt compromised, especially in its early years. Hume's article hints at these sentiments, as it begins, "it might seem ungrateful to complain, but there was something not quite right about Luminato."<sup>347</sup> Furthermore, it worth noting that media outlets such as *Toronto Life*, *FASHION*, and *Torontoist*, are owned by St. Joseph's Communications, the marketing firm for which Gagliano serves as the Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.<sup>348</sup> These connections may cause us to consider the power of the spectacle to not only appropriate the city's cultural capital, but to also possibly influence local media, which in turn helps sway public opinion at times of controversy. Finally, due to its role as a producer, Luminato had a considerable amount of power in terms of selecting who was, and who was not, invited to participate in its programming, thereby gaining access to additional funding and promotion. With its influx of funds and its powerful connections, Luminato could strategically craft and, in large part, dominate, mainstream messages about its intentions and its consequences. To some degree, the exciting story of Luminato eclipsed some of the social realities of its past and present, such as the previous lack of arts funding in the city, Toronto's economic crisis, and Luminato's role as a largely economic strategy.

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<sup>346</sup> Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 41.

<sup>347</sup> Hume, "A Businessperson's Notion of a Festival."

<sup>348</sup> For instance, the editor of *FASHION* at this time wrote about her involvement in the *Mille Femmes* exhibition in a promotional editorial piece entitled, "Lucky Shot" (*FASHION*, Summer 2008, 24).

## 1.4 *Toronto's Mille Femmes* (2008)

As the previous section illustrates, Luminato emerged as an entrepreneurial strategy that was designed with the hopes of boosting the Toronto economy by drawing on, investing in, and promoting the city's creative capital. The two art projects that I discuss in the following sections were presented as part of this initiative, which sought to rebuild Toronto as a thriving cultural centre in the aftermath of the SARS public relations nightmare and a downturn in the global tourism industry. These projects also emerged in the midst of the controversy and criticism surrounding Luminato's formative years. This complex history is important as I examine the power of these photographic portrait projects to not only celebrate vibrant and creative communities, but also to *market* communities as part of the cultural economy of Toronto, as well as to mask issues, guide behavior, divert festival critics, and ultimately generate capital.

*Mille Femmes* was not a new project designed specifically for the 2008 Luminato Festival, but rather was part of an existing concept that Maraval had been working on since 1993 entitled, *Portraits x 1000*. Each series of portraits involves shooting portraits of 1000 people who are "linked by a common passion or situation."<sup>349</sup> To date, Maraval has photographed groups of women worldwide, as well as athletes, soccer fans, scientists, "trend makers," "net pioneers," and people struggling with or engaged in the fight against AIDS.<sup>350</sup> The projects are most often linked to specific geographical locations and the photographs are shared via grand exhibitions, as well as in exhibition catalogues and Maraval's online archive ([www.maraval.org](http://www.maraval.org)). Thus, for many years prior to Luminato, Maraval was creating ambitious portrait projects, many of which represented consumers or people driving the creative industries and/or the knowledge economy. This portfolio would have been especially appealing to Luminato organizers, its sponsors, and the city planners of Toronto as they sought to inspire the creative class to attend the festival, to purchase specific products, or to move to the city. Not only would Maraval's concept

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<sup>349</sup> Pierre Maraval, "Portraits x 1000," in *Pierre Maraval Productions*, c. 2010, <http://www.maraval.org/spip.php?rubrique42> (accessed 12 November 2014).

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

acknowledge and appeal to the creative class, but it would also capture Toronto's visible diversity, which as scholar Naomi Klein has discussed, is the "mantra of global capital."<sup>351</sup> Klein notes, for many corporations, "diversity marketing" was seen as the answer to the identity politics controversies of the 1990s, as well as to the challenges of the global marketplace."<sup>352</sup> As Boudreau et al. have discussed, diversity marketing was also essential for civic strategies promoting Toronto as the most diverse city in the world.<sup>353</sup>

The exhibition of *Toronto's Mille Femmes* was met with a general sense of enthusiasm in the press. Many of the photographic subjects were female journalists or media personalities and their participation was featured in magazine editorials and articles, as well as in several news and entertainment segments appearing on ET Canada, CTV News, Radio Canada, and OMNI TV.<sup>354</sup> This media coverage also highlighted some of the more well-known photographic subjects such as former governor-general Adrienne Clarkson, actor Cynthia Dale, dancer Veronica Tennant, politician Olivia Chow, or former mayor Barbara Hall.<sup>355</sup> Often the televised interviews were set against the bustling backdrop of the opening of the exhibition, which helped to enhance the idea of a festive and vibrant arts scene in the city, especially for television viewers outside of Toronto. By recruiting media personalities for the spectacle of *Mille Femmes*, the festival was arguably more likely to receive favorable coverage in mass media. Thus, the recruitment for *Mille Femmes* guaranteed the festival, its sponsors, and the city, a media spotlight in today's competitive "attention economy."<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 2000; 2002): 115.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. Klein talks about how identity politics started to *feed* the system instead of subverting it (see: pg. 113).

<sup>353</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20; 86.

<sup>354</sup> For some of this footage, see: Pierre Maraval, "Mille Femmes Toronto," in *Pierre Maraval Productions*, 2008, <http://www.maraval.org/spip.php?article213> (accessed 3 December 2014).

<sup>355</sup> See: James Bradshaw, "A Wall of Wonderful Women," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 June 2008; or Ashante Infantry, "1000 Femmes, 1000 Pictures," *The Toronto Star*, 11 April 2008.

<sup>356</sup> Dr. Eric Schmidt developed the term "attention economy," to describe the way that corporations competed for consumer attention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. See: Crary, 24/7, 75.

Despite the reverie of the exhibition opening, and perhaps due to the presence of Lancôme and L'Oréal sponsorship signage, some participants expressed suspicion that there was more to this exhibition than a simple celebration of creative women. *Toronto Star* reporter James Bradshaw indicates that he encountered “varied responses” and he quotes one participant who “questioned whether it is a true celebration of women, [or whether it was] made up” due to its affiliation with Lancôme.<sup>357</sup> Truly, a Lancôme sponsorship proposal for an exhibition of one thousand photographic portraits of everyday women presented as part of an arts and culture festival, writes itself. Lancôme, a division of L'Oréal, prides itself on celebrating “ultra-femininity, emotion, *joie-de-vivre*, happiness and beauty,” through its luxury brand of beauty products.<sup>358</sup> Often Lancôme selects “charismatic and fully accomplished women” as “ambassadors,” who are most often high profile celebrities such as Julia Roberts or Kate Winslet.<sup>359</sup> In the case of *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, the brand's ambassadors were women representing Toronto's arts and culture industry, who each had a mini-makeover with Lancôme products prior to having their photographs taken.

The Lancôme makeover was emphasized in the exhibition signage and the on-site multimedia [Fig. 1.4], as well as in all marketing pieces. Online videos that promoted the exhibition simultaneously marketed the beauty brand.<sup>360</sup> For example, in one video about the exhibition, Maraval states,

We prepare these women when they come to me in a very special way with the people of Lancôme. The make-up is really important because we put them in a very good mood. They come to me relaxed and this is part of the secret to get what I want.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Bradshaw, “A Wall of Wonderful Women.”

<sup>358</sup> “Lancôme,” in *L'Oréal*, 2014, <http://www.loreal.ca/en/brands/loreal-luxe/lancome.aspx> (accessed 11 November 2014).

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> See, for example: Cocke, dir., *The Creation of Toronto's Mille Femmes* (video).

<sup>361</sup> Pierre Maraval, in: Ibid.

In the same video, Lancôme Canada Vice President, Heidi Strohl comments that the makeover is a way to “bring out the woman who is sitting and posing for the *Mille Femmes* photo.”<sup>362</sup> This commentary is imposed over footage of women having their make-up professionally done and then posing for their photographs. In this regard, despite Maraval’s original goal to create a human landscape, he also created a human *brandscape* that served as an extension of L’Oréal and Lancôme.<sup>363</sup> In a manner so typical of the entrepreneurial city, culture and consumption, or art and advertising, were conflated through the spectacle of *Mille Femmes*.<sup>364</sup>

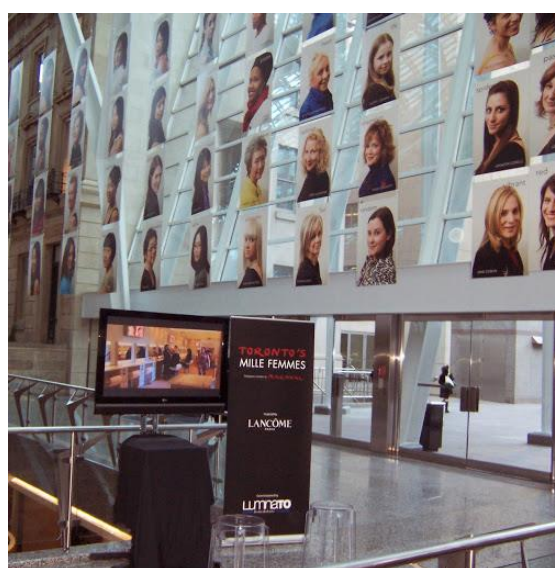


Figure 1.4: Installation view of Pierre Maraval’s *Toronto’s Mille Femmes* (Allan Lambert Galleria, Brookfield Place, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

The use of *Mille Femmes* as a marketing piece for the beauty brands may have been readily apparent to some viewers; however, what may have been less apparent to some participants and viewers was how this exhibition also served as a marketing piece

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<sup>362</sup> Heidi Strohl, in: Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> I encountered the term “brandscape” in Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 6. However, this term was not coined here. Lynne B. Upshaw credits the term to Anthropologist John Sherry (1986). See: Lynne B. Upshaw, *Building Brand Identity: A Strategy for Success in a Hostile Marketplace* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995): 48–49.

<sup>364</sup> Hetherington and Cronin, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 2.

for the City of Toronto as a creative, tolerant, and multicultural city through the sheer number of portraits representing women of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. By representing one thousand women who were presumably gainfully employed in Toronto's arts and culture sector, this exhibition helped to give the impression of a city full of rewarding and creative employment opportunities. However, as Klein argues, in recent years, the idea of steady work, "with benefits, holiday pay, a measure of security and maybe even union representation—has fallen out of economic fashion."<sup>365</sup> Furthermore, creative and non-profit industries, which produce knowledge, images, and other immaterial goods, have notoriously offered precarious and demanding (albeit often lower paying) employment.<sup>366</sup> In Canada's largest cities, as one recent study illustrates, culture workers earn an average income of \$44,400, which is 13% less than the overall labour force average salary (\$48,500), and artists earn an average of \$32,800, which is 29% lower than the average for the overall labour force.<sup>367</sup> Theorist Michael Hardt explains that as the production of immaterial goods became more central to the capitalist economy, there has been a normalization of the 24/7 work mentality, "precarious [...] wage relations," and the shift from permanent positions to flexible, contract positions.<sup>368</sup> In Toronto's arts and culture sector, the rationalities of immaterial labour are normalized on job boards that are rife with postings for volunteer positions, unpaid internships, or jobs for which the necessary qualifications, hours, and duties comically outweigh the

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<sup>365</sup> Klein, *No Logo*, 232.

<sup>366</sup> Michael Hardt, "Two Faces of the Apocalypse: A Letter from Copenhagen," *Polygraph* 22 (2010): 265–274. Accessed here: *Duke University Libraries*, 2015, <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/9295> (accessed 2 June 2015): 19.

<sup>367</sup> Many of these workers are also self-employed. These figures are higher in large cities. For example, across Canada, the average earnings for an artist are \$27,600. All of this data is from: Hill Strategies. "Artists and Cultural Workers in Canadian Municipalities," in *Hill Strategies*, 3 December 2014, <http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/artists-and-cultural-workers-canadian-municipalities> (accessed 2 June 2015). See also: Michael Maranda, *Waging Culture: A Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of York University, 2009); and "York US Study Finds Canadian Visual Artists Underpaid," in *York University: York Media Relations*, 31 March 2009, <http://news.yorku.ca/2009/03/31/york-u-study-finds-canadian-visual-artists-underpaid/> (accessed 2 June 2015).

<sup>368</sup> Hardt, "Two Faces of the Apocalypse," 19.

proposed salaries.<sup>369</sup> This is not to mention the possibility that Luminato's funding model can result in the exploitation of creative labour, as workers who are non-unionized or who have very little negotiating power due to vaguely defined contracts ("some evenings and weekends required") see their portfolios expand leading up to and during the festival. Thus, *Mille Femmes* helped to spectacularize, normalize, and legitimize Toronto's flexible neoliberal labour market, by presenting a visual celebration of creative women and the job opportunities that they represent, while omitting the fact that the arts and culture sector is largely made up of volunteer, casual, and contracted labourers, as well as workers who are generally paid less than the average salary of the overall labour force.<sup>370</sup>

The vibrant display of portraits also belies the fact that within this community, these women experience gaps in income or employment expectations, both among themselves and as compared to their male counterparts. As Braedley and Luxton explain, systemic inequalities of race and gender are maintained, intensified, or worse yet, normalized in a neoliberal era.<sup>371</sup> Behind the smiling spectacle of Toronto's diverse female workforce, is the broader social reality that people who represent ethnic minorities often struggle for equal pay.<sup>372</sup> A 2004 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives noted that in the private sector, aboriginal and visible minority workers earned 30% to 44% less than non-aboriginal or non-visible minority counterparts with the

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<sup>369</sup> This has been a noticeable trend on sites such as: *Work in Culture* ([www.workinculture.ca](http://www.workinculture.ca)) and *Akimbo* ([www.akimbo.ca](http://www.akimbo.ca)). However, I should note that recently the complex issues related to unpaid internships have been covered by Canadian press. See: Colin Perkel, "Ontario Shuts down Unpaid Magazine Internships," *Maclean's*, 27 March 2014; and Marcho Chown Oved, "Walrus Unpaid Interns are Back—with Pay," *The Toronto Star*, 4 May 2014.

<sup>370</sup> This description of the neoliberal work force is borrowed from Raewyn Connell's chapter. See: Connell, "Understanding Neoliberalism," 26.

<sup>371</sup> Braedley and Luxton, *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, 12–16.

<sup>372</sup> See: Sara Mojtahedzadeh, "Public Sector Workers Don't Get Paid More—Just More Fairly, Study Suggests: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Finds a "Shocking" Wage Gap between Private and Public Jobs for Aboriginal, Visible Minority, or Female Workers," *The Toronto Star*, 29 October 2014; Joe Friesen, "Canadian-born visible minorities earn less," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 February 2011; Kate McInturff and Paul Tulloch, *Narrowing the Gap: The Difference that Public Sector Wages Make* (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2014). While some of these reports post-date *Mille Femmes*, some of the data does not.

same levels of education.<sup>373</sup> However, the complexities of compensation in the arts world abound, as scholar Michael Miranda's 2009 report on wage relations found that, "immigrant artists have higher total incomes than Canadian-born artists," while Caucasian artists generally have higher income than visible minority artists.<sup>374</sup> In this regard, the long, grid like presentation of the *Mille Femmes* portraits remind me of Benedict Anderson's comments about the nation as a community, when he stated that despite the "actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail" within it, it is always conceived of as a "deep, horizontal comradeship."<sup>375</sup> I point this out not to cynically shatter the illusion of a tightly knit community of creative women, but simply to illustrate how the interpersonal relationships and the employment opportunities that these portraits aspired to convey were much more complex, and in some cases more fraught, than the uniform display of portraits allowed.

The dazzling surface of this celebration also detracted from the gender-based wage discrimination that many women face. Recent reports have investigated these issues in a range of fields, with many focusing on gender inequality in Canadian private sector, as well as in the local, national, and global art worlds.<sup>376</sup> For example, several scholars have examined the status of women in Canadian theatre, art, and film.<sup>377</sup> In addition, writer and curator Maura Reilly recently published an article that offers a comprehensive overview of gender inequities that have, and continue to, plague the global art world. She argues,

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<sup>373</sup> McInturff et al., *Narrowing the Gap*, 5. This report argues that in the public sector, a wage gap still exists, although the gap is much smaller.

<sup>374</sup> See: Out There, "Waging Culture 2007: The Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists," in *agYU: Out There*, 1 April 2009, <http://theagyuisthere.org/everywhere/?p=1443> (accessed 7 July 2015).

<sup>375</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; 2006): 7. He also refers to community as a "fraternity." In contrast, *Mille Femmes* presents community as a "deep, horizontal," sorority.

<sup>376</sup> See: McInturff et al., *Narrowing the Gap*, 7; and Center for the Future of Museums, "Let's Talk Money."

<sup>377</sup> Burton (2006); Zemans and Wallace (2013); Coles (2013); and Alison Cooley, Amy Luo and Caoimhe Morgan-Feir, "Canada's Galleries Fall Short: The Not-So Great White North," *Canadian Art*, 21 April 2015.



Discrimination against women at the top trickles down into every aspect of the art world—gallery representation, auction price differentials, press coverage, and inclusion in permanent-collection displays and solo-exhibition programs.<sup>378</sup>

Reilly's work has inspired a number of prominent female artists, writers, scholars, and curators to reflect on issues of discrimination, including Cindy Sherman and Carrie Mae Weems.<sup>379</sup> Of course many of these reports and conversations post-date Maraval's project, but as the quantitative evidence that they present indicate, the issues certainly do not.

In its effort to galvanize Toronto's *Mille Femmes* in a colourful celebration of creativity, did Maraval and his subjects miss a powerful opportunity to address important human rights issues that have impacted women in the art world? I mention the complicity of the subjects because many feminists, scholars, and artists have argued that it is essential that women find, or create, opportunities to address issues of gender inequality. For instance, feminist art historian Linda Nochlin argues, women must "be fearless, speak up, work together, and consistently make trouble."<sup>380</sup> This causes me to wonder how the women portrayed in *Mille Femmes*, myself included, might have used the exhibition as a platform to speak out about wage and gender disparity in Toronto's art and culture sector. Here, I am of course aware of the clarity that hindsight allows and I do not want to undermine the positive social impact that the exhibition-as-a-celebration engendered. However, it is important to note that contextualized as a celebration, the portraits also composed a spectacular community through a display that presented us with "fetishized social relations presented as images."<sup>381</sup> This is typical of branding strategies

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<sup>378</sup> Maura Reilly, "Taking the Measure of Sexism: Facts, Figures, and Fixes," *ArtNews*, 26 May 2015, <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/> (accessed 27 May 2015).

<sup>379</sup> See: Cindy Sherman, "Cindy Sherman Responds," *ArtNews*, 26 May 2015, <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/cindy-sherman-responds/> (accessed 27 May 2015); and Carrie Mae Weems, "Carrie Mae Weems Responds," *ArtNews*, 26 May 2015, <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/carrie-mae-weems-responds/> (accessed 27 May 2015).

<sup>380</sup> Linda Nochlin, quoted in: Reilly, "Taking the Measure of Sexism."

<sup>381</sup> Cronin and Hetherington, *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City*, 3.

that have emerged out of urban entrepreneurialism, which tend to produce images that are not fully representative of the reality of everyday life so as to put the city's best face forward.<sup>382</sup>

*Mille Femmes* also helped to redirect, or head off, festival critics, and as such served civic leaders and festival organizers as a kind of technology of power that helped to guide behaviour within the cultural community. At a time when Luminato was at risk of losing supporters within Toronto's artistic community due to its controversial economic windfall, this project used photographic portraiture to represent one thousand creative women as a kind of community in support of the festival. In addition, through its participatory nature, this exhibition had a built-in audience. In the contemporary spectacle of social media, the power of these portraits to promote the festival increased exponentially. Not only did the female subjects have a vested interest in attending *Mille Femmes* with their own entourages, but at this time interoffice emails circulated and posts went up on social media offering shout-outs to the photographed women and encouraging people to go and see the exhibition. *Mille Femmes* reveals the power of the spectacle to guide behavior and to neutralize acts of resistance by "converting them into objects or images of consumption."<sup>383</sup>

As this section has demonstrated, in addition to being a celebration of creativity and diversity, *Mille Femmes* was also an urban spectacle that entangled a community celebration and an art project with capitalist and urban entrepreneurial imperatives. By promoting the celebratory aspirations of this exhibition, this spectacular representation of community helped to depoliticize and galvanize the creative community. *Mille Femmes* helped to draw attention away from the festival's funding controversy and to distract viewers from issues within the arts and culture sector at this time, such as labour inequities, particularly those based on gender and race. Of course, as noted, *Mille Femmes* was not merely a hollowed out celebration of art and community and it had great

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<sup>382</sup> Greenberg, "Marketing the City in Crisis," 39.

<sup>383</sup> This is drawn from Crary's description of the spectacle in: Crary, "Spectacle, Attention, Counter Memory," 100.

potential to have a positive personal impact on its participants. However, in terms of the history of art and visual culture, this project is significant because it offers a concrete example of how neoliberal spectacle invades all aspects of our everyday life. Through this investigation, we can also see *how important* the marketing of everyday people is to the entrepreneurial city's economy and how this has impacted community-engaged art production in Toronto.

## 1.5 *Regent Park Portraits* (2008)

In Regent Park, just east of the *Mille Femmes* site, was another series of community portraits commissioned by Luminato—a series of large-scale, wheatpaste portrait posters by Toronto street artist and photographer Dan Bergeron (also known as “Fauxreel”). In this section, I demonstrate that while the gritty, black-and-white, street art style of Bergeron's gigantic wheatpaste portrait posters may at first seem to be the antithesis of the high-gloss colour portraits by Maraval, it too was a spectacular representation of community. Promoted by Luminato as “Art Posters,” Bergeron's street art-inspired portraits helped to market the entrepreneurial city as hip and diverse and encouraged mass approval of culture-led redevelopment strategies. However, unlike Maraval's exhibition, Bergeron's project had a kind of double life. Described by Bergeron as the “Regent Park Portraits,” these portraits offered a profound representation of the social impact of urban entrepreneurialism on the residents of the Toronto Community Housing community in Regent Park.

Bergeron's project was commissioned by curator Devon Ostrom and was presented as a part of *StreetScape*, a series of urban beautification projects that were facilitated in collaboration with various community arts organizations, as well as local and international street artists. *StreetScape* sought to transform areas of the city that were described as derelict urban spaces into “an outdoor gallery” by re-imagining “the city's post-industrial waterfront, housing communities, and urban spaces in the midst of

revitalization as monumental canvasses.”<sup>384</sup> One of the *StreetScape*’s target areas was Regent Park, which is considered Canada’s oldest and largest social housing community. For this component of the exhibition, Ostrom commissioned a local non-profit organization dedicated to mentoring youth and celebrating hip-hop culture and the arts, Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (henceforth Manifesto), to produce *StreetScape at Regent Park: Living Space*.<sup>385</sup> In collaboration with, or hired by, Manifesto, several artists facilitated a series of “process-driven” installations with Regent Park residents and community groups that sought to celebrate the “life that makes up Regent Park as a community.”<sup>386</sup> Overall, the *StreetScape* programming reflected a kind of trickle-down producing, which generally saw Luminato commissioning organizations, who then hired artists, recruited volunteers and participants, and forged further community partnerships within Regent Park. Furthermore, this programming illustrates how the festival engaged with, and essentially worked through, local communities.

For his series of *StreetScape* portraits, Bergeron monumentalized Regent Park residents by pasting enlarged black-and-white portrait posters to the sides of subsidized housing buildings. These buildings were slated to be levelled later that year as a part of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s controversial \$1 billion Regent Park Revitalization Project. To create the massive portraits, Bergeron selected eleven participants who represented a cross-section of race, ethnicity, and age to give a sense of

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<sup>384</sup> Luminato Festival, “Press Release: Luminato’s *StreetScape* Program Re-imagines Urban Spaces,” in *Luminato Festival*, 14 May 2008, [http://www.luminato.com/festival/eng/designedit/upload/Luminato\\_StreetScape\\_Program\\_Release\\_May\\_14\\_2008.pdf](http://www.luminato.com/festival/eng/designedit/upload/Luminato_StreetScape_Program_Release_May_14_2008.pdf) (accessed October 30, 2010). Much of the information about the 2008 program is no longer available on the Luminato website.

<sup>385</sup> Che Kothari, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2014. The programming that was done in collaboration with Manifesto was listed on: Luminato Festival of Art and Creativity, “*StreetScape*,” in *Luminato Festival*, 2008, <http://luminatostreetscape.blogspot.ca/> (accessed 10 May 2015). See: Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, “Luminato *StreetScape*,” in *Manifesto*, 2014, <http://mnfsto.com/projects/luminato-streetscape/> (accessed 18 November 2014).

<sup>386</sup> Luminato Festival, “*Streetscape at Regent Park ‘Living Space’*,” in *Luminato Festival*, 2008, <http://www.luminato.com/festival/eng/events/ID34/index.php> (accessed 30 September 2010). Note: Similar to the above footnote, this page no longer exists online.

the diversity of people living in the neighbourhood.<sup>387</sup> The participants were either introduced to Bergeron through the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Centre or were approached on the street based on a “gut feeling.”<sup>388</sup> Participants were not paid for their participation, but were given a copy of their portrait as a token of thanks for their involvement.<sup>389</sup> Each portrait poster required approximately twenty hours to complete, including taking the photographs and printing sections of the enlarged images on long thick strips of paper, which Bergeron and his two paid youth assistants then assembled into mural-sized posters while balancing on a Genie Boom [Fig. 1.5]. The result of their efforts was a striking series of photographic murals that would surprise people as they walked through the neighbourhood or as they sought out the “accidental encounters with art” that were promoted by Luminato.<sup>390</sup>



Figure 1.5: Dan Bergeron and an assistant installing a portrait of Windy (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

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<sup>387</sup> “Regent of the People for Real,” in *Brooklyn Street Art*, 7 July 2008, <http://www.brooklynstreetart.com/theBlog/?p=16> (accessed 1 November 2010).

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Dan Bergeron, in conversation with the author, 7 January 2014.

<sup>390</sup> Luminato Festival, “About Luminato,” in *Luminato Festival*, 2010, <http://www.luminato.com/about/13> (accessed 7 December 2010).

Despite the ephemeral nature of the wheatpaste posters, which are notoriously vulnerable to the elements, as well as the subsequent destruction of the buildings that served as sites for the posters, photographs of the project can still be found in blogs, websites, online articles, and video footage of the neighbourhood.<sup>391</sup> In one online photograph, a ghost-like portrait reaches up to two stories high; it is a close-up of a man who is possibly in his twenties or early thirties. He has short, dark hair, and a scruffy beard. He wears an earring in his left ear and a loosely buttoned, plaid shirt over a plain, white t-shirt. His neutral expression makes it difficult to read the thoughts behind his stoic gaze [Fig. 1.6]. In another photograph, there is a full-length portrait poster of a young woman wearing a hijab who looks out to the viewer with an alert and somewhat serious expression [Fig. 1.7]. To her left, debris from the dilapidated building is strewn on the grass. Other portrait posters include, “Windy,” a wall-sized, close-up portrait of an older gentlemen, and “Valda,” another huge portrait poster of woman wearing a knitted toque, who gazes out to the viewer with her chin proudly raised [Figs. 1.8 & 1.9]. There were also portraits of children, including: a full-length portrait of a young girl who poses with crossed arms and legs as if leaning against the brick wall, a young boy standing proudly as he poses in a sports jersey, a shy tot, and a beaming young girl who stands with outstretched arms and who at this size appears to hold up the wall. As is often the case with ephemeral street art, thanks to the age of digital reproduction viewers from around the world have access to works that would have otherwise only existed for a short time in a specific place, and thus we may continue to consider their meaning long after the works have been destroyed.

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<sup>391</sup> See, for example: Bergeron’s website (*fauxreel.ca*) or *Invisible City* (2009), a documentary film by Hubert Davis. The images are not part of Luminato’s online festival archive.





Figure 1.6: Dan Bergeron, *Regent Park Portraits—Tyrone*, 2008  
(Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy  
Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.



Figure 1.7: Dan Bergeron, *Regent Park Portraits—Fathima*, 2008  
(Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy  
Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.





Figure 1.8: Dan Bergeron, *Regent Park Portraits—Windy*, 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

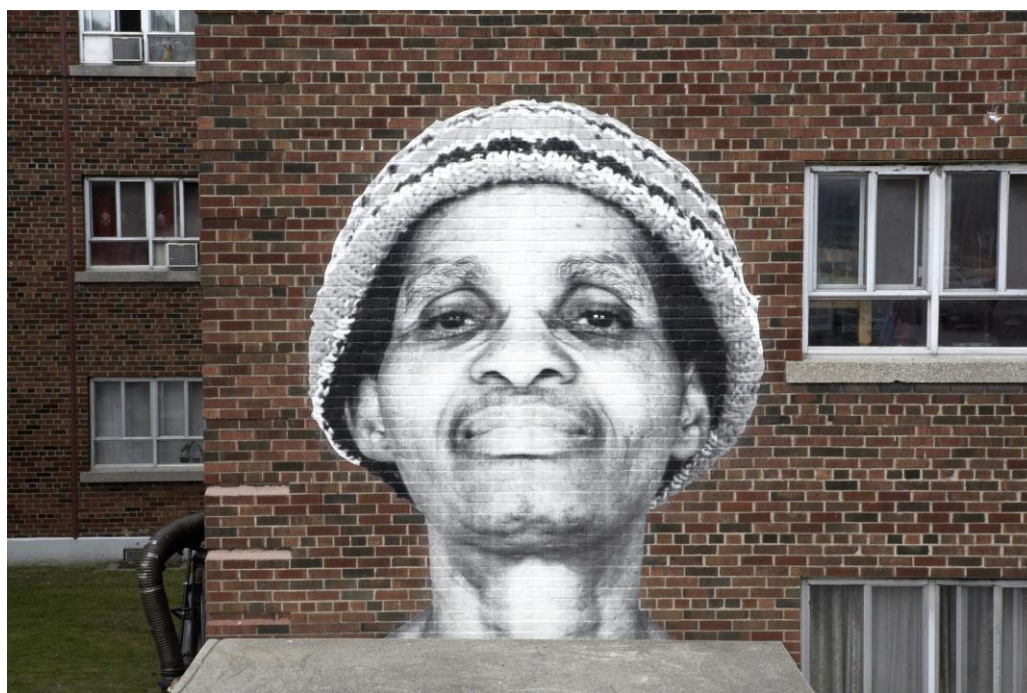


Figure 1.9: Dan Bergeron, *Regent Park Portraits—Valda*, 2008 (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.



Like *Mille Femmes*, within the framework of the Luminato festival, Bergeron's "Art Posters" were used to market Toronto as a diverse and creative global city so as to attract tourists and the creative class. For example, the *Streetscape* press release praised the projects for reflecting the lives of "a diverse community and Canada's pioneering social housing project."<sup>392</sup> Even Bergeron's participation in the festival was used to promote the opportunities available to the creative workers in Toronto. For example, Bergeron was featured in a *Toronto Life* article, which not only discussed the artist's work, but also at times sounds like an advertisement for the hip urban lifestyle of the city's creative class.<sup>393</sup> Journalist Carl Wilson begins his article with a dramatic introduction, stating,

As thunder cracks outside the windows of his spacious, handsomely renovated studio on Queen West near Roncesvalles, Dan Bergeron—in jeans, a black T-shirt and one pair out of a large collection of sneakers on display around the room—sits down to explain himself.<sup>394</sup>

Bergeron is described as the typical creative worker—very similar to a kind of creative city stock character that appears in civic planning documents at this time.<sup>395</sup> Thus, through commissioned work such as the "Art Posters," Luminato contributed to the city's agenda to recruit creative workers to join Toronto's vibrant cultural community.

However, despite the way it may have been used as a creative city marketing piece, Bergeron's work for *Streetscape* was deeply engaged with the urban spatial politics involved in the Regent Park revitalization project. Such urban revitalization projects are inspired by Florida's argument that the creative class is deterred by old neighbourhoods with closely knit social structures.<sup>396</sup> Florida's research suggests that

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<sup>392</sup> Luminato, "Press Release: Luminato's *StreetScape* Program Re-imagines Urban Spaces."

<sup>393</sup> Carl Wilson, "Off the Wall," *Toronto Life*, August 2008.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> See: AuthentiCity, "Creative City Planning Framework," 6. Here you will find a vignette with a very similar description of a creative city type, which notes, "[Creative workers] are highly paid members of a key head office team in the bank: core creative talent, the kind Toronto needs to attract and keep."

<sup>396</sup> Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 31.

older communities with strong social ties—communities like Regent Park—“retard innovation” and prosperity, whereas newer communities with weaker social ties are more appealing to the creative class.<sup>397</sup> Inspired by these theories, in 2005, the City of Toronto and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation announced the plan to revitalize Regent Park (then Canada’s largest publically-funded community housing neighbourhood) and to replace the neighbourhood with a “new, mixed tenure neighbourhood”<sup>398</sup> that would be composed of both subsidized housing and high-end condos. This \$1 billion plan involved tearing down the community housing buildings and relocating over a thousand people, predominantly the urban poor, senior citizens, and immigrant families, to make room for the new condo-style buildings and the creative class.

One might argue that the choice to showcase people of the neighbourhood on the dilapidated buildings could have resulted in negative attention to the redevelopment process occurring in Regent Park at the time of the festival. While this may have been the case for some viewers with an in-depth awareness of local issues, a large segment of the festival audience includes tourists and those who identify with the creative class demographic. According to Florida’s theories, this audience would likely see the benefits of redevelopment through this work by acknowledging Toronto’s goals of creating safer neighbourhoods through civic improvement programs. Furthermore, by creating “Art Posters” in collaboration with community members, these works could suggest that members of the community played an active role in culture-led redevelopment strategies. In this regard, the posters represented an image of a social infrastructure that supports citizens through, and engages diverse communities in, urban transformation. Finally, these posters were contextualized by marketing materials that positioned Bergeron’s work as “celebratory art” and the redevelopment process as “urban beautification,” pairing art with a careful use of language to suppress urban spatial politics and serious

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> City of Toronto, “Regent Part Revitalization: Strategy for the Provision of Community Facilities, August 2005,” in *Toronto*, 2010, [http://www.toronto.ca/revitalization/regent\\_park/pdf/cfs\\_strategy\\_sept705\\_1\\_appendix1.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/revitalization/regent_park/pdf/cfs_strategy_sept705_1_appendix1.pdf) (accessed 7 December 2010): 1.

social issues. Using spectacular art to support developer's agendas is a common strategy associated with public art projects, which US artist and activist Judith Baca describes as using art to help the public swallow the "bitter pills" of development.<sup>399</sup>

In reimagining the exterior walls of community housing units as "canvasses," the festival hoped that the community would be transformed into "an inspiring beacon for public creativity, as cutting-edge contemporary art bursts out of the galleries and onto the streets in a celebration of colour and light."<sup>400</sup> By using community-engaged, creative programming to re-imagine the controversial redevelopment of the neighbourhood, this discourse suggests an attempt on the part of the festival to utilize the portraits to neutralize the charged politics of public space through an artistic celebration of community and diversity. In this role, Bergeron's "Art Posters" could possibly serve as celebratory masking that would suppress local issues surrounding urban redevelopment and to brighten up the less glamorous areas of the city for the duration of the festival. In this sense, the spectacular portraits were used to divert attention away from "socio-cultural and economic impacts of urban redevelopment," such as social displacement or inequity in the urban landscape.<sup>401</sup>

However, Bergeron's description of the project strays from Luminato's promotion of his work in several important ways. First, in an interview, Bergeron was quite candid about Luminato's role as a marketing vehicle.<sup>402</sup> Secondly, when referring to the project he does not use the vague and objectifying title "Art Posters," but instead uses a much more reverent identifier, "Regent Park Portraits."<sup>403</sup> Some of his goals were more aligned with those of Luminato than others. For example, he notes that his goal was "to shift the focus of critics and the public from the politics surrounding the redevelopment process to

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<sup>399</sup> Judith F. Baca, "Whose Monument Where? Public Art in a Many-Cultured Society," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy, 131–138 (Seattle: Bay Press, Inc., 1995): 132.

<sup>400</sup> Luminato Festival, "Streetscape at Regent Park 'Living Space.'"

<sup>401</sup> Broudehoux, "Images of Power," 59.

<sup>402</sup> "Regent of the People for Real."

<sup>403</sup> Bergeron, "Regent Park Portraits."

*the actual residents whose lives are in upheaval.*"<sup>404</sup> He also indicates that his work aspired to change the stigmas associated with the area with the hope of drawing local Toronto residents to the neighbourhood. Due to Bergeron's choice of title and his history of producing subversive street art that has blurred the lines between advertising and activism, we may also consider the potential for his work to function as a form of urban contestation that used the festival as a platform from which further discussions of the human impact of urban beautification and gentrification could emerge.

The possibility for contestation within Bergeron's spectacular display of the Regent Park community recalls forms of resistance and subversion that were devised by the SI in response to capitalism's spectacular society. Debord and the members of the SI sought to produce alternatives to "the spectacle of the capitalist way of life"<sup>405</sup> by creating "situations" through a variety of strategies, or rather, by "seiz[ing] [modern culture] in order to negate it."<sup>406</sup> These revolutionary actions included, but were not limited to, strategies for disrupting social space ("the *derive*"), breaking down the barriers between high and low art, and subverting existing cultural forms through appropriation, recontextualization, or pastiche ("*détournement*").<sup>407</sup> The latter has been especially influential for more recent forms of activism and resistance, such as "culture jamming," which takes the form of graffiti, ad busting, performance art, and so forth, and which appropriates or intervenes with media that exists in public space as a way of making a critical social commentary.<sup>408</sup> As scholars J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson note, in recent years some critics have put the efficacy of culture jamming into question, as it has been increasingly coopted to serve capitalist imperatives.<sup>409</sup> Nevertheless, as many artists

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency (1957)," in *Situationist International Online*, trans. Ken Knabb, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html> (accessed 5 May 2015).

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> See: James Trier, "Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51, 1 (September 2007): 69–70; or Trier, "'The Spectacle and *Détournement*,'" 274–278.

<sup>408</sup> Logan Marshall, "Culture Jamming," in *Urban Dictionary*, 2004, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=culture%20jam> (accessed 4 May 2015).

<sup>409</sup> Cronin and Robertson, "Culture Jamming," in *Imagining Resistance*, 193–194.

and scholars have discussed, culture jamming has the potential to be a powerful form of *détournement*.

The potential for Bergeron's work to be a form of *détournement* working within the festival has a lot to do with how he describes his approach to the project and how it responded to and reflected the experiences of people in the community. Bergeron explains that he was thankful to have been assigned a neighbourhood that allowed him to engage with social issues that were important to many Toronto residents at the time, specifically the human impact of culture-led redevelopment plans. Inspired by his street art roots, which seek to create interventionist artworks within the (urban) environment, Bergeron felt that mounting the portraits to the sides of the buildings was integral to the project. He explains,

When I was first given Regent Park as a space in which to work, it immediately struck me that the majority of media, and discussions that I was having with people concerning the revitalization of the community, were all dealing with the physicality of the space and the tearing down of the buildings. What I saw instead was the tearing down of the community. As the buildings were to fall the residents would be displaced and connections between friends, family and neighbours could be lost. As such I thought that there should be a focus on the people, rather than the place. In my mind the easiest way to do this was to photograph the residents and place them upon the architecture they resided in and were about to lose.<sup>410</sup>

Far from promoting diversity and tolerance or embodying ideas of mass approval and consensus, Bergeron used portraits to confront the dismantling of not only the residents' physical space, but also, their sense of community.

As various art and media projects and local news reports suggest, Bergeron was not alone in seeing the loss of the buildings as a loss of community at this time. For example, images that were created out of the graphic design program at Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre captured feelings of devastation and anger associated

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<sup>410</sup> Bergeron, in conversation (2014).

with the destruction of the community and the plans for the new mixed-tenure buildings. In one poster, a Toronto Community Housing building is destroyed by Armageddon-like explosions. In another image, a poster in an alley reads, “Welcome new residents, we finally cleared the neighbourhood.”<sup>411</sup> Countless online videos were produced by Regent Park TV, which covered the trauma and the sense of powerlessness felt by the residents in the midst of relocation through interviews with various tenants.<sup>412</sup> Similarly, a *Toronto Star* article entitled, “A Loss Close to the Heart,” also covered the social impact of the urban revitalization project for many of the previous residents who felt uncertain of their future in the city and isolated in their new communities.<sup>413</sup>

Resisting their official role as “Art Posters,” the “Regent Park Portraits” created the opportunity for many critics to address the politics surrounding the human experience of redevelopment. For some writers, these portraits allowed the community to reclaim the neighbourhood through art<sup>414</sup> or to make a visual statement that exclaimed, “We are here!”<sup>415</sup> One *Globe and Mail* article quoted an 18-year-old resident commenting,

I didn’t know at the time that [the project] was going to be so much about Regent Park. So, I started understanding that it was a lot about the neighbourhood, and that it was being broken down [and demolished]. And so we are trying to leave with a bang.<sup>416</sup>

In this sense, the *Regent Park Portraits* could have served as memorials for the evicted individuals who had made Regent Park their home. Beyond simply providing a celebratory, spectacular vision of community, Bergeron’s posters captured the Regent

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<sup>411</sup> These images were available at: “Graphic Arts,” in *Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre*, 2010, <http://www.catchdaflava.com/content/posters.html> (accessed 3 December 2010).

<sup>412</sup> “Regent Park Revitalization—Phase 1,” in *Regent Park TV*, 2010, <http://www.regentpark.tv/blog?cmd=search&keywords=revitalization&submit=Search> (accessed 7 December 2010).

<sup>413</sup> Sandro Contenta, “A Loss Close to the Heart,” *The Toronto Star*, 19 May 2007.

<sup>414</sup> Guy Dixon, “Reclaiming Regent Park with Monster Art,” *The Globe and Mail*, 31 May 2008.

<sup>415</sup> Wilson, “Off the Wall.”

<sup>416</sup> Dixon, “Reclaiming Regent Park with Monster Art.”

Park community's impotent contestations in the face of the Toronto Community Housing revitalization process.

Bergeron also considered the life of his posters beyond the celebratory framework of the Luminato festival. He commented,

I knew going in that the work was going to have a limited lifespan. When I create work illegally it goes pretty much the same way, so this did not bother me. In fact, I think that it actually enhances the work because it reveals that life is always changing and that nothing is forever and that we, like the crumbling buildings, are fragile. And once the buildings were torn down and the installations along with them, it really drove the idea home that people were being displaced.<sup>417</sup>

One of Bergeron's photographs helps to illustrate this sense of fragility in the face of urban culture-led redevelopment, as the image shows a large yellow backhoe taking a chunk out of a Toronto Community Housing building, simultaneously removing a part of one of portraits [Fig. 1.10]. Despite the portrait's visual protest, it is torn down along with the building and the community that it once represented. This interpretation suggests that through use and destruction, the posters also served as a metaphor for the human experience of culture-led revitalization projects by visualizing resistance, by capturing the powerlessness of the urban poor against development strategies, and by performing the trauma and the loss involved in dismantling communities through redevelopment.

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<sup>417</sup> Bergeron, in conversation (2014).



Figure 1.10: Image of Tyrone being destroyed by a backhoe as part of the Regent Park Revitalization Project (Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario, 2008). Photograph and permission courtesy Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Dan Bergeron's street art posters challenged viewers to consider contrasting points of view, such as those of displaced residents as well as those of the civic leaders, and as such their meaning was shaped by diverse and sometimes conflicting discourses. Bergeron's work contributed to two opposing agendas: first, an economically-driven strategy that used the spectacle to attract Florida's creative class and secondly, a socially engaged reflection on the physical destruction of the old Regent Park housing community. Thus, on one hand the portraits were used by the festival to encourage mass approval of culture-led redevelopment strategies through spectacular representations of community. On the other, they referenced the way in which these strategies also represented a real threat to the residents of Toronto Community Housing in Regent Park. Here we can see how Bergeron's work functioned as both part of, and a contestation of, the civic spectacle emerging out of neoliberal, capitalist, and entrepreneurial events in the city.



## 1.6 Reconsidering Spectacular Portraits of Communities

In response to early criticism of the festival, in 2008, *Torontoist* reporter Jonathan Goldsbie wrote a reluctantly optimistic article about Luminato.<sup>418</sup> Goldsbie mentioned some of the negative responses to Luminato's inaugural season, but asserted that the festival had potential for improvement in its second year. In particular, Goldsbie cited *Toronto's Mille Femmes* and *Streetscape* (which included Bergeron's work), as "pieces that give [...] hope" that Luminato could become, "relevant to a greater segment of the people who live in the city."<sup>419</sup> With very little explanation as to why, one might assume that Goldsbie's faith in the two projects had a lot to do with how the exhibitions promised a direct link to Toronto communities through photographic portraits of *real* Torontonians or how, in the case of the *Regent Park Portraits*, the work drew on subversive street art practices that tend to eschew the kind of marketing that Goldsbie noted had become synonymous with some urban festivals.

Certainly, both Maraval and Bergeron set out to celebrate Toronto communities through *Mille Femmes* and *The Regent Park Portraits*. These projects aspired to acknowledge and honour their subjects by giving them a more prominent visual presence in urban space. In this regard, these projects are linked to the work of many activists and artists who, since the 1980s and the early 1990s, have fought for better representation of largely invisible communities in pop culture, media, and even urban design.<sup>420</sup> However, while these projects celebrated *real communities* on surface of the spectacle, the Luminato script failed to honour the *real challenges* faced by female creative workers or marginalized Toronto housing communities in terms of the existing labour or urban planning issues. For the *Mille Femmes*, Luminato put the spotlight on Toronto's creative women, but did not address gender or labour inequalities in the Toronto workforce or how this project served as a spectacular marketing vehicle. For Dan Bergeron's project, the Luminato script highlighted the celebratory aspect of his project as "Art Posters,"

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<sup>418</sup> Jonathan Goldsbie, "Hey Luminato (Please Like Me for Me)," *Torontoist*, 6 December 2007.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, 107–108.

while overlooking how his work was a profound response to the troubling social impact of urban planning. This is because, like most festivals in an era of urban entrepreneurialism, Luminato's primary role is that of an image-maker and income generator. These photographic projects also reveal that at this time, women and marginalized Toronto residents were not only considered symbolic of all that was good about Toronto (its creativity and diversity) but also that these groups were recruited because they were considered *ameliorative* to all that ailed the festival and even the city itself. When churned through the Luminato marketing department, the people, experiences, and relationships that the portraits represented were spectacularized, commodified, and marketed to the creative class. Thus, through these case studies, we can see how community-engaged photographic portrait projects might present us with subjects who are both the *public face* of Toronto's diversity and the *targets* of neoliberal rationalities that further marginalize these groups.

As performance scholars Levin and Solga remind us, "The creative city actively ignores the fact that ethnically, racially, and socially charged bodies can never 'inhabit' public space in neutral ways [...]." <sup>421</sup> In this chapter, I considered how the participants—or rather their "charged bodies"—were situated in a context of political, economic, cultural and social crisis and controversy. I discussed how *Mille Femmes* and the *Regent Park Portraits* were commissioned by Luminato at a time when civic leaders worldwide started to appropriate culture to create attention-grabbing spectacles that helped to rebrand cities as hot destinations for cultural tourism, to make them appear competitive on the world stage, to mask existing economic crises, to stifle criticism, and to generate much-needed capital. I addressed how Luminato drew on community-engaged photography as a spectacular technology of power to neutralize and redirect criticism. I also noted how these projects helped to promote the concept of "diversity" within the brand identities of not only Luminato and its sponsors, but also the City of Toronto by capturing the visible diversity of Toronto's citizens. In the context of the festival, these projects were far from being mere celebrations of community for celebration's sake.

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<sup>421</sup> Levin and Solga, "Building Utopia," 42.

Here, Toronto communities were invited to participate in spectacular processes that reproduced, rationalized, and legitimated power and that were caught up in urban entrepreneurial agendas. However, as my discussion of Bergeron's *Regent Park Portraits* helps to demonstrate, while the festival has aspired to spectacularize the city's communities, this did not prevent Bergeron from working within the festival framework to produce a complex representation of how communities are impacted by urban entrepreneurialism.

Does this change the way that I feel about at the role of these projects, or more specifically, my participation in *Mille Femmes*? The way that my copy of the *Mille Femmes* catalogue easily flops open to the page with my photograph on it is an embarrassing giveaway that I have had, and will continue to have, a personal connection to this work. As I look through the pages, I can't help but smile at the portraits of the people that I have worked with, many of whom are still my friends today. In many ways, my portrait reminds me of a particularly exciting and demanding time in my career as an arts worker and I would like to hold on to that. At the same time, as this chapter illustrates, my thoughts about *Mille Femmes* have grown more complicated. It is certainly possible to feel like a pawn who was duped into playing out a role that was circumscribed by the entrepreneurial city and that was less about celebrating my work and more about capitalist concerns. And yet, I am glad to have been a part of this complicated history. It is in part because of my participation that I am now able to reflect on these projects from very different perspectives.

As I have shown in this chapter, my views as a participant do not easily coincide with my interpretation of the exhibition as an art historian or an art critic. This disjuncture helps to illustrate why, at times, my discussions of such projects as an art scholar may fundamentally differ from the views of some of the participants or project facilitators. Hopefully, this chapter helps to demonstrate that a critical art historical record of these projects is necessary as it fills in the gap between the intimate, personal reflections of those involved in the project and the short-lived, celebratory, corporate discourse that surrounds the projects. It is my hope that by telling the stories of these community-engaged projects in a manner that is reflective of the greater social, historical, and

economic contexts, we can better reflect on the important roles played by community members who have served as the spectacular faces of (and essentially *for*) Toronto.

## CHAPTER 2

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### 2 TORONTO'S *UNADDRESSED*: PICTURING HOMELESSNESS IN A NEOLIBERAL ERA

In the past couple of decades we have seen a rise in the number and variety of strategies used to expose global audiences to the lives of marginalized individuals and communities. These projects have included research-based Photovoice projects that place cameras in the hands of the subjects, documentary films, socially-conscious theatre performances, participatory art works, subversive street art, and viral videos.<sup>422</sup> As if in direct correlation with neoliberal policies that have resulted in decreased funds for social welfare programs, projects that expose the challenges of people in need to wider audiences have flourished. In many cases, these projects have harnessed the power of recent technologies and the immediacy of online, social media platforms such as Facebook, Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube, and Instagram, to quickly and effectively garner attention. Such community-engaged projects are often intended to elicit emotional responses from viewers with the hopes of instigating social change. For example, many visual projects have sought to challenge persistent stereotypes, to engender cross-cultural communication, or to urge people to donate funds to specific causes through imagery that inspires feelings of admiration, empathy, sympathy, or even outrage on behalf of marginalized subjects. Thus, increasingly, the lives and experiences of a range of vulnerable groups—such as children, the elderly, immigrants, refugees, and people living with mental or physical illness—are shared with global audiences in a way that is mediated through new visual storytelling and/or performative strategies.

Of late, the growing trend of “picturing the margins” has resulted in an increasing number of art projects focused on the lives of a diverse group of people that are often

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<sup>422</sup> See: Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, “Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment,” *Health Education & Behavior* 24, 3 (June 1997): 369–387.

broadly identified as “homeless.”<sup>423</sup> This may be because the number of people in this socioeconomic group has increased tremendously worldwide, particularly after austerity politics and the political-economic restructuring influenced by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations beginning in the 1980s, and the global economic downturn of 2008.<sup>424</sup> Homelessness is a visible symptom of an eroding welfare state that people, especially in urban centres, observe daily when they see individuals sleeping in the streets, panhandlers, or makeshift shelters in alleys, to name a few examples.<sup>425</sup> Despite the fact that people experiencing homelessness represent, in part, the detrimental social and economic impact of neoliberalism and a market-led economy, neoliberal discourse and policies have blamed, shamed, and even criminalized struggling individuals for their poverty and homelessness. In Canada, for example, the government, the press, and the criminal justice system have silenced, discredited, or suppressed homeless individuals, as well as activists or anti-poverty groups, such as Toronto street nurse Cathy Crowe or the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP).<sup>426</sup> Furthermore, as environmental studies scholar Roger Keil helps to illustrate, through new technologies of power such as urban revanchism, lifting development controls, evictions, and increased incarceration, Ontario’s civic leaders have sought to make people experiencing poverty and homelessness less visible in public space.<sup>427</sup> As a result of similar developments taking

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<sup>423</sup> This term is both complex and fraught. I will elaborate on the issues surrounding the terms, “the homeless” and “homelessness,” in the next section.

<sup>424</sup> I am focusing on the rise of homelessness and poverty as a result of neoliberalism in developed, Western countries, and even more specifically at the rise of this social issue in Toronto. See: Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada,” *Antipode* (2002): 588.

<sup>425</sup> For example, Boudreau et al. write that: “During both the 1990s recession and the subsequent recovery, homelessness was a constant reminder of the highly uneven distribution of wealth in neoliberal Toronto.” See: Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil and Douglas Young, *Changing Toronto: Governing Urban Neoliberalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 26.

<sup>426</sup> See, for example: Cathy Crowe, *Dying for a Home: Homeless Activists Speak Out* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007): 11. Crowe writes: “Although I had the experience of being free to speak out, I also faced, more times than I can remember, the experience of being silenced.” Here she sites some specific examples of efforts to silence her advocacy. See also: OCAP, “A Short History of OCAP,” *Ontario Coalition Against Poverty*, n.d., <http://ocap.ca/files/history%20of%20ocap.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2015); and Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 23–25.

<sup>427</sup> Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 591.

place worldwide, many arts-based projects have emerged to advocate for people who are experiencing homelessness and to expose not only *the people* who find themselves without homes, but also the *causes* of their poverty. These projects drive home the message that personal or moral shortcomings are not the only factors that can lead to homelessness, but that there are deeper, systemic injustices that have fueled, and continue to fuel, this complex social issue. Art scholar Grant Kester has explained that socially engaged arts projects such as this represent a sense of political renewal and resistance that has emerged out of neoliberalism.<sup>428</sup> As a result of the critical debates about homelessness and social welfare in a global neoliberal era, visual representations of homeless subjects are especially charged sites of contestation.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, Toronto has experienced troubling rates of homelessness due to a number of factors, particularly the lack of affordable housing, deficient social housing and shelter systems, and aggressive laws that target homeless people causing them to accrue insurmountable fines.<sup>429</sup> These developments were associated with Ontario Premier Mike Harris' "Common-Sense Revolution," which, as scholar Keil explains, "created a political environment reminiscent of Thatcherism and Reaganism."<sup>430</sup> As such, there have been many efforts to expose the social impact of poverty and homelessness in the city, particularly through art and activism. This chapter

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<sup>428</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Duke University Press, 2011): 6. Kester is speaking about the rise of socially engaged projects more broadly. He does not focus specifically on projects that deal with issues of homelessness and poverty.

<sup>429</sup> For a recent fact sheet on poverty, housing and homelessness in Toronto, see: City of Toronto, "Poverty, Housing and Homelessness in Toronto," in *Toronto*, March 2013, <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Affordable%20Housing%20Office/Shared%20Content/pdf/poverty-factsheet.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2015). For more substantial reports on the growing issues of homelessness and poverty in Toronto, see: Michael Shapcott (principal author), *Framework for the Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto* (Toronto: Creative Commons, 2006): 2; or City of Toronto, "The Toronto Report Card on Housing & Homelessness 2003," in *The Homeless Hub*, 2003, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/reportcard2003.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2015). For reports on the impact of the increased criminalization of the homeless in Toronto, see: Bill O'Grady, Stephen Gaetz, and Kristy Buccieri, "Can I See Your ID: The Policing of Youth Homelessness in Toronto," in *The Homeless Hub Report Series, Report #5* (Toronto: Justice for Children and Youth, and Homeless Hub Press, 2011); or "City's Homeless Face Uphill Battle," *Toronto Metro*, 10 March 2015, 8.

<sup>430</sup> Keil, "'Common-Sense' Neoliberalism," 588.

examines a community-engaged, photo-based urban art project that was part of *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter* (2008–2009), a street art exhibition about homelessness in Toronto that was presented at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). I focus on local photographer and street artist Dan Bergeron’s project, *The Unaddressed* (2009), for which Bergeron created black-and-white portrait posters of people who were, or who had been, homeless. These posters were pasted up at various sites in the ROM and around Toronto. I discuss how Bergeron’s photo-based street art portraits enabled the participants to engage with ideas about neoliberal subjectivity and to contest prevalent assumptions about, and representations of, homelessness and poverty. I then discuss how Bergeron’s posters inspired volatile and revelatory reactions from some anonymous viewers. Bergeron’s photo-documentation of his posters months after they were placed in public space reveal several troubling interventions. Through these examples we can see how a relentless neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurialism and individualism manifests at street level in the spaces that compose our everyday life. As this chapter will demonstrate, Bergeron’s project offers a unique case study to consider the politics of producing and viewing images of homelessness in a neoliberal era and to explore the role of affect and feeling in the production of photographic meaning.

## 2.1 Homelessness in a Neoliberal Era

Any discussion about projects that aspire to represent homeless communities must first acknowledge that the terms “homeless” and “homelessness” are fraught. Researchers have argued that the term “homelessness” is an “odd-job word,” and that it has been appropriated by those in power to “impose order on a hodge-podge of social dislocation, extreme poverty, seasonal or itinerant work, and unconventional ways of life.”<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> J. David Hulchanski, Philippa Campsie, Shirley B. Y. Chau, Stephen W. Hwang, and Emily Paradis, “Introduction: Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” in *Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada* (e-book), 1–16 (Toronto: Cities Centre, University of Toronto, 2009): 1. This quote is by Hopper and Baumohl (1996), who are referenced here. For the original source, see: K. Hopper and J. Baumohl, “Redefining the Cursed Word: A Historical Interpretation of American Homelessness,” in *Homelessness in America*, ed. J. Baumohl, 3–14 (Pheonix: Oryx Press, 1996): 3.



Recently in Canada, there has been much research on the etymology of the word “homelessness,” and how it has been used in policy, the press, and public discourse. There have also been many efforts to make this research accessible via websites such as *The Homeless Hub* (homelesshub.ca), academic conferences such as *Growing Home* (Calgary, 2009), electronic books such as *Finding Home* (2009), or op-editorial pieces for newspapers such as the *Toronto Star*.<sup>432</sup> These scholarly endeavors reveal a sense of urgency on the part of social work researchers who seek to address the detrimental impact of the shift away from post-war policies that were dedicated to *rehousing* people, toward market-led policies in the 1980s, which have resulted in the *dehousing* of poor and marginalized communities.<sup>433</sup> By making this work widely available, these scholars want to improve our understanding of homelessness and to demand better housing and social welfare policies in Canada.<sup>434</sup> This research helps to identify the social context out of which the homeless community as we know it has emerged, and to isolate the ideologies and economic policies against which visual practices such as *The Unaddressed* are pitted.

Prior to the 1980s, the Canadian government invested in rehousing people by building social housing units and subsidizing some private rental housing.<sup>435</sup> In addition, the government offered a variety of social welfare funds to people who were ill, unemployed or impoverished, and/or elderly, by providing universal health insurance, unemployment insurance, and old age pensions.<sup>436</sup> However, starting in the 1980s, the responsibility for these programs was increasingly downloaded from the federal government to provincial or civic governments, resulting in slashed or cut social

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<sup>432</sup> See: “National Homelessness Conference, Growing Home: Housing and Homelessness in Canada,” in *Povnet: Building an Online Anti-Poverty Community*, 2009, <http://www.povnet.org/node/4641> (accessed 15 March 2015); Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 1–16; or David Hulchanski, “The Invention of Homelessness,” *The Toronto Star*, 18 September 2010.

<sup>433</sup> For a discussion of “rehousing and dehousing,” see: Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 3–4.

<sup>434</sup> For example, the *Finding Home* researchers state, “[We] hope that by taking apart the word ‘homelessness’ and revealing the many social issues it conceals we can begin to develop appropriate responses.” See: Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 15.

<sup>435</sup> Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 3.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

spending budgets.<sup>437</sup> Governments started to transfer the bulk of the responsibility for social welfare onto individuals themselves, while at the same time failing to address pre-existing systemic inequities, as well as creating a harsh environment of economic competition by moving toward a deregulated, market-led economy.<sup>438</sup> These actions were the result of a major paradigm shift in politics, from Keynesian economics, which upheld social spending, toward neoliberalism, which reduced governmental support and privatized fields that were once partially supported through public funds, such as housing.<sup>439</sup>

Since the mid-1980s, in developed countries such as Britain, the United States, and Canada, social welfare has largely taken the form of “trickle-down” economics.<sup>440</sup> This hotly contested economic and political policy has involved creating tax breaks for, and reconfiguring legislation in favour of, big businesses and the wealthy with the belief that in time this will generate capital growth that will ultimately filter down through the social strata, resulting in a broad-reaching increase in society’s standard of living.<sup>441</sup> In the meantime, it has been thought that that ideal “neoliberal citizens” will thrive against all odds, for they are envisioned as: active, prudent, entrepreneurial, self-reliant, and competitive.<sup>442</sup> However, as many reports on poverty and homelessness help to indicate,

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 3–5.

<sup>438</sup> These issues have been addressed by a host of scholars from diverse fields. See, for example: Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, “Competing Philosophies: Neoliberalism and the Challenges of Everyday Life,” in *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, eds. Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 3–21; or Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 1–15.

<sup>439</sup> Neoliberalism has been attributed to the following administrations: Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Ronald Reagan in the United States, and Brian Mulroney in Canada. See: Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 12.

<sup>440</sup> Braedley and Luxton, “Competing Philosophies,” 18–19. Here they explain that since the 1980s, “trickle-down economics” has also been taken up in countries worldwide.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> For further discussion about neoliberal citizenship, see: Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund, “The Responsibilities of the Poor: Performing Neoliberal Citizenship within the Bureaucratic Field,” *Social Service Review* 87, 2 (June 2013): 303–305; 313. Scholars that have addressed aspects of neoliberal subjectivity, as noted by Woolford and Nelund, include: Suzan Ilcan, Marcia Oliver, and Daniel O’Connor; John Clarke, Martin Whiteford, Jacqueline Kennelly and Kristina Llewellyn, Nikolas Rose, Aihwa Ong, Verónica Schild, Graham Burchell, and Alexandra Dobrowolsky.

economic windfalls have not been shared across the population, causing some critics to accuse trickle-down economics of being the “greatest broken promise of our time.”<sup>443</sup> For example, economist Ha Joon Chang, a vehement critic of free-market capitalism, has argued that trickle-down economics, or rather, “excessive tax cuts for the rich,” are merely a form of upward redistribution of capital that fails to benefit the population as a whole.<sup>444</sup>

In Ontario, neoliberal strategies akin to those developed by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations were embraced by Premier Mike Harris’s neoconservative government and its “Common Sense Revolution” (1995–2002), during which time the province reduced taxes for the wealthy, reduced the role of government, and generated policies and discourse that attacked, rather than supported, the poor.<sup>445</sup> Examples of the latter include imposing welfare cuts, implementing the Safe Streets Act (1999), which aspired to reduce the number of squeegee kids and panhandlers on city streets, and cutting all funding for public housing programs at the provincial level.<sup>446</sup> This is not to mention the issue of labour exploitation under neoliberalism, which has kept the wages of the working poor low and has limited worker benefits, despite an ever-increasing cost of living.<sup>447</sup> As Keil illustrates, a number of technologies of power have emerged out of urban neoliberalism in Ontario, which have resulted in labour inequities, including: cuts to workforce programs, lowered labour standards, and the introductions of new bills that

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<sup>443</sup> Alex Andreou, “Trickle-Down Economics is the Greatest Broken Promise of Our Lifetime,” *The Guardian*, 20 January 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/20/trickle-down-economics-broken-promise-richest-85> (accessed 12 February 2015). For the work of other critics, see also: Ha Joon Chang, “Thing 13: Making People Richer Doesn’t Make the Rest of Us Richer,” in *23 Things They Don’t Tell You About Capitalism* (Penguin Books, Ltd., 2010): 137–147 (See also Things 3, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, and 21); or David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London & New York: Verso: 2012): 29.

<sup>444</sup> Chang, “Thing 13,” in *23 Things*, 137–147.

<sup>445</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*. 58–59. See also: Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 588–589.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Braedley and Luxton discuss issues regarding “Class and the Wage Relation,” in: Braedley and Luxton, “Competing Philosophies,” 18–20. Hulchanski addressed issues of wage suppression and part time jobs with no benefits in the context of the competitive economy, in: Hulchanski, “The invention of poverty,” and Hulchanski et al., *Homelessness: What’s in a Word?* 5.

sought to increase work hours.<sup>448</sup> It is in this context of reduced social welfare spending, upward redistribution, low wages and few benefits, and in the face of a deregulated and increasingly privatized housing market that more and more people have struggled with housing insecurity, if not homelessness. Thus, the issue of homelessness is on the rise within a number of demographic groups, including, but not limited to: single men, aboriginal people, women and families, immigrants and refugees, people experiencing mental illness or suffering from addiction, and the working class.<sup>449</sup>

As scholars Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton have argued, “Some individuals may be able to live out the neoliberal ideal. The majority of the world cannot.”<sup>450</sup> Neoliberal developments have resulted in a widening gap between “the rich”—a small but powerful group—and “the poor”—an ever-growing, yet increasingly marginalized group with diverse needs. More recently, these economic groups have been called, “the 1%” and “the 99%,” respectively. These titles emerged out of the global Occupy Wall Street movement, which kicked off in Manhattan in 2011 in an attempt to create a coalition out of various groups experiencing crisis to protest growing inequality worldwide (particularly *income* inequality) and to decry the abuses of capitalist power.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism,” 589. This was re-printed in Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 62–63.

<sup>449</sup> For a discussion about how economic inequity under neoliberalism targets people by gender, class and race, see: Braedley and Luxton, “Competing Philosophies,” 12–20. For a discussion of the different social and ethnic groups impacted by homelessness, many of whom already face systemic inequities, see: Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 7. For a discussion of different social and ethnic groups that have faced housing instability despite a recent period of economic growth in the Toronto, see: City of Toronto, “The Toronto Report Card on Housing & Homelessness 2003,” 4–5.

<sup>450</sup> Luxton and Braedley, “Competing Philosophies,” 19.

<sup>451</sup> Occupy Wall Street is notoriously difficult to define, due in part to the wide range of interest groups it engages. There are also a diverse range of timelines for this protest, but it is generally understood to have emerged at the prompting of the Canadian group Adbusters, inspired by the anti-austerity protests in Egypt and Spain. For timelines, see: “Occupy Wall Street,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 January 2012, <http://timelines.latimes.com/occupy-wall-street-movement/> (accessed 15 March 2015); or David Weigel and Lauren Hepler, “Everything You Need to Know about Occupy Wall Street,” *Slate*, 18 November 2011, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/features/2011/occupy\\_wall\\_street/what\\_is\\_ows\\_a\\_complete\\_timeline.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/features/2011/occupy_wall_street/what_is_ows_a_complete_timeline.html) (accessed 15 March 2015). For a description of how and why this protest operates in the US, see: Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 161–164.

The widespread usage of terms such as the “1%” and the “99%” certainly post-date *The Unaddressed*. However, the issues of economic inequality and the spirit of activism that has grown in response to these issues were certainly prevalent in Toronto prior to, and at the time of, Bergeron’s project, particularly through the work of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). OCAP is an anti-poverty organization that emerged out of the welfare reform in the late 1980s, which campaigns against “regressive government policies” and uses direct-action casework and mobilization strategies that merge legal work with radical disruptive actions—marches, squats, blockades, poster campaigns, protests, and so forth—to fight for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.<sup>452</sup> Founded in the 1990s, this Toronto-based group is credited with addressing how local forms of oppression against the poor are the result of deep systemic issues, urban neoliberalism, globalization, and capitalism.<sup>453</sup> In the late 1990s and early 2000s, OCAP gained momentum and visibility as it mobilized people for such protests as: Days of Action (1995), “The Safe Park” (1999), and the “Queen’s Park Riot” (2000) against the policies and practices of Harris’ “Common Sense Revolution.” These controversial protests resulted in broad media attention that focused largely on OCAP’s radical tactics and the violent clashes between OCAP and law enforcement.<sup>454</sup> In the aftermath of these high profile protests, OCAP continued to campaign against the abuses experienced by people experiencing homelessness and poverty.<sup>455</sup> Thus, prior to *The Unaddressed*, Toronto was a hotbed for anti-poverty activism as OCAP fought, sometimes against brutal suppression, for the needs and rights of a growing population of poor and homeless citizens.

The growing gap between the rich and the poor has led to a larger population of unhoused individuals, who have become increasingly visible on the streets over the past

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<sup>452</sup> OCAP, *Ontario Coalition Against Poverty*, 2015, [www.ocap.ca](http://www.ocap.ca) (accessed 24 June 2015). See also: OCAP, “A Short History of OCAP”; and Jonathan Greene, “‘Whatever it Takes’: Poor People’s Organizing, OCAP, and Social Struggle,” *Studies in Political Economy* 75 (Spring 2005): 7–11.

<sup>453</sup> Green, “‘Whatever it Takes,’” 7; 17.

<sup>454</sup> Katherine Phipps and Katryna Szagala, “Social Movements and the News Media,” *The McMaster Journal of Communication* 4, 1 (2007): 44–48.

<sup>455</sup> Green, “‘Whatever it Takes,’” 16–17.

several decades, and to whom the response has not always been empathetic. For example, to address the issue of homelessness in the city, there have been many actions on the part of the government and law enforcement to try to manage, criminalize, or further penalize the growing homeless population. Scholar Loïc Wacquant's book entitled, *Punishing the Poor*, helps to bring some of these issues to the forefront by outlining how in correlation with the rise of neoliberalism, there have been more "punitive and proactive law-enforcement policies against those that are trapped in the margins."<sup>456</sup> This is echoed in a 2011 report on the policing of homeless youth in Canada, which defines this form of criminalization as "the use of laws and practices to restrict the movements of people who are homeless, often with the outcome being fines and/or incarceration."<sup>457</sup> This report explains that criminalization is achieved via strategies, such as: the emergence of new laws that target the activities of homeless people, disproportionate or discriminatory law enforcement, "hostile urban architecture"<sup>458</sup> that prohibits people from resting or sleeping in public spaces, increased incarceration of homeless people, and the release of homeless

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<sup>456</sup> Loïc Wacquant, "Social Insecurity and the Punitive Upsurge," in *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, 1–40 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009): 1.

<sup>457</sup> O'Grady et al., "Can I See Your ID," 7.

<sup>458</sup> "Hostile architecture," is another way that some cities have created an atmosphere that is unsympathetic toward the homeless. This form of architectural design emerged in the 1990s as a strategy to better manage public space. For example, recently there has been considerable debate about the use of "homeless spikes," which are small metal spikes that are placed on urban infrastructure that might otherwise serve as a place to sit or sleep, such as low, barrier walls, or parts of the sidewalk. Another form of hostile architecture are benches that slope or that have bars that protrude from the seat-area so as to make resting impossible or very uncomfortable. Urban studies scholar Rowland Atkinson describes these strategies as "a kind of assault on the poor, [or] a way of trying to displace their distress." This form of architecture adds to the existing systemic inequities and insufficiencies by disallowing people experiencing homelessness the most basic form of comfort, which is a place to sit. Scholar Nicholas Lezard links the rise of hostile architecture to the rise of neoliberalism. Sources: Nicholas Lezard, "24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* by Jonathan Crary—Review," *The Guardian*, 22 July 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/22/24-7-late-capitalism-ends-sleep-jonathan-crary-review> (accessed 3 March 2015); Iain Borden, architectural historian, quoted in: Ben Quinn, "Anti-Homeless spikes are part of a wider phenomenon of 'hostile architecture,'" *The Guardian*, 13 June 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/13/anti-homeless-spikes-hostile-architecture> (accessed 3 March 2015). For examples of hostile architecture see: Ben Quinn, "Anti-Homeless spikes are part of a wider phenomenon of 'hostile architecture,'" *The Guardian*, 13 June 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/13/anti-homeless-spikes-hostile-architecture> (accessed 3 March 2015).

prisoners back onto the streets with no support system in place.<sup>459</sup> In Canada, punitive actions against people experiencing homelessness include: tickets issued in accordance with the Ontario Safe Streets Act (1999), which banned panhandling and squeegeeing, as well as tickets issued for loitering, trespassing, urban camping, and other such behaviors.<sup>460</sup> The injustice and absurdity of over-ticketing impoverished and unhoused people is a situation that has been addressed by activist groups such as OCAP, as well as by many scholars. In 2003, for example, one of OCAP's many anti-poverty efforts included speaking out against police misconduct and brutality, as well as the increased ticketing of, illegal searching of, and disproportionate law enforcement against, Toronto's homeless citizens. To address these issues, OCAP hosted a press conference that highlighted the experiences of a number of residents, including: a filmmaker that was threatened by police for filming outside of 51 division and a woman who was given a hefty ticket for butting out her cigarette on the sidewalk.<sup>461</sup> Through efforts such as this, OCAP sought to shine the light on how increased law-enforcement was unjustly displacing marginalized people from downtown neighbourhoods. A more recent article in the *Metro* referenced Canadian Observatory on Homelessness research, which noted that over \$4 million in tickets were issued to unhoused people in Toronto from 2000 to 2010, with about 99% of tickets left unpaid.<sup>462</sup> These developments have many scholars questioning whether the firm hand of the law is an appropriate or effective solution to the issue of homelessness.<sup>463</sup> Furthermore, arguably, the criminalization of people who experience poverty and homelessness contributes to a growing sense of fear and

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<sup>459</sup> O'Grady et al., "Can I See Your ID," 7.

<sup>460</sup> The Ontario Safe Streets Act was introduced, "in response to the growing visibility of homelessness in Toronto and other major cities in the 1990s." Source: O'Grady et al., "Can I See Your ID," 8–14.

<sup>461</sup> OCAP, "51 Division Assaults Community Worker, Seizes Footage from Filmmaker and Steps up Harassment of Homeless People," in *Ontario Coalition Against Poverty*, 3 October 2003, <http://ocap.ca/node/334> (accessed 24 June 2015).

<sup>462</sup> "City's Homeless Face Uphill Battle," *Metro*, 10 March 2015, 8. More articles about the criminalization of the homeless can be located at the following website: "Criminalization of Homelessness," in *The Homeless Hub*, 2015, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/legal-justice-issues/criminalization-homelessness> (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

animosity that is felt toward disenfranchised people in the city.<sup>464</sup> On top of this, as civil rights lawyer Jackie Esmonde argues, anti-poverty activism, such as the work of OCAP, has been increasingly criminalized in Canada, through: “bail conditions prohibiting public protest, pre-trial detention orders of its leaders, and prohibitions on association with OCAP.”<sup>465</sup>

Alongside the massive economic, political, and legislative changes of the past few decades, social work scholar David Hulchanski has noted that our understanding of the word “homeless” and our use of the term “homelessness” have also shifted.<sup>466</sup> “Homeless” was once infrequently used in political discourse and the press to describe people (predominantly men) living in abject conditions without the social or emotional comforts that a “home” may provide.<sup>467</sup> Hulchanski’s research reveals that after the 1980s, the word “homelessness” became a commonly used umbrella term to identify a broader social problem: the growing group of people losing their homes.<sup>468</sup> It is now a term that envelops a host of issues—mental illness, abuse, addiction, poverty, crime, inequality, and so on—that contribute to, in one way or another, a diverse range of people living on the streets. The word “homelessness” today also encapsulates various types of precarious living conditions. It refers to people who are unsheltered, emergency

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<sup>464</sup> I mention this not to negate the fact that there is violence or criminal activity taking place within the homeless community, but rather to point out that there are reports of disproportionate law enforcement against the homeless, which have helped to create stereotypes and to instill fear in citizens. This sense of fear has been often propagated by the press. For example, in one article of the late 1980s, journalist Rocco Rossi confessed that upon encountering a person living on the streets his first reaction is “embarrassment mixed with guilt and confusion.” He adds, “If the person is in really bad shape I sometimes feel revulsion, and, if it’s dark, fear” (See: Rocco Rossi, “Give Your Spare Change to Hostels, Not Beggars, Winos,” *The Toronto Star*, 3 March 1987, F3). I also acknowledge that some people’s views about homelessness may not only be influenced by the judicial system and negative press, but also by their own personal experiences with individuals experiencing homelessness, which may have caused them to feel fearful or uncomfortable.

<sup>465</sup> Jackie Esmonde, “Bail, Global Justice, and the Limits of Dissent,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 41, 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2003): 323.

<sup>466</sup> Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 1–6.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.



sheltered, “provisionally accommodated,” or experiencing housing insecurity.<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, many researchers note that “pathways into and out of homelessness are neither linear nor uniform.”<sup>470</sup> According to Hulchanski, because the term “homelessness” is rather abstract, it allows our imaginations to run rampant as we grapple with what homelessness actually is and what causes it.<sup>471</sup> Despite its complexities, the term “homelessness” is widely used in policy, public discourse, and the press and it has influenced our understanding of, and determined how we address, poverty and at risk communities.<sup>472</sup>

In a neoliberal era that seeks to conceal the very economic inequalities that it aggravates, strategic language has also been used to stigmatize and attack “the homeless” and anti-poverty groups. For example, street nurse Cathy Crowe explains that the labelling of people experiencing homelessness has worsened over time, and cites a number of derogatory terms that she has heard including, “chronics (or the chronically homeless),” “street people,” “winos,” “addicts,” and “squirrel eaters.”<sup>473</sup> In the 1980s, the *Toronto Star* ran several articles about homelessness with headlines about “bag ladies,” “derelicts,” “beggars,” and “vagrants.”<sup>474</sup> In the 1990s, the Toronto press described the proliferation of street youth, and in particular squeegee kids, as a “plague” or

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<sup>469</sup> Stephen Gaetz, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Richter, & Tanya Gulliver, “The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013,” in *The Homeless Hub* (Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2013): 12–13. This 48 page report is accessible on the *Homeless Hub* website at: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC2103.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2015).

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>471</sup> Hulchanski, “The Invention of Homelessness.”

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> A “street nurse” is a trained nurse who takes care to the streets. For Crowe’s description of street nursing, and the derogatory terms for the homeless see: Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 2–31; 29 (for the terminology).

<sup>474</sup> See, for example: Kathy English, “Leave Us Alone, City Hall Derelicts Say Alderman Who Wants Them Out ‘Doesn’t Understand,’” *The Toronto Star*, 14 September 1986; Rocco Rossi, “Give Your Spare Change to Hostels, Not Beggars, Winos,” F3; Janice Turner, “Beds for Vagrants Going Unoccupied Politicians Say,” *The Toronto Star*, 20 December 1985, A6; or Jim Wilkes, “Bag Lady, 64, Dies in Parking Garage,” *The Toronto Star*, 29 January 1986: A8. Note: Despite the use of words like “bag lady” and “beggars,” these articles are not hostile toward the homeless, but rather demonstrate efforts to grapple with misunderstandings, misinformation, and fear about homelessness as a social issue. I reference these articles to note the normalization of negative language used to depict people experiencing homelessness.

“infestation.”<sup>475</sup> This media discourse, which drew on brazen quotes from local politicians, also described homeless individuals as dangerous, menacing, “horrible,” and “disgusting.”<sup>476</sup> Such discourse contributed to an overwhelming sense of panic about street safety due to homelessness in Toronto.<sup>477</sup> In addition, scholar Jonathan Greene notes instances where the Harris government attacked welfare recipients, and in particular single mothers, as “lazy,” “scroungers,” and “cheaters.”<sup>478</sup> This discourse implied that people struggling due to lack of shelter had personal or moral shortcomings that led to their destitution. Furthermore, as Boudreau et al. discuss, OCAP and its founder and leader, John Clarke, were harshly criticized in the press.<sup>479</sup> For example, in a 1999 cover story for the *Toronto Free Press*, Clarke was described as a “poverty pimp.”<sup>480</sup> This story, written by Editor Judi McLeod, describes OCAP’s August 1999 occupation of Allan Gardens (The Safe Park) with hostility and skepticism. Describing the food line provided by OCAP, McLeod chided, “No one looks all that hungry,” adding that as she and her colleagues walked around the protest, they saw “few people who could be seriously taken as homeless.”<sup>481</sup> Rather than acknowledging OCAP’s goal to create a safe space for the homeless or to rally against poverty,<sup>482</sup> McLeod’s article suggests that the efforts equated to a kind of Woodstock, or rather, a “Bumstock,” in the park.<sup>483</sup> The doubt that McLeod cast upon Clarke and OCAP’s mission offers one example of how negative press served to denigrate the work of anti-poverty activists at this time, rather than to focus on the

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<sup>475</sup> Patrick Parnaby, “Disaster Through Dirty Windshields: Law, Order, and Toronto’s Squeegee Kids,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 28, 3 (Summer 2003): 281–307. This is cited in: O’Grady et al., “Can I See Your ID,” 24.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> O’Grady et al., “Can I See Your ID,” 24.

<sup>478</sup> Greene, ““Whatever it Takes,”” 9. See also: Jean Swanson, *Poor Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001).

<sup>479</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 25.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid. See: Judi McLeod, “Portrait of a Poverty Pimp,” *Toronto Free Press*, 17 August 1999: 5.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>482</sup> Greene, ““Whatever it Takes,”” 16.

<sup>483</sup> McLeod, “Portrait of a Poverty Pimp,” 5.

larger systemic issues that such activism sought to address. Similarly, some news articles incited fear in readers as they described OCAP protestors as violent and dangerous.<sup>484</sup>

Hulchanski explains that some people may feel that it is “simpler and cheaper” to find ways to condemn those who find themselves without a home for their own economic failures rather than to foot the bill to [re]establish support systems focused on the rehabilitation and rehousing of individuals in need.<sup>485</sup> More and more, people who are marginalized or disadvantaged have been repositioned in neoliberal discourse as the “active agents of their own destinies,” which means that they are also the “authors of their own misfortune,” thereby responsible for their successes and failures.<sup>486</sup> This has created a social context in which some people believe that “if people became unhoused, it was *their fault*.”<sup>487</sup> In contrast, Hulchanski argues that the term “homelessness” has been used in a way that has detracted focus from many of the everyday “social dynamics” that have led to dehousing.<sup>488</sup> In a 2010 op-ed piece for the *Toronto Star*, he asserted that if anything, homelessness is a “catch-all term for a host of serious *social and economic policy failures*.”<sup>489</sup> More recently, the Homeless Hub research group has outlined the factors that contribute to homelessness, including: structural factors (such as the lack of affordable housing or employment opportunities), systems failures (such as the lack of proper support systems for children, immigrants, or people who are released from hospitals or prisons with nowhere to go) *and* individual and relational factors (such as domestic violence, mental health, or addiction).<sup>490</sup> Thus, visual projects that advocate for people experiencing homelessness face the daunting task of confronting deeply engrained

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<sup>484</sup> For a much more in-depth analysis of the OCAP protest coverage, see: Phipps and Szagala, “Social Movements and the News Media,” 38–51. See also: Ian Urquhart, “Protesters Were Clearly Looking for Trouble,” *The Toronto Star*, 16 June 2000: A1.

<sup>485</sup> Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 6–7.

<sup>486</sup> Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, 37–64 (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996): 59.

<sup>487</sup> My emphasis. Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word?” 12.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>489</sup> Hulchanski, “The Invention of Homelessness.”

<sup>490</sup> Stephen Gaetz et al., “The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013,” 13.

stereotypes about homelessness and must depict the underlying complexities of homelessness.

## 2.2 Advocacy in Urban Design, Art, and Visual Culture

Despite what might appear to be a many-pronged attack against people experiencing poverty and various forms of housing instability, several advocacy projects emerged out of this context of misinformation about homelessness. For example, due to the negative or misleading language that has been used to depict people struggling with homelessness, many scholars and activists urge us to use language that they feel is more representative of the economic and political circumstances surrounding this issue, such as the terms: “dehoused people,” “unhoused people,” “economic refugees,” or “displaced persons.”<sup>491</sup> Furthermore, although at times the press has propagated negative discourse about homelessness and anti-poverty activism, journalists have also covered homelessness as a serious social issue. For example, on many occasions the press has given a platform for advocacy projects, and some newspapers have run letters to the editor that contest terminology used for, or prevalent myths about, homelessness.<sup>492</sup> As media scholars Katherine Phipps and Katryna Szagala argue, even some press coverage of the OCAP protests offered a “more sympathetic framing” or perhaps more balanced view of how the violent events unfolded between the activists and the police.<sup>493</sup> Representations of homelessness in public discourse are complex and contradictory to say the least, and this plays out in urban design, art, and visual culture as well.

This section helps to situate my case study within a greater history of visual practices that have sought to represent people experiencing homelessness and poverty. For over a century, visual strategies, and especially photography, have been used to capture the social impact of poverty and homelessness and, in some cases, to instigate

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<sup>491</sup> See: Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 29; or Hulchanski et al., “Homelessness: What’s in a Word,” 1–16.

<sup>492</sup> See, for example: Cathy Dunphy, “Don’t Call Us Bag Ladies,” *The Toronto Star*, 20 February 1986; John E. Richthammer, “Why Must Poor Women Be Termed, ‘Bag Ladies?’” *The Toronto Star*, 26 February 1986, A14.

<sup>493</sup> Phipps and Szagala, “Social Movements and the News Media,” 45.

social change. This history includes the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century social reform photographs of Lewis Hine, Jacob Riis, and Arthur Goss; photographs of 1930s Paris by André Kertész and Germaine Krull;<sup>494</sup> and the widely circulated 1930s social documentary photographs for the US Farm Security Agency by photographers such as Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. However, here I narrow my field of focus as I discuss some of the representational practices that have emerged out of the context of neoliberalism, including not only photography, but also activism, art, and urban design projects.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of many community-engaged art and photography projects about homelessness, including the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko, Martha Rosler, and Jim Hubbard. Wodiczko's projects such as *The Homeless Projection* proposal (1986), the *Homeless Vehicle Project* (1987–1989), and more recently the *Homeless Projections* (Montreal, 2014) have sought to expose the social impact of urban redevelopment and, especially in the latter, to create “an intimate portrait of homelessness” in urban space.<sup>495</sup> Wodiczko is especially known for his site-specific projects that involve the strategy of projecting images onto monuments and buildings, such as the portraits of, or the stereotypical attributes of, unhoused people. In many cases, Wodiczko's projections are intended to provide viewers with fleeting “counter-image[s] of redevelopment,”<sup>496</sup> specifically those that betray the positive neoliberal spin on urban development. Rosler is also well-known for her subversive works such as her conceptual piece entitled, *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974–1975), which confronted the “impoverishment of representational strategies” used to capture the realities of poverty and addiction, as well as her essay, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts” (1981), which criticized photographers who, she argues, have built successful careers on

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<sup>494</sup> Sarah Kennel, “Photography and Interwar Paris,” *History of Photography* 29, 4 (Autumn 2005): 291. In this article Kennel interprets a sense of fascination with the issues of homelessness and exile in their photographs.

<sup>495</sup> “Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Projection: Place des Arts, 2014*,” in *Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*, 2014, <http://www.macm.org/en/expositions/krzysztof-wodiczko/> (accessed 10 March 2015).

<sup>496</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996): 32. I add, “fleeting,” as the projections can only be presented at nightfall.

the backs of the poor.<sup>497</sup> Like Wodiczko, Rosler also expressed concern for the social impact of eviction due to gentrification in her exhibition, “If You Lived Here....” (Dia Art Foundation, New York, 1989).<sup>498</sup> Rosler’s work has challenged our assumptions about representations of poverty and has forced us to critically consider the intentions of documentary photographers, as well as the “politics of photographic truth” in their images.<sup>499</sup> Also concerned with the ethics of representation, Washington-based photographer Jim Hubbard founded the empowerment project, “Shooting Back,” in 1989, through which he helped children impacted by homelessness to take photographs of their own realities.<sup>500</sup> Hubbard’s participatory photography project was based on the philosophy that “everyone is a photographer,” and it served as one of the key forerunners for the surge of participatory photography projects that engaged marginalized communities in the 1990s.<sup>501</sup> Despite their different approaches, for many of these projects the artists relied on collaboration with communities impacted by poverty and homelessness, which informed both the content and the visual outcomes of the projects to varying degrees. Furthermore, although they are not photography projects per se, as the OCAP website illustrates, photography and film have been an important way to record, represent, and disseminate information about anti-poverty activism, by capturing protest

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<sup>497</sup> Martha Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton, 303–342 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). For the quotation about the “impoverishment of representational strategies,” see page 322.

<sup>498</sup> For a discussion of Rosler’s projects, see: Rosalyn Deutsche, “Alternative Space,” in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism, A Project by Martha Rosler*, eds. Martha Rosler and Brian Wallis, 45–66 (New York: New Press, 1999).

<sup>499</sup> In *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1992), Rosler’s article is published under the heading, “What are the politics of photographic truth?” with articles by Rosalind Krauss (“Photography’s Discursive Spaces,” 1982) and Allan Sekula, (“The Body and the Archive” 1986).

<sup>500</sup> Jim Hubbard, *Shooting Back*, n.d., <http://shootingback.net/> (accessed 1 March 2015).

<sup>501</sup> For instance, scholars Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris reference Hubbard’s work in their seminal article on the Photovoice methodology, which they describe as a participatory visual strategy for sharing expertise and knowledge. See: Wang and Burris, “Photovoice,” 369–387. See also: Jim Hubbard, “Everyone is a Photographer,” in *Shooting Back*, n.d., <http://shootingback.net/shooting-back-press> (accessed 15 March 2015). On page 7 of the document, Hubbard addresses the explosion of interest in participatory photography in the 1990s.

performances and documenting poster campaigns.<sup>502</sup> These works also offer a rich backdrop for later works that deal with the same issues or that draw on similar visual strategies, such as *The Unaddressed*.

In contemporary visual culture, and especially in photography—be it professional, documentary, or vernacular—there is a surfeit of images of people impacted by homelessness. For example, a simple Google image search of “homeless” and “Toronto” provides an endless stream of what might be considered stereotypical icons of homelessness. The first type of image is of a person, most often a man, sprawled out horizontally on the sidewalk under heaps of garbage and other detritus. The second type of image is of a hooded person sitting cross-legged on the sidewalk, who, with head bowed low, holds out a paper cup or a panhandling sign. These images of “the homeless subject” often include other attributes, such as shopping carts, knapsacks, milk crates, cardboard boxes fashioned in a variety of ways, sleeping bags, and wheelchairs, or other visual codes that represent itinerancy and impoverishment. Many of these images reveal the photographers’ attempts to inspire empathy for their disenfranchised subjects through a point of view that captures the subjects at their level. This is achieved when the photographer lays down or crouches low to avoid a patronizing gaze that looks down on the subject. These types of images are now not only familiar scenes, but they have become “generic icons” of homelessness.<sup>503</sup> These staples of visual culture have represented homelessness through images of defeated, destitute, and at times, unconscious subjects.<sup>504</sup> Typical of generic icons, these images are amenable to vastly

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<sup>502</sup> See: OCAP, *Ontario Coalition Against Poverty*, 2015, [www.ocap.ca](http://www.ocap.ca) (accessed 24 June 2015). For a discussion of the role that photography plays in activism, see: Kirsty Robertson, “Webs of Resistance: Photography, the Internet and the Global Justice Movement,” in *Image and Imagination*, ed. Martha Langford (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005): 147–158.

<sup>503</sup> Here I am applying David Perlmutter’s writing about “icon of outrage” to the online images of people experiencing homelessness. Perlmutter describes the generic icon of outrage as one that has been repeated so many times that the basic scene becomes a visual cliché or a familiar staple. See: David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (London: Praeger, 1998): 11.

<sup>504</sup> Rosler also engages with the problematic representation of marginalized subjects as “docile” or “unconscious.” See: Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” 306.

different interpretations—they can serve as powerful activist tools or they can produce negative effects, albeit sometimes unintentionally, depending on how they are framed through discourse.<sup>505</sup>

Some contemporary artists have appropriated stereotypical icons of homelessness to try to expose the systemic issues that underlie this social issue. Canadian photographer Larry Clarke's infamous series of black-and-white photographs featuring drug-addicted women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver (*Heroines*, 1996–2001) offers one such example. On one hand, Clarke has been criticized for exploiting his disenfranchised subjects or glamorizing drug use, and yet on the other hand, he has been praised for “‘naming suffering’ for the purpose of social justice and reform.”<sup>506</sup> Through deeply unsettling photographs that associate female subjects with crime, drugs, prostitution, homelessness, and poverty, it has been argued that Clarke confronts and subverts institutional discourse that blames the poor for their own misfortune, so as to divert attention from a failing social system.<sup>507</sup> Homelessness has also captured the imaginations of many graffiti and street artists, many of whom have appropriated visual tropes such as the panhandling sign or the image of a man sitting on a milk crate, to make bold social commentary. Street art featuring presumably homeless protagonists include Banksy's stencil graffiti of a cross-legged panhandler whose sign reads, “Keep your coins, I want change,” Michael Aaron Williams' painted cardboard cut-out of an elderly man holding a sign that reads “Save Me,” and Fukt's provocative stencil of a homeless veteran sitting beside a loaded up shopping cart who is juxtaposed with the words, “Best we forget,” scrawled angrily in red paint.<sup>508</sup> Like the provisional shelters that are created

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<sup>505</sup> Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, xvii.

<sup>506</sup> Paul Ugor, “Imaging the Invisible, Naming Suffering: Lincoln Clarke's, Photography, and the Women of Downtown Eastside Vancouver,” in *Worldwide Green Eyes: Lincoln Clarke's Photographs*, 2007, <http://worldwidegreeneeyes.com/heriones-essay/> (accessed 26 June 2015).

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> The dates for these works are unavailable online. For more street art works that engage with the issue of homelessness, see: “Homeless,” *Street Art Utopia*, 2013, <http://www.streetartutopia.com/?tag=homeless> (accessed 1 March 2015).



by unhoused people in urban space, street art and graffiti are unsanctioned.<sup>509</sup> We have unexpected encounters with both street art and people experiencing homelessness in public space, many of which are restricted to visual encounters. In some cases, street art images serve as the flattened doppelgangers of people experiencing homelessness, that boldly state what living subjects may not have the opportunity to convey. Sadly, just like the real people themselves, street art images may or may not command our attention in public space. Nevertheless, these street art pieces have the potential to wake us out of the fog of the everyday by challenging the otherwise disempowering imagery associated with homelessness and to create alternative discourses about homelessness in the urban sphere.<sup>510</sup> Furthermore, as images of street art works circulate online, they have the potential to broad audiences to their messages about homelessness and poverty.

Other contemporary artists reject the stereotypical icons of homelessness to complicate our reading of the homeless subject in their work. For example, in 2008, the Tate Modern remounted artist Santiago Sierra's provocative performative art piece entitled, *Group of persons facing a wall* (2002). Sierra is widely known for recruiting vulnerable communities to produce troubling works of art that engage with, expose issues of, and even mimic systems of, contemporary economic inequality, globalization, and capitalism.<sup>511</sup> For *Group of persons facing a wall*, Sierra paid women experiencing homelessness the cost of one night's stay at a hostel and in exchange, the women stood facing a brick wall in the museum for long periods of time. As Sierra explains, in "a world full of images," this performance is an "anti-image."<sup>512</sup> Set against the stereotypical icons of homelessness, we can understand how this may be, and perhaps even see how Sierra's work, disturbing as it may have been to viewers, offered a nuanced

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<sup>509</sup> Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011): 74. Here, Waclawek discusses how street art is unsanctioned public art that create "moments of fracture" and "spaces of disruption" in the public sphere.

<sup>510</sup> Waclawek discusses how street artists in general create alternative forms of visual culture in the public sphere. See: Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 74.

<sup>511</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012): 223.

<sup>512</sup> Santiago Sierra, in: Tate Modern, "TateShots Issue 13—Santiago Sierra," *Tate*, 30 July 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=naoYNgnDUl8> (accessed 25 March 2014).

representation of homelessness. Not only does this work capture the abstract nature of the issue as we know it by neither revealing the faces nor offering the stories of the women, but it also reflects feelings of shame associated with housing instability. Sierra also explains that the work was intended to produce an uncomfortable experience for viewers, who were meant to ruminate on the issues of “work and punishment.”<sup>513</sup> By turning the female subjects to face the wall as if being punished, one might also draw connections between the work and the increased criminalization of homelessness over the past several decades. Works such as this show the power that subversive representations of homelessness have to provoke viewers and to confront us with the aspects of society of which we may be ashamed. In such cases, it may be easier to direct our anger at the artist, instead of at the economic or social systems that the artist seeks to expose or to ourselves for participating in those systems. Furthermore, such representations may help us to better identify the marginalized participants as victims, even if they are only portrayed as victims of an exploitative artist. Against the neoliberal discourse that places the blame of economic failure solely on individuals themselves, subversive representations such as this have the potential to shock us and to make us reconsider issues to which we may otherwise be oblivious in our daily lives.

As these examples help to illustrate, *The Unaddressed* was produced at a time that homelessness was gaining attention both inside the museum through provocative exhibitions, as well as in public space through the works of various street artists. It also emerged during a time when more artists and designers sought to address homelessness by creating empathetic urban designs. Since the 1990s, socially conscious artists and urban designers have been using their skills to challenge the hostile urban architecture and harsh anti-homeless laws that have emerged alongside urban neoliberalism.<sup>514</sup> Instead of using their design acumen to restrict or limit people from resting, sitting, or sleeping in public space, these artists have created designs that have sought to better

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> For examples of “hostile architecture,” see: Maryam Omid, “Anti-Homeless Spikes are Just the Latest in ‘Defensive Urban Architecture,’” *The Guardian*, 12 June 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/jun/12/anti-homeless-spikes-latest-defensive-urban-architecture> (accessed 15 March 2015).

accommodate people with nowhere else to go. Often their designs work with existing elements in the urban environment, drawing on resources that are free and readily available, such as metal scaffolding or steam from air ducts. Artist Michael Rakowitz's concept for his inflatable *paraSITE* shelters of the 1990s offers one such example. With the help of people experiencing homelessness, Rakowitz used materials found on the streets, such as plastic bags, to create shelters that used the air from available outtake ducts to keep the structure heated and inflated.<sup>515</sup> Other more recent examples of empathetic urban design projects include: housing pods, parasite tent pods, mobile backpack shelters, and benches that not only allow people to sleep on them, but that also flip open to create a provisional roof.<sup>516</sup> Like Rakowitz, often the designers for projects such as these seek out the input of their prospective subjects to better meet individual needs. Collaboration has inspired designers to ensure that these structures work within existing anti-camping or anti-homeless laws, to consider issues of personal safety in their designs, or to create shelters that can be quickly packed up and easily carried around on one's person.<sup>517</sup> Compassionate design, creative uses of public space, collaborative strategies, and the use of inexpensive, and often ephemeral materials, are the key features of these projects. Similar approaches have been taken up for *The Unaddressed*, as my discussion of Bergeron's working process and design for the project reveals.

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<sup>515</sup> MoMA, "Michael Rakowitz: Parasite Homeless Shelter," in *MoMA: The Collection*, 2015, [http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=94026](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=94026) (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>516</sup> For examples of empathetic urban design ideas, see: Dan Bloom, "'Housing Pods' for the homeless: How Rival Councillors are Turning to SHEDS (or 'Microhouses') to Solve City's Housing Crisis," *Daily Mail Online*, 1 May 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2617725/Housing-pods-homeless-How-rival-councillors-turning-SHEDS-microhouses-solve-citys-housing-crisis.html>; Delena, "Parasite Tent Pods: Vertical Urban Wall Homes for the Homeless," in *Web Urbanist*, 2013, <http://weburbanist.com/2013/12/10/parasite-tent-pods-vertical-urban-wall-homes-for-homeless/>; Fiona Lowenstein, "Vancouver's Thoughtful RainCity Homeless Benches Puts London's Anti-Homeless Spikes to Shame," in *Bustle*, 2 July 2014, <http://www.bustle.com/articles/30292-vancouver-thoughtful-raincity-homeless-benches-puts-londons-anti-homeless-spikes-to-shame>; or Urbanist, "Rough Sleeper: Mobile Backpack Shelter for Urban Homeless," in *Web Urbanist*, 2013, <http://weburbanist.com/2013/12/24/rough-sleeper-mobile-backpack-shelter-for-urban-homeless/>. (All online articles cited here were accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>517</sup> For example, Rakowitz discusses his collaborative process in: Michael Rakowitz, "paraSITE," in *Michael Rakowitz*, n.d., <http://michaelrakowitz.com/projects/parasite/> (accessed 15 March 2015).

Finally, since *The Unaddressed* aspired to capture the people of, and the challenges faced by, Toronto's homeless community, it is important to situate it within other visual advocacy projects that have taken place in the city since the 1980s. For example, the Church of the Holy Trinity, which is located in downtown Toronto's Trinity Square, has maintained a memorial site for Toronto's homeless community since 1985. The Toronto Homeless Memorial is a list that commemorates people who "have died as a result of homelessness in Toronto."<sup>518</sup> Every month, the church updates the list and hosts a memorial service in honour of those who have passed away. In film, director Michael Connolly produced a documentary entitled *Shelter from the Storm* (2002), which investigated the dramatic increase in homelessness in Toronto since the 1990s and followed the work of some of the city's activists for this social issue.<sup>519</sup> In a 2006 research project that was led by Nancy Halifax, an "arts-informed researcher" from York University's Health Policy and Management Department, a group of scholars worked with a non-profit organization called Street Health to facilitate a Photovoice project with people who were homeless at the time.<sup>520</sup> This group aspired to compose a "comprehensive picture of what the daily experience of homelessness is like and its effects on well-being."<sup>521</sup> Halifax and her team mounted exhibitions in local libraries and community centres to share the "powerful images" and to "give voice to a population not often heard."<sup>522</sup> More recently, in theatre, York University students produced a play that was based on interviews with people experiencing homelessness entitled *The Invisible*

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<sup>518</sup> Church of the Holy Trinity, "Toronto Homeless Memorial," in *Church of the Holy Trinity*, 2015, <http://www.holytrinitytoronto.org/wp/justice-work/homeless-memorial/> (accessed 12 February 2015).

<sup>519</sup> Katie Brenner, *Shelter from the Storm: Educational Resource*, (Toronto: Hot Docs, 2002): 1. This is accessible online at: [http://hotdocslibrary.ca/uploads/filmAssets/HD\\_DocLib\\_EducPkg\\_SHELTER.pdf](http://hotdocslibrary.ca/uploads/filmAssets/HD_DocLib_EducPkg_SHELTER.pdf).

<sup>520</sup> For an article on the study, see: Nancy Viva Davis Halifax, Fred Yurichuk and Erika Kandor, "Photovoice in a Toronto Community Partnership: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health with Homeless People," *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action* 2, 2 (Summer 2008): 129–136.

<sup>521</sup> Halifax et al., "Photovoice in a Toronto Community Partnership," 131. For access to the images created through this initiative, refer to this article.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

*City* (2013), for the Toronto Fringe Festival.<sup>523</sup> Thus, there have been many actions that have married social engagement with forms of artistic expression, including memorializing, documentary filmmaking, photography, and performance, to better acknowledge Toronto's growing community of people who have faced, or who continue to face, homelessness and poverty. Bergeron's project, and the exhibition for which it was commissioned, were part of this trajectory of using art and visual culture to better expose these struggles.

### 2.3 *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter* at the ROM (2008–2009)

*The Unaddressed* was commissioned as part of an exhibition entitled, *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter* that was curated by Devin Ostrom and presented by the Institute for Contemporary Culture (ICC) at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in partnership with the CONTACT Photography Festival (December 2008–July 2009).<sup>524</sup> It was an extension of an exhibition that took place the previous spring that was part of the Luminato Festival, which was called, *Housepaint at Tent City* (June 2008).<sup>525</sup> The original *Housepaint* exhibition focused on poverty and homelessness in Toronto, and more specifically, on the history of Toronto's Tent City. Tent City was a kind of "shantytown" that had developed on some land at the south end of Parliament Street in the late 1990s as a result of growing poverty in the city.<sup>526</sup> It was controversially evacuated due to health concerns in 2002. For the first phase of *Housepaint*, graffiti and street artists constructed ten small, house-like structures out of canvas and wood on what was once the Tent City

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<sup>523</sup> "Fine Arts Students and Grads in Creative Collaboration at Toronto Fringe Festival," in *York University*, 8 July 2013, <http://yfile.news.yorku.ca/2013/07/08/fine-arts-students-and-grads-in-creative-collaboration-at-toronto-fringe-fest/> (accessed 3 March 2015).

<sup>524</sup> The ICC is now called ROM Contemporary Culture, but I have chosen to use the abbreviation ICC in this chapter because that is what it is called in the primary documents at the time of the project. CONTACT Photography Festival is now Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.

<sup>525</sup> The first phase of *Housepaint* was commissioned by the Luminato Festival and Manifesto Community Projects and it was curated by Devin Ostrom. This was part of *Streetscape 2008*.

<sup>526</sup> ROM, "ICC at the ROM presents *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter*," in *ROM: Royal Ontario Museum*, 27 November 2008, <http://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/icc-at-the-rom-presents-housepaint-phase-2-shelter> (accessed 1 March 2015).

site and covered them in brightly painted graffiti and found objects. This site-specific exhibition commemorated a place where over two hundred Torontonians had once sought refuge “from a social system bursting at the seams”<sup>527</sup>—a place that arguably symbolized the social impact of roll-back neoliberal measures such as the closure of many shelters. *Housepaint at Tent City* also alluded to broader issues of homelessness in Toronto, with one structure serving as a memorial for homeless people who have passed away on city streets since 1987.<sup>528</sup> Furthermore, the exhibition sought to visualize Toronto’s economic disparities by making the structures different sizes to roughly illustrate the city’s uneven economic composition.<sup>529</sup> In the context of the well-funded and highly publicized Luminato Festival, *Housepaint at Tent City* may have inspired some viewers to contemplate the city’s continued economic disparities due to urban entrepreneurialism. In the entrepreneurial city, more and more public and private funds are funneled toward global city branding and image-making strategies such as the Luminato Festival, while many local social welfare services struggle to meet their operating budgets.

Hosted by the ROM, the second phase of the exhibition continued to explore the themes of homelessness and poverty and it involved many of the same locally and internationally renowned graffiti and street artists that participated in the first exhibition, including Cant, Case, EGR, and Dan Bergeron (Fauxreel). *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter* sought to, “amplify voices that are often marginalized, and to distill the collaborative spirit and spontaneity of street art.”<sup>530</sup> It also aspired to demonstrate the ICC’s “commitment to presenting provocative exhibitions on current cultural issues.”<sup>531</sup> For this

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<sup>527</sup> “Tent City & ‘Subtext: Real Stories,’” in *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter*, 2008, <http://housepaint.typepad.com/housepaint/subtext-realstories.html> (accessed 2 March 2015).

<sup>528</sup> ROM, “ICC at the ROM presents *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter*.”

<sup>529</sup> Of the ten structures, two were intended to represent the lower-class, six were meant to represent the middle-class, and two were intended to reflect the upper class to further reflect the city’s ratio of economic classes. See: “Tent City & ‘Subtext: Real Stories.’” For more info about and images of the structures, see: Devon Ostrom, “Housepaint at Tent City (Luminato, Streetscape 2008),” in *Devon Ostrom/Portfolio*, 2008, <http://ostrom.ca/2008/06/05/housepaint-at-tent-city-luminato-streetscape-2008/> (accessed 10 March 2015).

<sup>530</sup> Devon Ostrom, ICC guest curator, quoted in: ROM, “ICC at the ROM presents *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter*.”

<sup>531</sup> William Thorsell, ROM Director and CEO, quoted in: Ibid.

exhibition, the Tent City structures were remounted in the exhibition spaces of the ROM's most recent addition, the Michael Lee Chin Crystal (2007), and they were auctioned off at the end of the exhibition with all funds going to Habitat for Humanity Toronto.<sup>532</sup> In addition to the original structures, *Phase 2* included a presentation of filmmaker Eric Weissman's 2008 documentary about Torontonians experiencing homelessness entitled *Subtext*, various mixed media pieces, and Bergeron's wheatpaste poster project. The exhibit was complemented by extensive education and outreach programming, which included talks, workshops, and "outreach to sustainable housing stakeholders."<sup>533</sup> In addition, while *Housepaint, Phase 2* officially began in December 2008, it was intended to be "open-ended," meaning that over the course of several months, graffiti and street artists were invited to respond to, or add to, some of the existing works or to the exhibition itself.<sup>534</sup>

The second phase of *Housepaint* was promoted by ROM organizers as an especially unique partnership between a cultural institution and a group of street artists, if not the "first major museum exhibition of street art in a major Canadian museum."<sup>535</sup> This exhibition helped to position the ROM at the cutting edge of developments in art and visual culture. In the early 2000s, street art and graffiti had been steadily growing in popularity, not only in mainstream culture but also in the art market. This was due in large part to the growing media coverage of British street artist and viral sensation Banksy and his entree into the capital A, "Art world," which was marked by his first solo exhibition in 2002 (33 ½ Gallery, Los Angeles) and followed by some his works being snapped up at art auctions by high profile collectors such as actress and humanitarian

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<sup>532</sup> To see a time-lapse video of the installation process, see: ROM, "*Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter* (video)," in *ROM Channel*, 2008, <http://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research/rom-channel/housepaint-phase-2-shelter> (accessed 2 March 2015).

<sup>533</sup> Quote from: Devon Ostrom, "Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter (ICC/ROM 2009)," in *Devon Ostrom/Portfolio*, 2008, <http://ostrom.ca/2009/01/13/housepaint-phase-2-shelter-iccrom-2009/> (accessed 2 March 2015). For a comprehensive list of outreach programming, see: ROM, "ICC at the ROM Presents Special Housepaint Programming," in *ROM: Royal Ontario Museum*, 26 January 2009, <http://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/icc-at-the-rom-presents-special-housepaint-programming> (accessed 2 March 2015).

<sup>534</sup> See: ROM, "ICC at the ROM presents *Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter*."

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

Angelina Jolie and pop diva Christina Aguilera.<sup>536</sup> As a result, there was a growing audience for street art that included people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, from marginalized street youth to wealthy art collectors looking to bolster their assets. By bringing in an exhibition of an artistic genre that was so in vogue, the ROM harnessed the popularity of street art and graffiti to potentially boost attendance numbers. Furthermore, with this exhibition, the ROM joined the ranks of leading cultural institutions such as Britain's Tate Modern, which had mounted the exhibition, "Street Art," several months earlier (May 2008–August 2008).<sup>537</sup> Of course, the partnership between street art and the ROM was not seamless. Not surprisingly, for some viewers *Housepaint, Phase 2* raised important questions about the institutionalization of street art. For example, journalist Peter Goddard's review of the exhibition noted some of the implications of the "ROM-ification of street art," which include: the loss of street cred for the participating artists and the concern that street art is less capable of critique when institutionalized or mainstreamed through such exhibitions.<sup>538</sup> This is not to mention that a street art exhibition about poverty and homelessness at a cultural institution that preserves and presents opulent material history to largely middle- and upper-class audiences may have been considered incongruous by some viewers.

Despite the uneasy marriage of street and institutional cultures, this partnership promised several potential benefits to stakeholders. For instance, *Housepaint, Phase 2* sought to legitimize graffiti and street art as important works of visual culture and to expose the work of these artists to viewers who may not have otherwise (knowingly) encountered their work.<sup>539</sup> This exhibition and its accompanying programming also served as platforms from which to instigate conversations and to help disseminate

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<sup>536</sup> G. Roberts, "Sotheby's Makes a Killing from Banksy's Guerrilla Artworks," in *The Independent*, 19 January 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/sothebys-makes-a-killing-from-banksys-guerrilla-artworks-432756.html> (accessed 1 April 2015).

<sup>537</sup> Tate Modern, "Street Art," in *TATE*, 2008, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/street-art> (accessed 1 April 2015).

<sup>538</sup> Peter Goddard, "Takin' It From the Streets," *The Toronto Star*, 14 December 2008.

<sup>539</sup> Bergeron discusses the legitimizing power of the museum, in: David Topping, "Homecoming," in *Torontoist*, 12 May 2009, <http://torontoist.com/2009/05/homecoming/> (accessed 2 February 2015).



information about poverty and housing sustainability issues in Toronto, which could ultimately benefit the populations it sought to represent. Furthermore, this exhibition served the ICC's mandate to "raise provocative questions about [...] living cultures," and to broaden the purview of the ROM by highlighting subjects and practices that are relevant to contemporary society.<sup>540</sup> These points were echoed by the ROM's Director of Contemporary Culture Francisco Alvarez, who stressed the exhibition's relevance and praised it for drawing in a new audience.<sup>541</sup> As for raising provocative questions, *Housepaint, Phase 2* not only referenced issues of housing in Toronto but it also touched upon the importance of, as well as the challenges of, representing homeless communities within cultural institutions. Furthermore, through the exhibition's focus on homelessness, the ROM demonstrated openness, tolerance, and social consciousness, and through its presentation of ever-changing works of street art, this seemingly staid institution aspired to reinvent itself as hip, evolving, and even organic. In an era of urban entrepreneurialism and fierce competition among global cultural institutions, these qualities would have been extremely valuable for the promotion of the newly renovated ROM. Finally, as scholar Andrew McLellan notes, the recent rise in admission fees, due to increased operating costs for museums, have reinforced the view that museums are "self-selecting preserves of the educated middle class," and that even when the museum waives admission prices, they are not "ostensibly popular with the poor and uneducated."<sup>542</sup> Through this partnership, the ROM could attempt to challenge such negative assumptions about its institutional identity as well as its audience.

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<sup>540</sup> ROM, "ROM Contemporary Culture," in *ROM: Royal Ontario Museum*, 2015, <http://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research/centres-discovery/contemporary-culture> (accessed 2 April 2015).

<sup>541</sup> Francisco Alvarez was quoted in: Topping, "Homecoming."

<sup>542</sup> Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (California: University of California Press, 2008): 7.

## 2.4 *The Unaddressed* (Dan Bergeron, 2009)

Unlike the other artists who primarily focused on the theme of shelter for *Housepaint, Phase 2*, Bergeron wanted his contribution to focus on the *people* that were, or had been, impacted by a lack of shelter in the city.<sup>543</sup> As noted, for *The Unaddressed* (2009), Bergeron proposed a plan to produce photographic portrait posters of people impacted by poverty and homelessness in Toronto and to wheatpaste the images at the ROM and across the city. The subjects would be photographed with signs, reminiscent of British artist Gillian Wearing's project for which she photographed everyday people holding up signs that disclosed intimate thoughts and feelings (*Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say*, 1992–1993).<sup>544</sup> As Bergeron explains, he decided to use “the trope of the panhandling sign to disclose messages usually ignored or unspoken.”<sup>545</sup> Bergeron hoped that the subjects would substitute the lines that are found on panhandling signs, such as “Can you spare some change?” with thought-provoking statements or critical social commentary.<sup>546</sup>

After receiving the green light for the project, Bergeron faced the daunting task of recruiting participants from a vulnerable and largely transient community. To meet prospective subjects, Bergeron involved himself in various outreach programs for people struggling with homelessness. First, after mentioning the project to a friend who worked at a drop-in program for street youth at Knox Presbyterian Church (Knox), Bergeron was invited to drop by the program and “hang out.”<sup>547</sup> Since the mid-1990s, Knox has been hosting free dinners for street youth and organizing walks to hand out sandwiches, hats, and mittens to people sleeping in the streets.<sup>548</sup> To begin, Bergeron focused on getting

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<sup>543</sup> Many of the details conveyed in this section are informed by an interview with Dan Bergeron. Dan Bergeron, in conversation with the author, 7 January 2014.

<sup>544</sup> This is not a connection that is made by Bergeron so much as one that was identified by Dr. Sarah Bassnett in conversation about this work.

<sup>545</sup> Dan Bergeron, “The Unaddressed (2009),” in *Dan Bergeron*, 2015, <http://fauxreel.ca/projects/the-unaddressed-2009/> (accessed 2 April 2015).

<sup>546</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> See: Knox Presbyterian Church, “Knox Youth Dinner & Food Bank,” in *Knox*, 2015, <http://www.knoxtoronto.org/ministries/knox-youth-dinner-food-bank/> (accessed 20 March 2015).

involved with the outreach programs by helping out at the drop-in and by joining one of the walks. Bergeron was not interested in introducing the project to the participants right away, but rather he hoped to ingrain himself into the community, to learn, and to get to know his potential subjects prior to proposing his idea to them. Bergeron's methodology was developed out of respect for the prospective participants and this approach demonstrates his awareness of the ethical issues involved in simply applying a pre-conceived artistic idea to a relatively unfamiliar population.

After a few visits, Bergeron began to speak to the outreach participants to gauge their response on his idea. Specifically, he wanted to know if the prospective participants "thought it would be a worthwhile idea or if they thought it might be exploiting them."<sup>549</sup> Bergeron recalls that many of the youth with whom he spoke were connected to the online community via social media and that they were very much interested in "spreading their ideas out in a public forum."<sup>550</sup> He explains that his project "didn't seem that foreign to them and they felt pretty comfortable with that idea."<sup>551</sup> This level of computer literacy may not come as a surprise because, as noted earlier, "homelessness" is often not a fixed status, and as such these youth may have had access to the Internet when they lived at home, when they attended school, or when they visited public libraries or outreach programs.

While the youth were relatively easy to recruit for the project, it was important to Bergeron to include people of diverse ages. To meet more prospective participants, he also approached the Salvation Army, a well-established organization that is dedicated to providing food, shelter, and other social services to people affected by poverty.<sup>552</sup> There, he met a group of people, predominantly male, ranging from approximately 20 to 60 years in age. Unlike many of the youth who attended the dinners at Knox, Bergeron

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<sup>549</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> For a brief overview of the Salvation Army's mission and programs, see: Salvation Army, "The Fight against Poverty Deserves Your Personal Attention," in *The Salvation Army: Giving Hope Today*, 2014, <http://www.salvationarmy.ca/the-fight-against-poverty-deserves-your-personal-attention/> (accessed 29 December 2014).

found that the older people he encountered through the Salvation Army programs were “more wary” of him and the project.<sup>553</sup> The staff helped to direct him to individuals who would be likely more willing to participate and who “had the facilities to take that conversation to some deeper levels.”<sup>554</sup> He adds that these conversations were an important way to gain the trust of his prospective participants. Through this process, Bergeron had to be mindful of mental health issues and consider the agency of his prospective participants. As is typical of socially engaged artists in a neoliberal era, this project required that Bergeron try to reconcile his roles as a street artist and photographer with a performance of new roles that were similar to those of an outreach or social worker.<sup>555</sup>

Bergeron’s conversations with the prospective participants touched upon issues of representation as well as social issues pertaining to homelessness and affordable housing, raising themes that were integrated into the final portraits. Individuals that accepted the invitation to participate in the project joined Bergeron at Fauxreel Studios to create their signs and to have their photographs taken in front of a bright white backdrop [Fig. 2.1].<sup>556</sup> Bergeron encouraged his subjects to think about what they would say to the viewers of the portraits based on their previous discussions. He worked with the participants to come up with a list of short statements, from which they would pick the best one to write on the cardboard.

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<sup>553</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> As noted by Boudreau et al., “Transferring the burden of social work onto artists is an example of the individualization of responsibility characteristic of neoliberal management.” See: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 198.

<sup>556</sup> Bergeron shot the portraits with a Hasselblad medium format film, although in interview he admits that were he to do the project again he would shoot the portraits with a digital camera. Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.



Figure 2.1: Photograph of Lisa Fischer posing for her photograph at Bergeron's studio (Fauxreel Studios, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Some of the selected lines expressed the feeling of being ignored by people in the urban environment or by society at large, such as: “If thou shalt not give, then at least verbally acknowledge me,” “Don’t u *dare* deny my existence” [Fig. 2.2], or, “People hear disaster and they think earthquake. I hear disaster and I think homeless in Toronto.”<sup>557</sup> The latter echoes the sentiments of many homeless activists who argued that the government readily offers relief to victims of natural disasters abroad, while largely ignoring the local issue of homelessness, which they argue is a “man-made disaster.”<sup>558</sup> Some of the subjects chose to address what they perceived to be common misconceptions about homelessness, through comments such as: “For *me*, this was *not* a choice” [Fig. 2.3], “We may beg for change but we’re not stupid,” or “Just because you think you

<sup>557</sup> Quotes by: Michael Manitowabie, Ron Craven, and Jennifer Ford. See all images at: Bergeron, “The Unaddressed (2009),” in *Dan Bergeron*, 2015, <http://fauxreel.ca/projects/the-unaddressed-2009/> (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>558</sup> For a discussion about homelessness as a kind of “man-made disaster,” see: Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 18–19. In 1998, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee declared that homelessness was a national disaster at the urging of many activists. *Ibid.*, 23.

know where I've been doesn't mean that you know where I'm going."<sup>559</sup> These lines speak out against the stigmatization of and negative assumptions about people who are homeless that have emerged out of neoliberal discourse, particularly those that position individuals as solely responsible for their own fates.



Figure 2.2: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Ron Craven, "Don't u dare deny my existence," 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

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<sup>559</sup> Quotes by: Daniel Dempster, Tony Clemens, and Lisa Fischer.



Figure 2.3: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Daniel Dempster, “For me this was not a choice!” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Other lines sought to shift criticism from the individuals experiencing homelessness to the economic or social systems that fail to support them, such as: “The system is broken. I am not,” or “Stop giving handouts to the rich and start giving handouts to the poor” [Figs. 2.4 & 2.5].<sup>560</sup> These lines decry the impact of neoliberal austerity measures on the urban poor, as well as the problems of an economic system that provides corporate bail outs or misuses public funds, and the failing social systems that do not adequately meet the needs of their participants due to rigid bureaucracy or lack of resources. Overall, the language selected helps to illustrate what social science scholars Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund describe as the way that marginalized actors may take up the language and play roles according to the framework in which they are situated—the framework here being one of activism on behalf of people experiencing

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<sup>560</sup> Quotes by: Andrew Thomas and Leslie Morrison.



homelessness.<sup>561</sup> Like Woolford and Nelund's research subjects, Bergeron's photographic subjects sought to counter stigma. They also demonstrated "an intuitive knowledge of the neoliberal conditions" of their world, and with Bergeron's assistance, the participants selected messages that were "more likely to be of symbolic value" within the framework of the project.<sup>562</sup> Interestingly, whereas Woolford and Nelund's report explains that their unhoused research subjects had learned to inflect their speech with neoliberal discourse as a way to present themselves as citizens worthy of care, Bergeron's subjects drew on the discourse of contestation that has emerged out of neoliberalism to demonstrate that they are worthy of attention and respect.



Figure 2.4: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Andrew Thomas, "The system is broken... I am not," 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

<sup>561</sup> Woolford and Nelund, "The Responsibilities of the Poor," 296.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 296; 303.



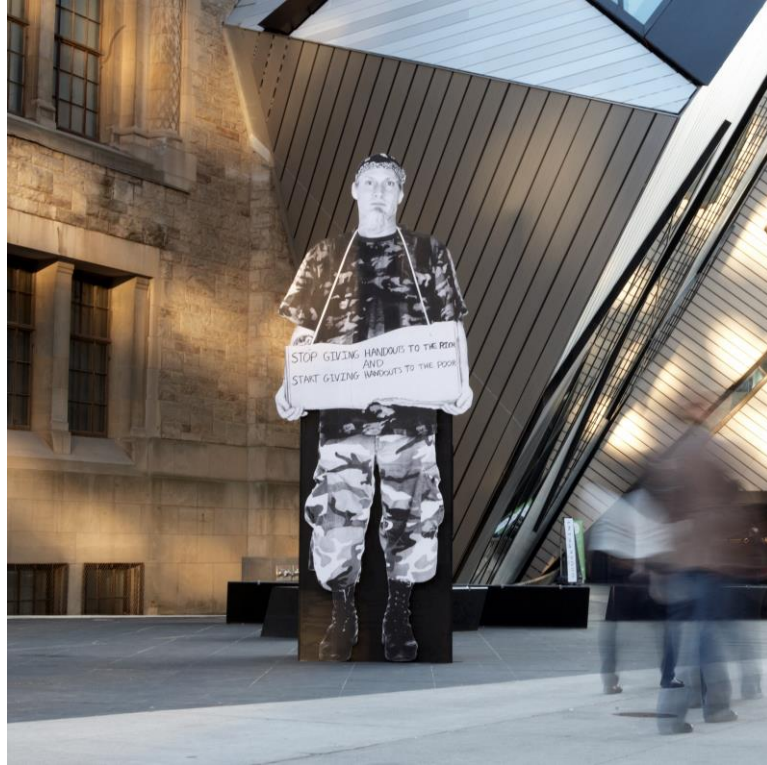


Figure 2.5: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Leslie Morrison, “Stop giving handouts to the rich and start giving handouts to the poor,” 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Bergeron printed the black-and-white portraits to approximate scale on large strips of white paper. He explains that unlike his earlier Regent Park portrait project (2008) for which he mounted monumental portrait posters of community members in their neighbourhood, it was more important to create posters that were roughly life-sized for this project. For *The Unaddressed*, he was less interested in presenting his subjects as “larger than life,”<sup>563</sup> as he was instead trying to establish a dialogue between the viewer and the subject in the image. Site-specific, frontally posed, full-length, life-sized portrait posters encouraged a more realistic sense of human interaction when approached by viewers. Additionally, Bergeron wanted to illegally paste several of the posters in the streets of Toronto at sites where his subjects hung out, panhandled, or even slept. Because of this, Bergeron felt that, “it wouldn’t make any sense to do anything but 100%

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<sup>563</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

scale images because [he wanted] them to appear as they would appear if they [were] on the street [...]”.<sup>564</sup> Bergeron’s portraits deviated from the more common representations of homeless people that have developed over time, in which people experiencing homelessness are represented “on the grate, on the ground, prostrate, [and] depersonalized.”<sup>565</sup> In contrast, Bergeron presented his subjects as active agents in their own advocacy and he sought to humanize the issue of homelessness through photographs of real people holding up their own personal statements. Quite unlike Sierra’s use of anonymous people in *Group of persons facing a wall* (2002), Bergeron portrayed his subjects as empowered, “homeless activists,”<sup>566</sup> who turn from the wall and confront us with their messages.

Importantly, around this time, ad agencies were producing street-level, Guerrilla marketing campaigns that appropriated performance and street art techniques, which in some cases also used the trope of disenfranchised individuals holding signs to solicit responses. For example, one Toronto radio station marketed their edgy, talk-radio programming by hiring prostitutes and panhandlers to stand in public spaces holding signs that asked if prostitution or panhandling should be legal, followed by the statement, “We need to talk,” and the program’s logo.<sup>567</sup> Previously, Bergeron was commissioned by Vespa Canada to create his own Guerrilla ad campaign of wheatpaste posters, which had landed him in hot water among many of his fellow street artists.<sup>568</sup> Unlike these other projects, *The Unaddressed* was not intended to sell a brand, despite the fact that Bergeron was acutely aware that the dispersed posters would unofficially advertise the ROM

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<sup>564</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>565</sup> Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 29.

<sup>566</sup> Crowe describes her subjects as, “homeless activists.” See: Ibid., 30.

<sup>567</sup> This strategy was used by CFRB, Newstalk 1010 and was developed in partnership with the marketing consultancy firm Zig. See: Dana Flavelle, “Marketing Outside of the Box: Guerrilla Marketing,” *The Toronto Star*, 22 August 2009.

<sup>568</sup> The Vespa Scooterheads controversy is mentioned in: Murray Whyte, “Evolution of a Street Art Rebel,” *The Toronto Star*, 10 May 2009. See also: Fateema Sayani, “Street View,” in *Carleton Alumni*, 2010, <http://alumni.carleton.ca/2010/10/street-view/> (accessed 3 February 2015).

exhibition and the CONTACT Festival by raising curiosity and starting conversations.<sup>569</sup> More akin to Wearing's photographs, Bergeron's subjects were meant to hold signs that exposed their otherwise private thoughts with the hopes of bringing attention to the social impact of homelessness in Toronto.<sup>570</sup>

Due to the ephemeral nature of the wheatpaste posters, after several years there are no longer any signs of *The Unaddressed* in Toronto. All that remains are the images of the portraits on Bergeron's website (fauxreel.ca), which reveal clues of their original sites by the architectural details that are captured in the background. In an interview, Bergeron identified many of the sites, including locations on key city thoroughfares such as: Queen Street West, Bloor Street West, Dundas Street West, Ossington Avenue, Richmond Street, Carlton Street, and beneath the Gardiner Expressway on Lakeshore Boulevard.<sup>571</sup> The posters were placed at sites where one may easily encounter panhandling or "squeegee kids," or on streets that have poor residential areas butted up against expensive condo developments due to uneven rates of gentrification. Thus, the audience of these works included not only the subjects themselves, but also people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds as they walked or drove in these neighbourhoods.

As noted, in addition to the posters that were pasted across the city, some posters were also put inside the ROM. Bergeron admits that though the ROM was not necessarily perceived as a welcome spot by his participants, he also saw tremendous potential for creating striking juxtapositions between his subjects and the artifacts on display.<sup>572</sup> He explains, "My original idea was to scatter the portraits in the ROM in specific locations

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<sup>569</sup> Bergeron commented on the advertising power of this project and even used this as a way to get the ROM to green light the posters that would be put up in public space. In a *Toronto Star* article he mentions the struggle to get the ROM to agree to this part of the project by stating, "It took some convincing. [...] I told them, 'If you want to think of it in a business way, it's good for it to be outdoors, because it'll get people into the ROM. It's free advertising.'" See: Whyte, "Evolution of a Street Art Rebel."

<sup>570</sup> John-Paul Stonard, "Gillian Wearing," in *Tate*, 2001, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/gillian-wearing-obe-2648> (accessed 20 August 2013).

<sup>571</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

[...] so that the portraits would come out of nowhere almost.”<sup>573</sup> He was intrigued by the possibility of someone viewing a collection of jewelry and then stumbling upon an image of a person panhandling. This scenario would force the viewer to negotiate the strange and unsettling encounter between the disenfranchised subject, the valuable objects on display, and even their own subject position as one who can afford to enjoy the museum in their leisure time (adult admission at the time of the exhibit was approximately \$22). Nevertheless, the ROM was not interested in pursuing this idea, and instead of placing the posters within the permanent collections or on the exposed brick walls of the original building, he was only permitted to place them in the new addition and on the walls near elevators or entranceways.<sup>574</sup> *Torontoist* journalist David Topping suggests that the posters found in the ROM were “inferior copies” of those found in the streets, and when asked his opinion of this critique, Bergeron agreed, explaining, “It’s very accurate.”<sup>575</sup> In Bergeron’s view, the posters in the museum lacked the rawness, the texture, and the subversiveness of the posters that were mounted illegally in the public sphere.<sup>576</sup> Nevertheless, inside the museum the portraits were able to participate in institutional discourse about inclusivity and the themes of the *Housepaint, Phase 2* exhibition with an immediacy that the outdoor posters could not replicate.

Originally, Bergeron had also hoped to place posters on the exterior walls of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, but this idea was rejected by the ROM as well.<sup>577</sup> Instead, Bergeron placed two oversized posters on a makeshift wooden structure outside of the ROM. In part, Bergeron chose to make the outdoor posters larger so that they might better compete with the architecture of the ROM.<sup>578</sup> However, these large, seemingly out-of-place posters served more as a promotional vehicle drawing attention to the ROM and the exhibition rather than as a genuine part of the exhibition. First, the site was somewhat

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<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> Bergeron admits that he was frustrated that none of the posters were given a permanent place in any of the older sections of the ROM and that he was not able to put the posters on the exterior walls of the ROM. Sources: Ibid. See also: Topping, “Homecoming.”

<sup>575</sup> Topping, “Homecoming.” Also: Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>576</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. See also: Topping, “Homecoming.”

<sup>578</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

flawed in comparison to those selected for the posters across the city, which were areas where the visual impacts of homelessness and poverty may have been seen on a daily basis. As Bergeron notes, it is highly unlikely that anyone would be permitted to panhandle outside of the ROM.<sup>579</sup> Secondly, here the posters appeared “larger-than-life,” presented in a scale that was more akin to billboard ads. Thirdly, awkwardly positioned on the sidewalk leading to the museum’s front doors, the posters took on the appearance of provisional, promotional signboards. Nevertheless, the large portraits were particularly poignant when placed outside of the newly renovated cultural institution. Here, Bergeron placed the image of Traci Noble whose sign reads, “Without ID you can’t get ahead. Without ID you can’t get benefits,” and the image of Leslie Morrison, who posed with the aforementioned sign that criticized “handouts to the rich.” Located outside of an institution that has a somewhat steep admission price, which markets such things as membership benefits (which also come at a considerable price), and which relies on donations from both private and public funds to survive, the posters appeared to be adversarial statements toward the host institution by a somewhat recalcitrant street artist. Bergeron was candid about his frustration with some of the compromises involved in this project and this frustration possibly fueled his selections for these two oversized portraits.<sup>580</sup> Interestingly, however, Bergeron did not receive any pushback from the ROM about these posters. Possibly by refusing to allow the portraits to be attached to the building, the ROM was better able to establish its “arms-length” relationship to the illegal, outdoor portrait posters.<sup>581</sup> Or perhaps, this was because, by placing these posters outside of the ROM, Bergeron helped to visually identify the institution with the spontaneous new street art posters popping up around Toronto and signaled the presence of the work inside the museum itself, thereby potentially drawing in new visitors.

Not only were there negotiations about where to place the photographic posters in and around the ROM, there were also discussions about how best to welcome Bergeron’s

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> For example, in one article, Bergeron is quoted saying that the partnership was a “bit frustrating” and “very bureaucratic.” See: Topping, “Homecoming.”

<sup>581</sup> The arm’s length relationship is noted in: Topping, “Homecoming.”

participants to the museum. Bergeron felt strongly that his subjects deserved an open invitation to the ROM, in part because he wanted to avoid creating works at the museum that enabled, “homeless voyeurism.”<sup>582</sup> At Bergeron’s urging, the participants were offered free admission to the ROM for the duration of the exhibition and they were allowed to bring as many guests as they wanted. Bergeron sensed that this arrangement made the ROM staff slightly uncomfortable. Arguably, at a time of growing fear about homelessness, this would be a typical response for an institution that sees many visitors per day, many of whom might not have been aware of the project or of this accessibility arrangement. Nevertheless, to avoid negative publicity, it would have been imperative for the ROM to concede to Bergeron’s demand.

As this section helps to illustrate, tremendous effort went into this project, including gaining the trust of the participants, taking portraits, finding appropriate places for the posters, and negotiating free entrance to the ROM for his subjects. Additionally, there were many stakeholders for this project, including not only Bergeron and his participants, but also the individuals representing the ROM and the CONTACT Photography Festival. Thus, Bergeron needed to continuously manage the often conflicting needs and expectations of his stakeholders, as well as his own goals as a photographer and street artist. Both during and after this collaboration, Bergeron has frankly admitted that *The Unaddressed* was one of his most challenging projects. On a leading street art website, Bergeron explained,

[*The Unaddressed*] was definitely the hardest project that I have worked on [...] I wanted the viewer to feel compassion for these individuals and others like them, without feeling pity. I wanted the subjects to feel empowered without being exploited.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>583</sup> Dan Bergeron on the *Wooster Collective* website: Marc, with Dan Bergeron, “Catchin’ Up with Dan Bergeron,” in *Wooster Collective*, 10 May 2009, <http://www.woostercollective.com/post/catchin-up-with-dan-bergeron> (accessed 15 March 2015).

In retrospect, Bergeron has also admitted that *The Unaddressed* was his least satisfying project.<sup>584</sup> This was due in part to the sometimes maddening institutional negotiations that this project required. However, more troubling was the mistreatment of the posters in public space. He explains, “The pieces got torn down, scribbled on with nasty comments and generally disrespected.”<sup>585</sup> This was particularly disturbing to Bergeron, and he explains that his first reaction was a feeling of hurt for himself and for the people who trusted him.<sup>586</sup>

Before analyzing some of the negative responses to *The Unaddressed*, it is important to address some of its positive outcomes. Bergeron’s work and the *Housepaint, Phase 2* exhibition sought to raise awareness about homelessness and poverty in Toronto. Key themes and issues were taken up in many ROM publications and in a range of press articles and reviews. In *ROM Magazine*, there were many efforts to explain, albeit briefly, the importance of street art in visual culture and its role in exposing marginalized voices.<sup>587</sup> In *Afterimage*, Fraser J. Lynn lauded the exhibition as a unique partnership between the museum and the street artists.<sup>588</sup> Even mixed reviews of the exhibition stressed the importance of its theme. For example, in the *Anglican Journal*, Marites Sisson wrote that *Housepaint, Phase 2* was “unusual, yet timely,” and that, “the exhibition may be an assault on one’s senses, but it is much-needed” at a time of growing economic disparity in Toronto.<sup>589</sup> Additionally, some articles and online comments reveal that Bergeron’s work was well-received by many viewers. One article described an interaction between a woman and Bergeron in which she congratulated him for his work, impressed by the statement that it made.<sup>590</sup> Another writer called Bergeron a

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<sup>584</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>585</sup> Dan Bergeron, quoted in: “Dan Bergeron,” in *Unurth: Street Art*, n.d., <http://www.unurth.com/filter/Dan-Bergeron> (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>586</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>587</sup> See, for example: “Housepaint, Phase 2: Shelter,” *ROM Magazine* 41, 4 (Spring 2009): 6; and Francisco Alvarez, “In Conversation,” *ROM Magazine* 41, 4 (Spring 2009): 11.

<sup>588</sup> Fraser J. Lynn, “Paradigm Shift,” *Afterimage* 37, 1 (July/Aug., 2009): 47.

<sup>589</sup> Marites N. Sison, “Street artists capture life of Canada’s homeless,” *Anglican Journal* 135, 2 (Feb. 2009): 7.

<sup>590</sup> Whyte, “Evolution of a Street Art Rebel.”

“mastermind” and described his work as beautiful and thought-provoking.<sup>591</sup> At the time of the exhibition, some viewers even posted their praise of *The Unaddressed* online, with comments like, “[the poster] totally jarred me, i love it [sic],” and, “Several of my close friends were the subjects of Dan’s photos and they are glad of the exposure and ability to make a statement about homelessness and poverty.”<sup>592</sup> Sadly, these comments were juxtaposed against the ranting of online “trolls,” who attacked everything from the urban poor to the artist himself, and some of whose sentiments were echoed in the onsite vandalism of the works.

## 2.5 Street-Level Manifestations of Neoliberal Thought

In response to the disrespect of the images in public space, Bergeron comments, “Although this really got me down at first, I later realized that the work provoked a reaction and really showed what a lot of Torontonians think about those who are homeless.”<sup>593</sup> In this section, I build off of Bergeron’s analysis to consider how the acts of vandalism may reveal street-level manifestations of neoliberal thought. As scholar Raewyn Connell discusses regarding the processes and practices of neoliberalism, “It is difficult to tell how deeply these processes have affected popular consciousness.”<sup>594</sup> While it may be difficult to measure how neoliberalism has impacted society’s impressions of people experiencing homelessness and poverty, here I argue that Bergeron’s photo-documentation of posters that were destroyed helps to illustrate the troubling way in which neoliberal discourse about poverty and homelessness has seeped into popular consciousness in Toronto.

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<sup>591</sup> Rebecca Perrone, “Toronto Street Art by Fauxreel,” *Adone Magazine*, 10 March 2013, <http://adonemagazine.com/article/toronto-street-art-fauxreel#.VRWRvY54pws> (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>592</sup> Comments by Liz and Andy C. posted on: Joshua, “We’re Not Stupid,” in *BlogTO*, 11 May 2009, [http://www.blogto.com/arts/2009/05/were\\_not\\_stupid/](http://www.blogto.com/arts/2009/05/were_not_stupid/) (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>593</sup> Dan Bergeron, quoted in: “Dan Bergeron,” in *Unurth: Street Art*.

<sup>594</sup> Raewyn Connell, “Understanding Neoliberalism,” in *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*, eds. Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, 22–36 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 28.



Bergeron's portrait of the late Martin Beebe shows a man who solemnly stares out at the viewer holding a sign that states, "I'd rather beg than steal" [Fig. 2.6].<sup>595</sup> Beebe wears a sheep-skin lined denim jacket, a pair of jeans, and dark, lace-up shoes. For the exhibition, Bergeron placed Beebe's portrait poster on the glass door of a storefront on the north side of Queen Street at Wilson Park Road. The site, an abandoned plaza that has since been torn down, was located in west Parkdale on a strip of Queen Street West that has been somewhat slower to gentrify and is surrounded by mixed income households in the nearby residential areas. As with the other poster locations, this site remains a place where patrons of trendy bars and restaurants are solicited by panhandlers. Not really a popular spot among young families or business professionals, it is likely that the daily audience for Beebe's portrait would have been predominantly hipsters, low-income Toronto residents, and graffiti artists who were already using the plaza as a "canvas."



Figure 2.6: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed—Martin Beebe, "I'd rather beg than steal,"* 2009 (Toronto, Ontario). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

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<sup>595</sup> Bergeron recently informed me that Martin Beebe has since passed away.

Six months after pasting up the image, Bergeron returned to Beebe's portrait poster and documented how the image had changed over time [Fig. 2.7]. In a photograph from this visit, it is clear that Beebe's portrait became a site of conflict between anonymous passers-by, each fiercely adamant about their views. The image shows that Beebe's face had been violently scratched out—a callous act that has literally de-faced his image. It also reveals that someone had pasted a clownish, blue bowtie onto Beebe, which matched a larger, pink bowtie that was placed beside him. In addition, someone has hastily crossed out the word “beg” on Beebe's sign and added the word, “work,” changing the message of his sign to, “I'd rather *work* ~~beg~~ than steal.” The photograph also shows that not all interventions with the work attack Beebe or the issues that he represents in the poster. In response to the addition of the word “work,” another person appears to have come to Beebe's defense, by writing, “Who is a prick?” However, this too appears to have been scratched over. We do not know who authored these gestures, when they did it, or what drove them to engage with Beebe's portrait in these ways. Nevertheless, through the photographic documentation, we are presented with a charged visual document, and one in which the impact of a hegemonic neoliberal worldview and its contestations can be read.



Figure 2.7: Photograph of Martin Beebe's portrait poster six months after it was pasted at the site (Toronto, Ontario, c. 2010). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

The photo documentation reveals how Beebe's portrait became a site where individuals expressed their views about homelessness and poverty in a neoliberal society, be it through harsh judgement, anger, derision, or mockery. Importantly, whereas graffiti first emerged as a way to convey a proper sense of place for subcultures and marginalized groups, many of the actions taken against Beebe's portrait reflect aspects of neoliberal thought that were expressed *at the expense of* the marginalized subject. The anonymous critic's assertion, "I'd rather *work* than steal," is a neoliberal one: it expresses an individual's drive to work for a wage and to make his or her own living rather than to beg or "steal" from others. Here the word, "steal," can be taken to mean more than just the criminal act of theft. The use of the word, "steal," in this context may be used as a condemnation of people who do not (or cannot) work and who rely on forms of social assistance. The person who wrote this appears to blame Beebe, or people who may identify with him, for their station in life and suggests that the correct choice to be made is the choice of *working* over either begging or stealing. Of course, originally the message could have been intended as an attack against the lack of available employment opportunities in Toronto, as in, "I'd rather work, *if work was available*." However, cast against the other visual gestures, the comment appears to parrot neoliberal ideology, which actively seeks to transfer blame from failed policies, lack of employment, systemic discrimination, or insufficient social supports, onto the individual. As scholars Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton have discussed, "neoliberals stress that individuals make choices," but tend to disregard the fact that people's choices are made and impacted by social conditions over which they have little to no control.<sup>596</sup> Similarly, Beebe's faceless critic expresses the neoliberal belief that individuals have the freedom to, and must, make their own positive economic choices. This interaction demonstrates ignorance of the complex issues that have led to the rise in urban poverty—an ignorance that has been formed in part by, and is perfectly suited to, neoliberalism. Thus, the photo-documentation of reactions to Beebe's poster offers visual evidence of how the neoliberal worldview has seeped into public consciousness and how it is enacted through daily life. Here the weapons of neoliberalism are the everyday people who deface, shame, and

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<sup>596</sup> Braedley and Luxton, "Competing Philosophies," 11.

destroy the representation of a human being in need, with little to no understanding of the circumstances that have led to his situation.

Traci Noble's portrait received similar treatment when it was pasted in public space. As mentioned earlier, Noble's sign read, "Without ID you can't get ahead. Without ID you can't get benefits." In her portrait, she stares out dispassionately and rests her weight on her right hip—a posture that reflects anything from indifference to weariness. Perhaps her posture is a reflection of what street nurse Cathy Crowe calls "the deprivation of the human spirit," which is the result of the emotional and mental trauma of homelessness.<sup>597</sup> In addition to the oversized portrait poster of Noble located outside of the ROM, Bergeron placed another life-sized portrait on a bright yellow wall on the north side of Queen Street, just east of Church Street [Fig. 2.8]. This site is on the border between "Old Town," a neighbourhood south of Queen that is recognized for significant historical landmarks and a recent boom of condo developments, and the "Garden District," an area that has a number of churches as well as a mixed housing that includes everything from expensive residences to shelters and hostels. Also nearby is "Moss Park," which is a neighbourhood with a large number of public housing buildings. Despite the close proximity to the downtown core and the financial district, the neighbourhoods surrounding the site of Noble's poster also serve as home to many of Toronto's poorest residents. Thus, it is fair to say that the audience for Noble's image at this location would have been a rather mixed socio-economic group.

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<sup>597</sup> Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 7.

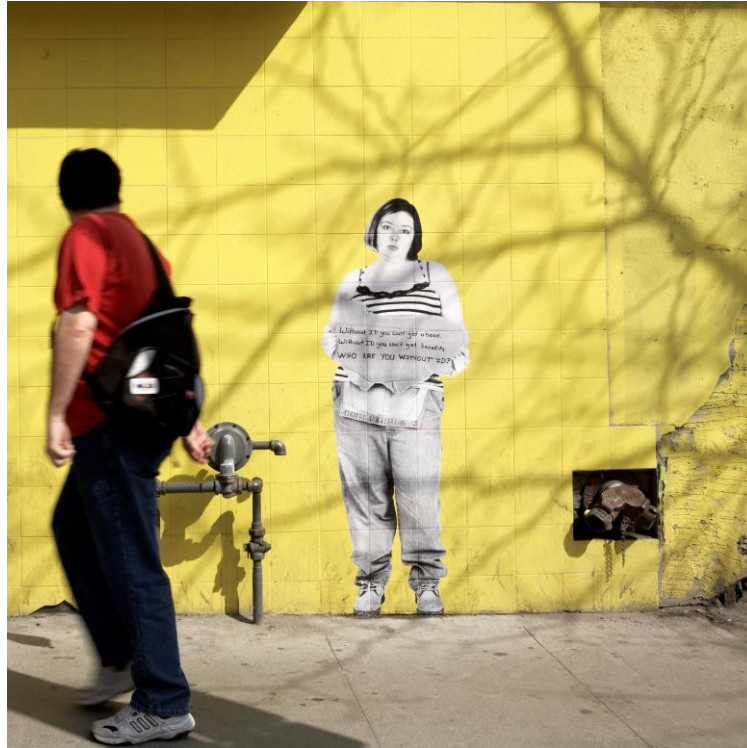


Figure 2.8: Dan Bergeron, *The Unaddressed*—Traci Noble, “Without ID you can’t get ahead. Without ID you can’t get benefits,” *Who Are You Without ID?* (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Again, after allowing some time to pass, this time ten months, Bergeron returned to the site of Noble’s image to take photographs. There he found startling interventions with her poster [Fig. 2.9]. A photograph reveals that someone has written the word, “contribute,” in large letters framing the contour of her head. Of course, it is unclear from the word alone whether it was originally intended to suggest that society should contribute to the poor, or that the poor of Toronto should contribute to society. However, like Beebe’s portrait, in light of the other actions taken against the portrait, Noble’s portrait seems to be caught up in the latter. Her eyes have been painted bright orange and her hair has been coloured a deeper shade of orange. A large, orange drop breaching the left corner of her mouth has also been scribbled onto her face. This image also shows that slightly below her collarbone there is a brown blob that was not previously there. Someone has slapped what appears to be feces onto her image. In words, imagery, and even matter, Noble’s image seems to have been both figuratively and literally “shat on”

by anonymous citizens. Like Beebe, her portrait became a site where everyday people imposed their extreme views about poverty and homelessness.

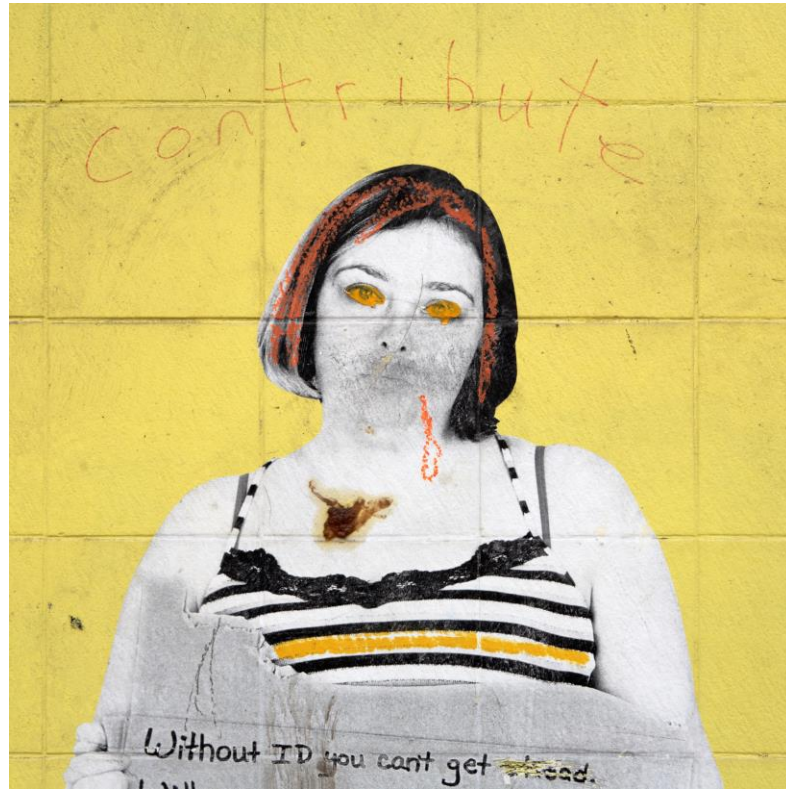


Figure 2.9: Photograph of Traci Noble's portrait poster ten months after it was pasted at the site (Toronto, Ontario, c. 2010). Photograph and permission courtesy of Dan Bergeron / Fauxreel Studios.

Bergeron's photo-documentation offer examples of how neoliberal ideology may have influenced responses to the portraits. First, the defacement of these portraits shows a lack of empathy for the subjects, and as I have discussed, a lack of empathy toward the poor, the unemployed, or the under-housed has been identified as a core characteristic of neoliberalism. Secondly, the anonymous critics appear to judge the marginalized subjects for not working or contributing to society. Their acts of vandalism serve to similarly attack and shame the subjects for their homelessness and poverty. As Connell explains, the legitimization of neoliberal policies and practices has been reliant on the idea that there are economic "winners" that are rewarded.<sup>598</sup> To win, we must perform

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<sup>598</sup> Connell, "Understanding Neoliberalism," 27.



exceedingly well in a neoliberal context of: “competition, choice, entrepreneurialism, and individualism.”<sup>599</sup> Not only are the “winners” handsomely compensated, but people who are struggling and the social systems that are intended to support them are attacked.<sup>600</sup> This strategy is intended to justify the withdrawal of social welfare programs and it ultimately shames the poor. Through words and imagery, the attacks on the posters express the harsh views that people experiencing poverty and homelessness have no value or that they are too foolish or too intoxicated to make changes in their lives. The former is conveyed by placing a ridiculous, floppy bowtie on Beebe, and the latter, by discolouring Noble’s eyes and drawing an orange substance that drips down her face. Finally, the defacement of the posters reveals the misconception that all homeless people have *chosen* their status, suggesting that if they simply made different choices their problems would not exist. The concept of choice is a complex one in debates about homelessness. As street nurse Cathy Crowe explains, “We are told that [people experiencing homelessness] ‘choose’ to sleep outside. An artist chooses to be an artist, a doctor chooses to be a doctor. No one chooses to be homeless.”<sup>601</sup>

## 2.6 The Politics of Viewing Images of Homelessness in a Neoliberal Era

When asked about how his subjects felt about the defacement of their portraits, Bergeron comments that they seemed unsurprised.<sup>602</sup> In a world where people experiencing homelessness are sometimes beaten and left for dead, where their pleas for help are often ignored, and where their demands for justice are silenced, the destruction of a few advocacy posters may be the least of their concerns. However, in the context of visual culture, it is important to engage with what the hostility toward *The Unaddressed* reveals about the “politics of viewing” representations of homelessness and poverty in

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Crowe, *Dying for a Home*, 29.

<sup>602</sup> Bergeron, in conversation, 2014.

contemporary urban space.<sup>603</sup> As this chapter has illustrated, not only can the historical context of neoliberalism be read in the original posters through the subjects' messages of contestation, but we can also see how the negative reactions to the work are deeply embedded with the discourse and ideologies of a harsh neoliberal worldview.

In scholars Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu's recent work on photography, feeling, and affect, they argue for a photography scholarship that is more attuned to the reception of images.<sup>604</sup> As many scholars have addressed, photography makes us feel—we touch photographs and we are touched by them.<sup>605</sup> We are often taught that photographs, particularly those that exist as physical objects, demand special care and attention. However, the interventions with Bergeron's posters were quite unlike the meek and gentle engagements with photographs that are so often found in scholarly accounts of photographic encounters. In this regard, Bergeron's work offers a unique case study for exploring the role of affect and feeling in practices of viewing and in the production of photographic meaning, particularly because *The Unaddressed* provoked some viewers to lash out and alter the fundamental message of the posters.

As I have discussed, some of Bergeron's posters were ripped down; others were vandalized and disrespected through a variety of engagements and interactions, be it by spewing vitriol in online forums or by physically altering the images in public space. In the late 1990s, historian Elizabeth Edwards discussed how our physical engagements with photographic images represent social ways of viewing, be it personal or collective.<sup>606</sup> Edwards explains that photographs “can be handled, framed, cut, crumpled,

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<sup>603</sup> Considering the “politics of viewing” is inspired by Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu's recent work. See: Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, “Introduction,” in *Feeling Photography*, 1–20 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014): 7.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> For recent research that addresses the relationship between photography, touch, and affect, see: Brown and Phu, *Feeling Photography* (2014); and Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>606</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, eds. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley, 221–236 (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 228.



caressed, pinned on a wall, put under a pillow, [or] wept over.”<sup>607</sup> She adds that, “to cut, tear, or worse, burn a photograph is [...], ‘a violent, frightening hysterical action, which leaves behind indexical wounds and irreparable scars.’”<sup>608</sup> The destruction of Bergeron’s photographic portrait posters can be seen as a similar kind of violence, not only against the images, but also against the people and the social issues that they represent. More recently, scholar Margaret Olin introduced the idea of photography as a kind of powerful relational art that brings communities together, often through processes that involve how we touch, or are touched by, photographs.<sup>609</sup> However, as Bergeron’s photo-documentation reveals, some of his images were not handled well. Rather than bringing community together, the images became polarizing representations and intense sites of contestation, which exposed and amplified existing fractures within the community about issues of poverty and homelessness.

Many scholars have addressed the recent challenges of eliciting empathy through photographic representations in the image-saturated world in which we live. As scholar Susan Sontag articulated, there are two lines of thought regarding the impact of photography.<sup>610</sup> On the one hand, photography may be used to shape and influence our ideas about particular crises. On the other hand, some believe that due to the glut of images in our world we have become callous or numbed to images of suffering, especially given our repeated exposure to them. While Sontag once expressed belief in the power of photography to diminish our sympathies, in her more recent book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), she admits that she is less certain about this point of view and asks, “What is the evidence that photographs have a diminishing impact, that our culture of spectatorship neutralizes the moral force of photographs of atrocities?”<sup>611</sup> Is it possible that Bergeron’s photo-documentation of the vandalized posters provides us with such evidence? And does the lack of compassion that is evident in the defacement of

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 3.

<sup>610</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003): 104.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 104.

Bergeron's posters stem from an over-engagement with photography, or from the political context in which we live, or both?

It is certainly understood that ephemeral, photo-based street art representations are vulnerable due to their placement in public space. However, as some of the responses to *The Unaddressed* demonstrate, these images had the power to raise the ire of some viewers. The wrath imposed on Bergeron's posters has its roots in an aggressive neoliberal discourse about economic "winners" and "losers" that has emerged since the 1980s. A growing lack of empathy toward people experiencing homelessness is the result of misinformation, stigmatization, and increased criminalization of unhoused communities over the past few decades. Bergeron portrayed his subjects as empowered activists, which contested dominant neoliberal representations of homelessness and poverty. In this context, the case study of *The Unaddressed* asks us to consider the power of neoliberal discourse to alter how we see, feel, and even react to images that not only express need, but that also contest the economic foundations of our society. With this in mind, perhaps the vandalized portraits are at the very least useful to us in that they offer clues to the everyday social impact of a shift from the empathic welfare state toward the more cut-throat, competitive, neoliberal era.

## CHAPTER 3

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### 3 FIRST *IMPRESSIONS*, THEN AND NOW: COMMUNITY PORTRAITS AND CIVIC PLACEMAKING

My first encounter with the case study that I discuss in this chapter was quite spontaneous. In December 2013, I was sitting in the back seat of our car feeding my son a snack on the way to the Ontario Science Centre. As he often does, my husband turned down Jameson Avenue to get to the Gardiner Expressway, which is a common route to take for those travelling from Toronto's West End to the East End and vice versa. I looked up from the container of Cheerios and the applesauce pouch that I was juggling and out of the window I saw row upon row of black-and-white photographic tiles on the boxed tree planters lining the avenue. They were placed low to the ground and there was a mix of passport style portrait photographs and streetscape images [Fig. 3.1]. Due to my interest in collaborative community arts projects that use photographic strategies, I was inspired to learn more about the origins of the work.



Figure 3.1: Photograph of Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young's 2009 project, *Jameson Avenue "Impressions"* (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

I returned to the Parkdale neighbourhood the next day to explore the photographs and started my walk at the intersection of Jameson and Springhurst avenues, which is the south-easternmost edge of the installation. On the south-facing side of the first tree planter that I examined, I noticed four didactic tiles [Fig. 3.2]. Reading the text, I learned that in 2009, artist Jim Thierry Bravo and photographer Kate Young partnered with the not-for-profit organization, Mural Routes, and the City of Toronto to create this project, entitled *Jameson Avenue "Impressions"* (henceforth *Impressions*).<sup>612</sup> These tiles note that *Impressions* is installed in between Queen Street West and Springhurst Avenue and that it “showcases over 500 images and portraits of [the] vibrant Parkdale community.” The didactic tiles also include a short, poetic statement, which helps to set the tone for both the photographic installation and the street itself. It reads, “Though old faces leave as quickly as new faces arrive, a part of each will always remain.”<sup>613</sup>



Figure 3.2: Detail of didactic tiles for *Impressions*, 2009 (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

<sup>612</sup> *Impressions* refers to the photographic component of a two phase project called, “The Jameson Avenue Project,” as described on the Mural Routes website. As I discuss later, the first phase involved creatively arranging historical cobblestones and the photographic tiles represent the second phase. See: Mural Routes, “Jameson Avenue Impressions,” in *Mural Routes: Improving communities through mural art*, 2009, <http://www.muralroutes.com/news/jameson.htm> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>613</sup> This statement is found on text panels by City of Toronto, which are located on the northeast and northwest sides of the intersection of Jameson Avenue and Springhurst Avenue, as well as on the southeast and southwest sides of the intersection of Jameson Avenue and Queen Street West.

I strolled up the avenue to Queen Street, where I crossed over to the west side and walked south again. By following this route, I was able to see hundreds of tiles on over 70 planter boxes. Some images were in perfect condition, but many showed signs of daily wear-and-tear that had occurred in the four years since the project was installed. I was thrilled to see that space was allocated on this busy, neighbourhood thoroughfare to represent the people of the community. However, I was also troubled by a viewing experience that was thwarted by tiles that were in disrepair, tiles that were vandalized, and tiles that were obstructed, or in some cases haphazardly framed, by curbside garbage, including mattresses, discarded children's toys, and food waste [Figs. 3.3–3.5].



Figure 3.3: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail of peeling tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.



Figure 3.4: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail showing graffiti on the tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.





Figure 3.5: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail of litter around the tiles (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

As I looked at the photographic tiles that day, I thought about the elements that were fundamentally altering the meaning of the installation, thereby detracting from the project's original goals. I also wondered about how the stakeholders felt about the current state of the installation. Along the route, I stopped in front of a tile with a portrait of a young woman with long, black hair. The top of the image had started peeling away and a flimsy layer of film curled over, exposing the bright, white tile upon which the image had been transferred. I crouched down to get a closer look and as I leaned in to take a photograph [Fig. 3.6], I heard a gruff voice behind me. "It's falling apart," grumbled a person with a thick Hungarian accent. I turned around and saw a middle-aged man who was smoking a cigarette and wearing a large, black coat and a black helmet, which fit snugly on his head and was strapped tightly under his stubbly chin. He walked up to the tile that I was gingerly approaching with my camera and roughly scraped his fingers along the loose pieces of film. He waved at the photographs, the ashes from his cigarette flying in the crisp breeze, and he said, "I never wanted them to put these up." Curious, I

asked lightly, “You don’t like the photographs?” He elaborated, “I don’t want them to put *my* photograph up,” adding that he valued his privacy. Having grown a bit camera-shy myself—in part a kneejerk reaction to an age of online sharing via photographs and in part the result of rigorously analyzing photographs—I was able to sympathize with his point-of-view. We chatted for several more minutes. We talked about the art project and our respective neighbourhoods: Parkdale and The Junction Triangle. “We’re neighbours!” he exclaimed, adding that both of our areas have a rich history. Through this interaction, I felt as though I had experienced one of the intended outcomes of the project. By taking a prolonged interest in the photographs, I demonstrated that I was open to learning more about the people in the neighbourhood and I unknowingly invited a passer-by into a conversation. Still, I left that day, curious to learn more about the project’s political context, its site specificity, its original goals, and its framework for participation.



Figure 3.6: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail of a peeling tile (4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

Over time, the poetic statement on the introductory tiles, (“a part of each [remains]”), has taken on a more literal meaning as the photographic tiles have deteriorated, leaving us with fragments of the faces and spaces that were once represented in the project. Certainly, the current visual outcomes were not intended by the City of Toronto nor by the project facilitators. The didactic tiles indicate that the project was created with a sense of celebration, optimism, and good-will, typical of many community-engaged civic art projects. Nevertheless, rather than presenting us with a visual celebration, today, the photographic tiles raise important questions about the vicissitudes of *Impressions*—from its fresh beginnings, to its current state of disrepair, and finally, to plans for its future revitalization.

This chapter addresses the political implications of this project, which has been almost entirely framed as a collaborative effort to celebrate Parkdale as a vibrant community or as a visual representation of community pride. Recognizing that Parkdale has long been a site of contestation, particularly in regard to representations of its community identity, I discuss how *Impressions* was, to some extent, a neoliberal imaging of community, in that its subjects were both the faces, and the targets of, neoliberal rationality, policies, and practices. Discussing *Impressions* as a kind of neoliberal imaging of community is not meant to take away from the personal impact that this project may have had on its stakeholders or a sense of community spirit that this project may have engendered. Nor is it meant to detract from the intentions of the project collaborators, who genuinely wanted to involve the community in the street beautification process.<sup>614</sup> While this chapter acknowledges the intentions of the project, it argues that it is crucial to recognize its relationship to the contentious history of representing Parkdale, to situate the project within its political context of urban neoliberalism and neo-

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<sup>614</sup> As I researched this project, various stakeholders granted me interviews, through which I learned about how they approached this project from unique vantage points. These discussions—about personal experiences, diverse goals, negotiations, setbacks, and discoveries—were deeply informative as I tried to navigate the collaborative process that was involved in *Impressions*. The interviews helped me as I tried to avoid collapsing the artist’s vision, the civic goals for the project, and the visual outcomes of the project. Furthermore, the interviewees confirmed that the work’s deterioration was an unintentional, yet not entirely unforeseeable, outcome, and that the disrepair of the tiles today is disappointing to all of the stakeholders with whom I spoke.



reformism, to acknowledge the complexities of its site, and to address how the politics of viewing this work have shifted since 2009. Drawing on the theories and methods of art and visual culture studies, we can explore the depths of this seemingly humble project, and we can better understand the cultural significance of the inadvertently antagonistic impressions of Parkdale with which it confronts us today.

### 3.1 Representing Parkdale

As journalist Christopher Hume wrote, “Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods,” and these neighbourhoods are demarcated by physical landscape and architecture, as well as by social, cultural, and emotional bonds that bring people together.<sup>615</sup> The Parkdale neighbourhood is located in Ward 14, which is a long strip of land in downtown Toronto’s West End. The northern border of Ward 14 follows the mostly diagonal path of the Canadian Pacific Rail line, which roughly stretches between the intersection of Keele Street and Junction Road and the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and King Street West.<sup>616</sup> The perimeter of the ward is then demarcated by Atlantic Avenue on the east, the lakeshore on the south, and Parkside Drive (which turns into Keele at Bloor Street) on the west. This ward is roughly divided into two sections: High Park, composed of the northern half of this area and a thin strip of land that lines the park on the west, and Parkdale, the southernmost section of the ward. Parkdale’s perimeter is sketched out by Wright Avenue, the Canadian Pacific Railway line, Dufferin Street, the lakeshore, and Roncesvalles Avenue.

Compared to the fairly straightforward physical boundaries of the area, the ever-shifting social history that has defined Parkdale is considerably more complex. Recently, urban planning scholars Carolyn Whitzman and Tom Slater argued that, since the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Christopher Hume, “We Define Ourselves by Our Neighbourhoods,” *The Toronto Star*, 30 August 2009.

<sup>616</sup> For a map of this area, see: City of Toronto, “City of Toronto Ward Profiles: Ward 14—Parkdale-High Park,” in *Toronto*, 1998–2014, <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/City%20Planning/Wards/Files/pdf/W/W14map.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2014).

century, there has been a disconnect between the *representation* of Parkdale on the part of landholders, developers, the media, and the government through images and discourse, and the *social realities* that have existed in the community that were captured in census data.<sup>617</sup> By investigating the validity of textual descriptions of Parkdale in government discourse, newspapers, books, and advertising, these scholars have identified a trajectory that involves three distinct images, or “dreams,” of Parkdale. Whitzman and Slater describe these images of Parkdale as: a suburban dream in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a nightmarish slum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finally, a developing urban village in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>618</sup>

Whitzman and Slater argue that the existing chronology of Parkdale as a suburb, slum, and urban village has long served to conceal the social realities of the neighbourhood and has had a significant impact on popular perceptions of, as well as development in, the area. For example, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century image of Parkdale as a wealthy suburb was largely aspirational on the part of developers, real estate agents, and landholders, or rather, those who sought to market the area or to protect their investments.<sup>619</sup> At this time, Parkdale was promoted as a “Flowery Suburb,” but tax assessment roles and street directories reveal that it was actually inhabited by mixed-income residents and a large population of industrial workers living in cheap accommodations, such as tenements and rooming houses.<sup>620</sup> From 1913–1966, when Parkdale started to show some signs of decline, it experienced an even steeper “decline” in popular discourse and governmental reports, which served a complex and diverse range of housing and development agendas, until there appeared to be a general

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<sup>617</sup> See: Carolyn Whitzman and Tom Slater, “Village Ghetto Land: Myth, Social Conditions, and Housing Policy in Parkdale, Toronto, 1879–2000,” *Urban Affairs Review* 41, 5 (May 2006): 673–696; and Carolyn Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village: Transformations in Toronto’s Parkdale Neighbourhood 1875–2002* (Toronto & Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

<sup>618</sup> Whitzman and Slater’s article, “Village Ghetto Land” (2006) addresses some of the issues of representation noted here. However, Whitzman’s book, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village* (2009), develops this thesis further and focuses more on the idea of various “dreams” of Parkdale.

<sup>619</sup> Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 193.

<sup>620</sup> Whitzman and Slater, “Village Ghetto Land,” 677–678.

consensus was that it was a “serious slum.”<sup>621</sup> However, Whitzman notes that for most of this time period, Parkdale residents continued to be diverse in terms of household income, and that compared to the rest of the downtown area at this time, it was in fact somewhat wealthier and did not reflect the qualities of a “classic slum,” which is characterized as having unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions.<sup>622</sup> In the 1960s, reflecting a discursive pattern that is often used in support of gentrification efforts, financial stakeholders in Parkdale sought to return the area to its former, albeit somewhat mythical, image.<sup>623</sup> For example, urban developers referenced Parkdale’s past reputation as a “wealthy suburb” to appeal to potential homebuyers and the area was marketed as a developing urban village.<sup>624</sup> Meanwhile, Parkdale increasingly became home to low-income, at risk, or marginalized residents.<sup>625</sup> This was due in part to the arrival of new groups of poor immigrants, as well as to an influx of discharged patients from the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) that began in the 1970s.<sup>626</sup> As a result, Parkdale did not entirely shed the negative reputation that it had acquired in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the press, Parkdale was linked to drug-related crime, public intoxication, prostitution, and homelessness, and it was judged by some as a “blot on Toronto’s reputation for livability and harmony.”<sup>627</sup> This discourse further supported the need to

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<sup>621</sup> Whitzman offers a comprehensive overview of the decline of Parkdale in: Carolyn Whitzman, “‘Becoming a Serious Slum’: Decline in Parkdale, 1913–1966,” in *Suburb, Slum Urban Village* (Toronto & Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009): 103–150. Whitzman refers to the use of the term “serious slum” in a governmental report to describe Parkdale in: Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 194.

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.*, 197–198.

<sup>623</sup> Whitzman and Slater, “Village Ghetto Land,” 673.

<sup>624</sup> Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 3.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>626</sup> For a brief discussion of the impact of the influx of discharged patients from the CAMH, see: Tom Slater, “Toronto’s South Parkdale Neighbourhood: A Brief History of Development, Disinvestment, and Gentrification,” *Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Research Bulletin* #28 (May 2005): 2–3.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. The quotation here is borrowed from Slater, who summarizes Parkdale’s reputation by drawing on excerpts from the *Globe and Mail*, including this description by columnist Margaret Philp: “Temple Avenue is pure, distilled Parkdale, a street of big old brick houses that have faded from glory. Some have been carved into rooming houses, others muddled by cheap renovations. All are cast in the shadow of run-down apartment buildings on nearby streets that stand like walls, fracturing the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood rife with poverty, drugs, and prostitution

gentrify and revitalize the area despite its important, albeit sometimes concealed, role as an affordable area for Toronto's less affluent or marginalized residents.<sup>628</sup> Thus, for well over a century Parkdale has been a site of struggle in terms of representations of its community identity. Ultimately, Whitzman concludes that "economic and social factors, [...] led to Parkdale's changing image over time,"<sup>629</sup> and she notes that the players in the battle over Parkdale's image have included the government, financial institutions, residents' associations, real estate agents, landowners, developers, and citizens. This research reveals that historically, representations of Parkdale have failed to capture, or have blatantly omitted, the social realities of the area, and it helps to establish why we must continue to interrogate representations of Parkdale today.

As a result of its fraught history of representation, Parkdale has been called everything from "Rosedale on the Water"<sup>630</sup> to a "service-dependent ghetto."<sup>631</sup> Moreover, the recent agenda to transform Parkdale into a hip, urban village, despite its growing percentage of low-income and at risk residents, has resulted in two coexisting and conflicting identities for the area.<sup>632</sup> For example, in the 1980s, Parkdale was simultaneously described in the *Globe and Mail* as a "costly enclave" and "'dumping ground' for the poor."<sup>633</sup> In the late 1990s, Parkdale became a place where "bowery and bohemia coexisted, a world of extreme poverty and powerlessness next to a world of individual and community creativity."<sup>634</sup> This contradictory discourse continues today and often efforts to define the area and its residents have been hotly debated. For example, at best, Parkdale is described as follows:

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... no place for a child to grow up. Broken glass and wild screaming on the street at night.

Prostitutes strolling down the side-walk. Drunks splayed on the grass asleep." (5 August 2000).

<sup>628</sup> Slater and Whitzman address the importance of Parkdale as home to less affluent Torontonians in: Whitzman and Slater, "Village Ghetto Land," 693.

<sup>629</sup> Whitzman. *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 195.

<sup>630</sup> Gord Perks noted that this was how it was marketed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in conversation with the author, 21 February 2014. Note: Rosedale is an affluent residential neighbourhood in Toronto.

<sup>631</sup> Slater, "Toronto's South Parkdale Neighbourhood," 3. Here Slater is referring to a term that various academics have used to describe Parkdale.

<sup>632</sup> Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 153.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., 3; Whitzman borrows her language from, and refers to, the following *Globe and Mail* article: Carole Corbeil, "Lament for a Neighbourhood," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 September 1980.

<sup>634</sup> Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 153.

Today [Parkdale] is home to a working-class neighbourhood, with a mix of low and high income residents, as well as new immigrants, artists and young professionals. The diversity and creativity of the area has led to a thriving neighbourhood and destination of choice for its estimated 50,000 residents and visitors alike.<sup>635</sup>

At worst, Parkdale has been accused of being a “haven for slumming hipsters”<sup>636</sup> or even a “pedophile district.”<sup>637</sup> The latter was a slur that was uttered by Toronto City Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti that led to an explosive reaction from people who came to the defense of the neighbourhood, both at city council and via social media platforms such as Twitter (#parkdalelove).<sup>638</sup> Such controversies about Parkdale’s community identity help to illustrate that there continues to be a diversity of stakeholders in the debate over Parkdale’s identity. Thus, as a result of Parkdale’s highly disputed past and present, *Impressions* rests on an especially charged site with regard to the issues of representing the community in Toronto. Furthermore, as I elaborate in the next section, due to its reputation as a developing bohemia or a “haven for [...] hipsters,” Parkdale was an ideal site for a project that supported the Creative City agenda in 2009.

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<sup>635</sup> Parkdale Village BIA, “History,” *Parkdale Village*, 2014, <http://parkdalevillagebia.com/history/> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>636</sup> “Haven for slumming hipsters,” is referred to as a popular, albeit offensive, title for Parkdale in the following article: “Things to Know About: Parkdale,” *The Grid: Street Level in Toronto*, 2014, <http://www.thegridto.com/neighbourhoods/parkdale/#sub=places&subValue=0> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>637</sup> For articles about this controversy, see: Daniel Dale, “Giorgio Mammoliti Stuns Fellow Councillors by Calling Parkdale a ‘Pedophile District,’” *The Toronto Star*, 16 June 2014; or Kevin Connor, “Mammoliti Calls Parkdale ‘Pedophile District,’” *Toronto Sun*, 16 June 2014.

<sup>638</sup> For evidence of a huge response to Mammoliti’s slur about Parkdale, see: David Nickle, “Councillor Mammoliti’s Parkdale Pedophile Comment Draws a Huge Response,” in *Inside Toronto*, 17 June 2014, <http://www.insidetoronto.com/news-story/4583299-councillor-mammoliti-s-parkdale-pedophile-comments-draws-huge-response/> (accessed 1 October 2014); or “Results for #parkdalelove,” in *Twitter*, 2014, <https://twitter.com/hashtag/parkdalelove> (accessed 1 October 2014).

### 3.2 Urban Neoliberalism, Neo-reformism, and Developments in Public Art

In recent years, political and economic forces have continued to shape Parkdale through the rationalities, policies, and procedures of urban neoliberalism, as well as through neo-reformist strategies. First, to offer a brief and partial definition of an exceedingly complex concept, neoliberalism is an adaptive and evolving set of theories, pedagogies, ideologies, and governmentalities that have resulted in a range of context-specific developments, including: reduced government, slashed social welfare spending, the privatization and commodification of more goods and services, the normalization of social and economic inequality, different technologies and new forms of surveillance, new subjectivities centred on individualism and entrepreneurialism, restructured urban environments, and even new forms of resistance.<sup>639</sup> It is adaptive because neoliberal strategies and ideologies have variously manifested in diverse contexts—with great concentration in urban centres—worldwide.<sup>640</sup> It is evolving because aspects of neoliberalism have changed over time, resulting in its different phases, such as: “attacks” on Keynesian economics in the 1950s and 1960s, “pro-business activism” of the 1970s, “roll back” neoliberalism of the 1980s, and the “neoliberal ‘equality’ politics” of the twenty-first century.<sup>641</sup> Furthermore, the logic of neoliberalism is not only malleable, but it is so thoroughly embedded in our culture that many scholars have identified how even its contestations have utilized or co-opted ideologies, practices, and tools that have developed out of neoliberalism.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> Numerous scholars have addressed the various forms of neoliberalism and its development over time. See, for example: Harvey (2000); Lerner (2000); Peck and Tickell (2002); Keil (2002); Duggan (2004); Giroux (2005); Leitner et al. (2007); Braedley and Luxton (2010), Gane (2012); Connell (2010); and Harvey (2012).

<sup>640</sup> See: Sassen (2006); and Massey (2007).

<sup>641</sup> Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality*, xi–xii; and Peck and Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” 383–404.

<sup>642</sup> Various scholars address how neoliberalism and its contestations are entwined in: Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S. Sheppard, *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* (New York & London: The Guildford Press, 2007).

Toronto, like many urban centres, has been deeply impacted by neoliberalism in its various forms, and these developments have not only reverberated through, but they have also manifested in, its communities. For example, federal downloading had a detrimental impact on the city after the 1980s. During this time, Toronto became more responsible for its own economic development, and this resulted in a long period of austerity politics.<sup>643</sup> Within this timeframe, the city was also restructured through the highly contested amalgamation in 1998. By the twenty-first century, and largely as a result of Ontario Premier Mike Harris' neoliberal conservatism, the city's infrastructure was weakened and homelessness rose dramatically.<sup>644</sup> As public housing programs were cut and rent controls were obliterated, activist groups such as Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and tenants associations staged protests.<sup>645</sup> As Boudreau et al. explain, in response to the economic and social impact of Harris' administration, around 2002–2003 Toronto looked to urban planner Richard Florida's creative city strategies to attract residents who could turn the city's economy around, particularly under the leadership of Mayor David Miller.<sup>646</sup>

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, civic leaders worldwide were inspired by the theory that investments in creativity and culture would help to restore urban communities from the detrimental impact of the preceding period of austerity.<sup>647</sup> Florida encouraged civic leaders to find innovative and entrepreneurial ways to appeal to the “Creative Class”—workers who were generally young and trendy and who drove the new and ever-growing knowledge economy—with the hypothesis that this form of human capital was central to urban economic growth.<sup>648</sup> By examining the trends of urban migration through a series

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<sup>643</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 183.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 62. See also: OCAP, “A Short History of OCAP,” in *Ontario Coalition Against Poverty*, n.d., <http://ocap.ca/files/history%20of%20ocap.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2015).

<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>647</sup> For a discussion of how the city turned from austerity to creative competitiveness, see: Boudreau et al., “Creative Competitiveness,” in *Changing Toronto*, 183–198.

<sup>648</sup> Florida has developed these ideas in various publications, including: Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); and Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited* (New York:

of indexes— “the Melting Pot Index,” “the Gay Index,” and “the Bohemian Index”<sup>649</sup>— Florida asserted that members of the Creative Class, as well as powerful creative firms, were more apt to flock to cities that embraced and celebrated ethnic minorities, people of different sexual orientations, and, of course, artists.<sup>650</sup> According to Florida, thriving creative cities ranked high on all three indexes (which he described as “basic indicators of diversity”) and demonstrated a competitive edge in the “3 T’s” of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance.<sup>651</sup> Although Florida’s theories have since been rigorously critiqued by numerous scholars, they were quickly adopted by civic leaders.<sup>652</sup> Florida’s ideas were translated to an easy to follow “toolkit,” otherwise known as the “Creative City script,” which was then infused into urban governance discourse and economic policies.<sup>653</sup>

*Impressions* took place during David Miller’s tenure as Mayor, which has been described by urban planning scholars as Toronto’s “neo-reformist period.”<sup>654</sup> Neo-reformism confronted Harris’ preceding austerity politics by drawing on aspects of reformism (1972–1995), and in particular its focus on the defining and beautifying the city centre.<sup>655</sup> Neo-reformism turned to Florida’s creative competitiveness strategy to help improve perceptions of Toronto’s “quality of life” on the world stage, which neo-

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Basic Books, 2012). For discussions of the impact of Richard Florida’s idea on urban planning in Toronto, see, for example: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 183; and John Paul Catungal, Deborah Leslie and Yvonne Hii, “Geographies of Displacement in the Creative City: The Case of Liberty Village, Toronto,” *Urban Studies* 46, 5 & 6 (May 2009): 1095.

<sup>649</sup> Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 39–42.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, 35–36.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–39.

<sup>652</sup> For critiques of Florida’s theories, see: Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 4 (2005): 740–770; or Barbara Jenkins and Patricia Goff, “The ‘New World’ of Culture: Reexamining Canadian Cultural Policy,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* 36, 3 (2006): 181–196. Florida also refers to his critics in his own writing. See, for example, the introduction of *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005) or the preface of *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited* (2012).

<sup>653</sup> Jamie Peck argues that civic leaders have been so able and so quick to take on the Creative City script because the strategies are generally easy to execute. He also notes that investments in soft infrastructure are affordable, and that at the same time, they allow pre-existing neoliberal agendas to move forward. See: Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 740–770.

<sup>654</sup> For a discussion of “neo-reformism,” see: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 204–205.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.



reformists considered Toronto's key asset in terms of economic development.<sup>656</sup> The Creative City script inspired Toronto civic planners to promote the city as one "with a viable, festive, multicultural centre,"<sup>657</sup> and its presence in policy is signaled by key terms such as: "creativity," "authenticity," "vibrancy," "heterogeneity," "diversity," and "quality of place."<sup>658</sup> For example, this discourse is found throughout the Miller administration's 2008 *Agenda for Prosperity*, in which the mayor is quoted as saying, "We must put creativity at the heart of Toronto's economic development."<sup>659</sup> In addition, the Creative City discourse is the foundation of a support document for this agenda, which was entitled, the *Creative City Planning Framework*.<sup>660</sup> This document outlined strategies that sought to enhance Toronto's creative and cultural industries, develop its place competitiveness, and create "authentic urban environments."<sup>661</sup> Under a heading "Culture + Place = Wealth," this document asserted that, "Authentic urban environments that are bubbling with lively cultural and entertainment options are magnets that attract and retain creative people."<sup>662</sup>

At this time, civic placemaking was key to developing place competitiveness and was a strategy that was described in the planning framework as: "an integrated and transformative process that connects creative and cultural resources to build authentic, dynamic and resilient communities or place."<sup>663</sup> In Toronto, the Creative City plan involved several entrepreneurial placemaking strategies, including: large-scale arts

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<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 204–205.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>658</sup> See, for example: AuthentiCity, *Creative City Planning Framework* (Toronto: Authenticity & The City of Toronto, February 2008): 19. Here, the writers list many of these terms, among others, as core values of the creative perspective and sets them against the previous utilitarian perspective.

<sup>659</sup> Toronto Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Advisory Committee (TMECAC), *Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Agenda for Prosperity* (Toronto: The City of Toronto, January 2008): 4.

<sup>660</sup> AuthentiCity, *Creative City Planning Framework*, 1–51.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 22. Here there is a Venn diagram of that overlays the three components of place, economy and culture, to illustrate how investments in various combinations of these three components can lead to enhancing the city's creative and cultural industries, developing its place competitiveness, and creating authentic urban environments.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 44.

festivals, neighbourhood beautification efforts, stunning streetscapes, bold architectural renovations, and public art projects. These predominantly visual strategies, which were photographed and disseminated in the media, helped to market the city as a place of “consumption” and “creativity.”<sup>664</sup> By advertising its commitment to communities and culture, Toronto would “tell the world what a great city Toronto is in which to live, work, play, and invest.”<sup>665</sup>

Importantly, numerous scholars have critiqued both neo-reformism and the Creative City approach to cultural policy as forms of governance that were thoroughly tied up with aspects of neoliberalism. For example, neo-reformism is described as a “synthesis of reformist ideals implemented with neoliberal tools.”<sup>666</sup> On the one hand, neo-reformism pursues reformist values of sustainability, local democracy, quality of life, and diversity, while on the other, it is driven by an underlying neoliberal agenda of urban marketability and economic competitiveness.<sup>667</sup> Likewise, the Creative City plan has been critiqued by numerous scholars as a kind of smokescreen behind which “the same old neoliberal logic prevails,” such as an emphasis on performance, consumption, privatization, marketing diversity, entrepreneurialism, and individualization.<sup>668</sup> Thus, *Impressions* emerged from an incredibly complex political context, and reflects the impact of neo-reformism on Toronto communities, as well as the ways in which neo-reformism responded to, engaged with, or was inflected with, aspects of neoliberalism.

As many scholars have noted, neoliberalism has had a considerable impact on neighbourhood beautification and public art practices. To begin, Miwon Kwon’s seminal

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<sup>664</sup> For discussions of how these creative strategies are linked to consumption in Toronto, see, for example: Catungal et al., “Geographies of Displacement in the Creative City,” 1096; and Laura Levin and Kim Solga, “Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto,” *The Drama Review* 53, 3 (Fall 2009): 37–53. Kwon also discusses this correlation in: Miwon Kwon, “Public Art and Urban Identities,” *EIPCP*, 2002, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0102/kwon/en> (accessed 10 September 2014).

<sup>665</sup> TMECAC, *Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Agenda for Prosperity*, 26.

<sup>666</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 199.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*, 194. These issues are also raised in: Peck (2005); and Levin and Solga (2009), for example.

scholarship on public art outlines a rough trajectory of approaches to public art since the 1960s, and provides a useful background for understanding how *Impressions* functioned as public art in 2009. Kwon outlines three categories of public art: art-in-public-places, art-as-public-space, and finally, art-in-the-public-interest.<sup>669</sup> According to Kwon, art-in-public-places was the dominant model for public art from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s and it generally involved placing modernist sculptures by “internationally established male artists,”<sup>670</sup> such as Henry Moore and Alexander Calder, in public space. These works had very little investment in the people or places surrounding the sites in which they were installed and were often followed by varying degrees of public outcry and controversy.<sup>671</sup> This was followed by the art-as-public-spaces model, which emerged in the 1970s with the objective to “align public art more with the production of amenities and site-oriented projects.”<sup>672</sup> This style of public art integrated art, architecture, and landscape design, and resulted in work such as street furniture or sculptures, which served both aesthetic and utilitarian purposes in the urban environment.<sup>673</sup> Art-as-public-spaces also relied on the involvement of a variety of professional collaborators such as artists, civic planners, city administrators, and architects, and often it played a role in redevelopment or beautification projects.<sup>674</sup> Finally, in the late 1980s, art-in-the-public-interest grew out of a growing demand for more accountability on the part of artists and funding bodies erecting public art. Art-in-the-public-interest refers to works that are “often temporary city-based programs focusing on social issues rather than the built environment that involve collaborations with marginalized social groups rather than design professionals.”<sup>675</sup> Like the art-as-public-spaces approach, *Impressions* marries urban design and function and uses the collaborative approach that includes city planners, artists, and civil servants. However, by using photographic portraits of local residents,

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<sup>669</sup> Miwon Kwon, “Sittings of Public Art: Integration Versus Intervention,” in *One Place After Another: Site Specificity and Locational Identity*, 56–99 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002): 60.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 64–65.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>674</sup> Kwon “Public Art and Urban Identities.”

<sup>675</sup> Ibid.

*Impressions* demonstrates a dedication to community that is more akin to the art-in-the-public-interest model. Nonetheless, while it may appear to be a hybrid of the two preceding models, *Impressions* is also deeply rooted in the emergent practice of neoliberal placemaking through public art, at least from a governmental standpoint.

Over the past few decades, public and participatory art practice have become integral to developer-driven or civic placemaking strategies, which are intended to promote “authentic” and “unique” urban neighbourhoods for a global audience.<sup>676</sup> These new developments in urban planning, as well as the surge of cultures of participation in a vast range of fields since the 1990s, have deeply impacted how artists and everyday people are recruited to participate in making public art. Rightly, many scholars have expressed concern regarding the relationship between neoliberal political economies and public art practice or “collaborative” urban beautification efforts.<sup>677</sup> For instance, more recently, Kwon noted the benefits and the potential pitfalls of this new form of public art stating that:

Site-specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories, provide support for greater visibility of marginalized groups and issues, and initiate the re(dis)covery of “minor” places so far ignored by the dominant culture. But inasmuch as the current socio-economic order thrives on the (artificial) production and (mass) consumption of difference (for difference sake), the siting of art in “real” places can also be a means to *extract* the social and historical dimensions out of places to variously serve the thematic drive of an artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfill the fiscal needs of a city.<sup>678</sup>

Kwon’s discussion of the impact of the political economy of the 1990s–2000s on public art practice indicates that there is a need to carefully consider the social realities of the

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid. For a summary of different scholars’ opinions about the impact of neoliberal urban policy on grassroots neighbourhood revitalization efforts, see: Sarah Elwood, “Neighbourhood Revitalization Through ‘Collaboration’: Assessing the Implications of Neoliberal Urban Policy at the Grassroots,” *GeoJournal* 58 (2002): 121–130.

<sup>678</sup> Kwon, “Public Art and Urban Identities.”

site against the goals and parameters of collaborative revitalization processes and public art production. Additionally, performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson has offered a critique of more recent community-engaged public art projects that have emerged out of what she calls “a mixed economy of an under-funded world of public art and an under-funded world of public relief.”<sup>679</sup> Jackson uses a theoretical concept that she defines as an “infrastructural aesthetic,” which helps her “to take a community stance on the arts but also take an aesthetic stance on community engagement.”<sup>680</sup> By considering the civic and aesthetic stakes in performances of public art and by focusing on the formal and material attributes of socially engaged works, Jackson looks at “what the aesthetic frame does to and with the idea of community, and what the aesthetic process does to social processes.”<sup>681</sup> Thus, as this section illustrates, research on urban neoliberalism, neo-reformism, and new developments in public art help us to question how and why works such as *Impressions* present us with images of “difference,” and inspires us to consider how such works expose or conceal the social history of the site for the purpose of civic placemaking. Furthermore, Jackson’s work raises important questions about how *Impressions* framed the Parkdale community and points to the need to critically engage with its material and aesthetic qualities, as well as with the underlying social processes it represents.

### 3.3 South Parkdale and Jameson Avenue

This section considers the social conditions of the installation site prior to *Impressions* to establish that there was a pre-existing need for a community-engaged public art project in this area. As *Impressions* emerged concurrently with a Creative City agenda that sought to promote Toronto’s “livability,” “diversity,” and “vibrancy,” it is important to consider how the social realities of the installation site stack up against these descriptions. As the history of representing Parkdale suggests, despite the heartfelt connection that many of its

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<sup>679</sup> Shannon Jackson, *Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 211.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

residents may have for the neighbourhood, this area has become more and more fractured in terms of “livability.” For example, in Toronto, like many global cities, the effects of neoliberal downloading and gentrification have led to a widening gap between the rich and the poor and this has impacted the city’s neighbourhood composition, giving some areas reputations for concentrated wealth, or alternatively, for concentrated poverty.<sup>682</sup> Parkdale offers an interesting example of a growing economic divide within the neighbourhood itself. Over the past several decades, Parkdale has become increasingly split into two sections—North and South Parkdale—which are the mostly residential areas located above and below Queen Street.<sup>683</sup> Whitzman draws on census data to note that compared to the rest of Toronto, Parkdale as a whole is generally home to a larger population of low-income residents.<sup>684</sup> However, North Parkdale has gentrified at a faster rate thereby attracting more residents with higher incomes, whereas South Parkdale has continued to serve as home to less affluent residents.<sup>685</sup> Previously, the city’s 2005 *Priority Neighbourhood Areas for Investment* ranking system did not identify South Parkdale as a “Priority Neighbourhood Area,”<sup>686</sup> which was the term used by the city to describe poorer neighbourhoods with large populations of people considered “at risk,” such as visible minorities, immigrants, single parents, and the elderly, and with high rates of violent crime and unemployment.<sup>687</sup> However, a new 2014 ranking system acknowledges South Parkdale as a “Neighbourhood Improvement Area,” which is the revised term for “Priority Neighbourhood Area,” due to its high rates of unemployment,

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<sup>682</sup> For example, this trend in urban development was reported in the following article: “Working Paper: Neighbourhoods,” *The Toronto Star*, 26 February 2007.

<sup>683</sup> Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 13.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> For the description and documents concerning “Priority Areas”, see: City of Toronto, “Backgrounder: 2006 Census Update on Social Risk Factors in the City’s 13 Priority Areas,” in *Toronto*, 2007, [http://www1.toronto.ca/city\\_of\\_toronto/social\\_development/finance\\_administration/files/pdf/ba ckgrounder\\_socialriskfactors\\_priority.pdf](http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/social_development/finance_administration/files/pdf/ba ckgrounder_socialriskfactors_priority.pdf) (accessed 1 September 2014); and for a list of the previous and revised rankings, see: City of Toronto, “Appendix B: Neighbourhood Equity Scores for Toronto Neighbourhoods and Recommended Neighbourhood Improvement Areas,” in *Toronto*, 2014, <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-67351.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>687</sup> City of Toronto, “Backgrounder,” 1.

low income families, “preventable hospitalizations,” and residents who rely on social assistance.<sup>688</sup> It is significant that *Impressions* was situated on Jameson, an avenue that runs through the center of South Parkdale. Considering Parkdale’s growing community of marginalized residents, its uneven development, and its widening economic and social stratification, an investment in beautifying this key thoroughfare in South Parkdale would have been necessary to better promote the idea of Parkdale’s “quality of life.”

Further issues with regard to Parkdale’s sense of “livability” include escalating population density and tenancy inequities that have resulted from increased poverty among residents, as well as disinvestment, largely on the part of many private high-rise owners in the area. As several city documents help to illustrate, Ward 14, and the South Parkdale area in particular, are quite densely populated.<sup>689</sup> According to a 2011 census, roughly 75.7% of Ward 14 residents live in apartment buildings.<sup>690</sup> In addition, a 2011 report on families and dwellings in South Parkdale indicates that apartment buildings are undeniably the leading structure type for private dwellings in the area. On a bar graph that charts the types of homes in South Parkdale, the columns representing the over 9500 private dwellings in apartment buildings soar above the diminutive columns that represent the 1065 private dwellings of all other types, such as single- and semi-detached homes, row houses, and apartments located in houses.<sup>691</sup> Simply put, this area is in large

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<sup>688</sup> Robyn Doolittle, “Losers and Gainers in Toronto’s New Priority Neighbourhoods List,” *The Toronto Star*, 11 March 2014.

<sup>689</sup> For reports that stress South Parkdale’s high level of population density, see: United Way Toronto, *Vertical Poverty: Poverty by Postal Code 2* (Toronto: United Way of Greater Toronto & National Film Board, 2011): 41; and Sara Campbell Mates et al., “Toronto’s West-Central Neighbourhoods: A Profile of the St. Christopher House Catchment Area,” *Centre for Urban and Community Studies Research Bulletin* 29 (June 2005): 1–4.

<sup>690</sup> City of Toronto. “City of Toronto Ward Profiles, 2011 Census: Ward 14—Parkdale-High Park,” in *City of Toronto*, 2011, <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/City%20Planning/Wards/Files/pdf/W/Ward%2014%20Profile%202011.pdf> (accessed 8 August 2014): 1.

<sup>691</sup> City of Toronto, “City of Toronto Neighbourhood Planning Area Profiles: South Parkdale (85)—Families & Dwellings,” in *City of Toronto*, 2011, <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Social%20Development,%20Finance%20&%20Administration/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2011/pdf3/cpa85.pdf> (accessed 8 August 2014): 1.

part “a community of tenants.”<sup>692</sup> This is especially true along Jameson Avenue, which is a street that is lined with 1950s and 1960s era “mid-rise, high-density apartment complexes,” which University of Toronto professor Alan Walks has described as “an anchor for Parkdale’s low-income residents.”<sup>693</sup> In fact, many scholars and not-for-profit groups have drawn attention to the links between population density and poverty in Parkdale’s high-rises. For instance, Parkdale’s troubling population density has been addressed in United Way reports such as *Poverty by Postal Code* (2004) and *Vertical Poverty* (2011).<sup>694</sup> Furthermore, the Parkdale Tenants Association (PTA) has cheekily addressed the serious housing inequities experienced by local tenants through the 2004 “Golden Cockroach Award,” which was awarded to the worst Parkdale landlord. Against stiff competition, the Wynn Group, which owns the 157 and 165 Jameson Avenue apartment buildings, was the runner up for this mock honour.<sup>695</sup> Another PTA initiative includes the 2006 “Lord of the Slums Bus Tour,” which parodied cultural tourism through “slum tourism.”<sup>696</sup> This also included an award for the title of “Lord of the Slums,” for which Mayor David Miller was a nominee due to what the PTA considered his inactivity on the growing tenancy crisis in the area.<sup>697</sup> These initiatives made visible the deplorable living conditions in the area not only through performance and demonstration strategies, but also through photodocumentary practices. For instance, photographer John Bonnar has a website with numerous black-and-white photographs

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<sup>692</sup> Danielle Groen, “The Resistance Movement,” in *The Grid TO*, 14 December 2011, <http://www.thegridto.com/city/places/the-resistance-movement/> (accessed 13 August 2014).

<sup>693</sup> Alan Walks, quoted in: Groen, “The Resistance Movement.”

<sup>694</sup> See: United Way Toronto, *Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty, City of Toronto, 1981–2001* (Toronto: United Way of Greater Toronto & The Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004): 18 & 29; and United Way Toronto, *Vertical Poverty*, 41.

<sup>695</sup> Parkdale Tenants Association, “2004 Golden Cockroach Award Presentation,” in *Parkdale Tenants Association*, 2004, <http://www.goldencockroach.org/gca-presentation.php> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>696</sup> See: Parkdale Tenants Association, “Slums Unlimited Tour Shows Tourists the Other Toronto,” in *Slum Tourism*, 2006, <http://www.torontoslumtourism.com/lots.php> (accessed 2 October 2014). The “Lord of the Slums” Bus Tour is also noted in: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 194.

<sup>697</sup> For its official website, and the list of the 2005 nominees for the “Lord of the Slums” title, see: Parkdale Tenants Association, “Who Is the ‘Lord of the Slums?’” in *Slum Tourism*, 2005, <http://www.torontoslumtourism.com/your-lots.php> (accessed 2 October 2014).



that were taken during the bus tour, some of which dramatically represent the derelict interiors of apartment buildings in the neighbourhood.<sup>698</sup> Prior to *Impressions*, Parkdale, and especially Jameson Avenue, was due for an image makeover, especially in terms of “livability.”

While Parkdale’s sense of “livability” was certainly tenuous at the time of *Impressions*, the area’s diversity was, and is, unquestionable. Located in downtown Toronto, which is hailed as one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, it may not be surprising that the Parkdale community is also quite diverse. Answering the question of what makes Parkdale unique, Ward 14 Councillor Gord Perks explains, “We are home to more communities, and I use this term in the broadest way possible, than anywhere else I know in the city.”<sup>699</sup> While Councillor Perks is referring to diversity of all kinds that exists in Parkdale, including ethnic, religious, sexual, and economic diversity, this area is particularly well known for its ethnic diversity. Different ethnic groups that have settled in this area over the past few decades include West Indian, Hispanic, Filipino, Sikh, and Tamil immigrants in the 1980s, Tibetan immigrants in the 1990s, and for a short time, Roma refugees fleeing Hungary in the first decade of the 2000s.<sup>700</sup> A recent neighbourhood profile of South Parkdale helps to illustrate its ethnic diversity by noting that 44% of residents polled in 2011 spoke a mother tongue other than English. The top non-official mother tongue languages of residents that were identified include: Tibetan languages (8.8%), Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino) (4.1%), Polish (3.8%), Hungarian (3.5%), Spanish (2.6%), Vietnamese (2.6%) and Tamil (1.9%).<sup>701</sup> Local non-

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<sup>698</sup> John Bonnar, “Lord of the Slums Tour ’06,” in *John Bonnar Photography*, 2006, <http://johnb.smugmug.com/Journalism/Journalism-2/Lord-of-the-Slums-Tour-06/n-2RRcF/> (accessed 14 October 2014).

<sup>699</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>700</sup> These different periods of immigration are addressed in: Groen, “The Resistance Movement”; and Zosia Bielski, “Parkdale Roma: The Neighbours May Relate to Their Plight, but Tensions Prevail,” *The Globe and Mail*, 8 October 2010.

<sup>701</sup> City of Toronto, “City of Toronto Neighbourhood Planning Area Profiles: South Parkdale (85)—Languages,” in *Toronto*, 2011, <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Social%20Development,%20Finance%20&%20Administration/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2011/pdf2/cpa85.pdf> (accessed 8 August 2014): 2.

profit organizations such as the Parkdale Intercultural Association have played, and continue to play, an integral role in the settlement of the area, by supporting newcomers through free settlement services, drop-in programs, and language classes for immigrants and refugees.<sup>702</sup> Furthermore, Jameson Avenue, considered by many people as “the heart of Parkdale,”<sup>703</sup> is an especially significant site in terms of ethnic diversity, because it is one of the main low-rent areas in Toronto where many new immigrants have made their homes. In fact, the avenue has the nickname “The Landing Strip,”<sup>704</sup> as it is the first place where many newcomers “land” upon arrival. However, Jameson Avenue is in a constant state of flux as it is also a place from which many of its residents “take off,” moving on to new neighbourhoods and new opportunities. As such, South Parkdale and Jameson Avenue are places where we can expect to see rich community diversity, which would have been exceptionally appealing to city planners aspiring to promote a diverse Toronto.

Finally, to promote the idea of community “vibrancy,” the physical space along Jameson Avenue was in dire need of revitalization prior to *Impressions*. The rows of apartment buildings along Jameson Avenue have been in a visible state of disrepair for some time and generally conform to a grim urban palette composed of grey concrete forms and rust-coloured bricks. Though the *Impressions* didactic tiles speak about the vibrancy of the neighbourhood, the built environment along Jameson Avenue is not vibrant in terms of being bright, colourful, or striking. Instead, the vibrancy of Parkdale to which *Impressions* alludes has a lot to do with the daily comings-and-goings of its densely populated, diverse community, which animates the neighbourhood. Jameson Avenue is “surging with life,”<sup>705</sup> and not only because it is heavily populated. This artery is also a key transportation route for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic. For example, at the base of the avenue is the Jameson Bridge, which gives pedestrians and

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<sup>702</sup> Erin Hatfield, “Parkdale Intercultural Association Celebrates 35 Years of Settlement Services,” in *InsideToronto.com*, 30 January 2013, <http://www.insidetoronto.com/news-story/1935695-parkdale-intercultural-association-celebrates-35-years-of-settlement-services/> (accessed 20 September 2014).

<sup>703</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid. See also: Groen, “The Resistance Movement.”

<sup>705</sup> I am borrowing this expression from Dionne Brand’s poem, “for Jameson Avenue,” which I accessed on the *Impressions* webpage. See: Mural Routes, “Jameson Avenue Impressions.”

cyclists access to the lakeshore by allowing people to safely pass over the Gardiner Expressway.<sup>706</sup> This is an especially important route in the summer months for Parkdale residents who want to escape the heat by going down to the lake.<sup>707</sup> This bridge also gives joggers and cyclists access to the very popular Waterfront Trail.<sup>708</sup> Jameson Avenue also serves downtown vehicular traffic as it connects Toronto's west end to the Gardiner Expressway and the Lakeshore Boulevard. Recognizing Jameson Avenue's critical role in linking the West End neighbourhoods to the major transportation corridor along the lakeshore, Councillor Perks notes that, "[Jameson] is not only the 'Landing Strip,' it's also the 'Welcome to the West End' road."<sup>709</sup> Situating *Impressions* on this popular route for Toronto traffic ensured that this city-funded art installation would be seen by local viewers, as well as by many visitors, whether they were slowly passing by the images on a leisurely summer stroll, zipping past them on a bicycle, or getting intermittent glimpses of the images while driving along the avenue. Investments in placemaking strategies that would draw viewers' attention away from the rundown buildings and that would better reflect the neighbourhood's unique sense of "vibrancy" were expedient to Creative City agendas that sought to promote dynamic and thriving neighbourhoods at this time. By considering South Parkdale and Jameson Avenue's complex social realities, we can see why the installation site was of strategic importance for city planners, due to both the need to, and the area's *potential* to, reflect neo-reformist values of "livability," "diversity," and "vibrancy."

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<sup>706</sup> For a description of the bridge and its uses, see: City of Toronto, "Transportation Services: New Bike Lane on the Jameson Bridge," in *Cyclometer*, August 2011, <http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/cyclometer/newsletter/2011-08.htm> (accessed 2 September 2014).

<sup>707</sup> The need for the bridge to serve as access to the lake was reported in: "Jameson Avenue pedestrian bridge will remain closed for the summer," in *Inside Toronto*, 4 June 2008, <http://www.insidetoronto.com/community-story/24367-jameson-avenue-pedestrian-bridge-will-remain-closed-for-the-summer/> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>708</sup> *Impressions* has captured the attention of not only pedestrians but also cyclists. For example, see this blog post by a cyclist/blogger named Duncan: Duncan, "Jameson Avenue Impressions," in *Duncan's City Ride: A BikingToronto Blog*, 7 November 2009, <http://bikingtoronto.com/duncan/jameson-avenue-impressions/> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>709</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

### 3.4 Jameson Avenue “Impressions” (2009)

With the understanding that Jameson Avenue presented a key site for urban neoliberalism and neo-reformist redevelopment and discourse, we may now situate the project’s goals and framework for participation within this political context. The idea to create a community art project on Jameson Avenue emerged from the offices of City Hall as part of a street reconstruction project. In the fall of 2008, the City of Toronto began the Jameson Avenue road reconstruction between Queen Street West and Springhurst Avenue.<sup>710</sup> This reconstruction was “triggered by extensive water main replacement work,”<sup>711</sup> which meant that parts of the roads and the sidewalks needed to be repaired [Fig. 3.7]. The city allocated a \$2.5 million budget to cover the cost of the water main replacement, as well as the road and sidewalk reconstruction.<sup>712</sup> In addition to these plans, the city aspired to beautify the street through the Jameson Avenue Revitalization Project. City images reveal that even prior to the reconstruction many sections of the sidewalk were patchy and uneven, and the tree planters, albeit functional, appeared somewhat barren and unremarkable [Figs. 3.8 & 3.9]. The revitalization component was intended to resolve these issues, by “renew[ing] public space and [improving] pedestrian amenities.”<sup>713</sup> On top of the reconstruction budget, approximately \$200,000 was invested in refurbishing the streetscape by replacing trees and installing new tree planters and by

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<sup>710</sup> “Jameson Road Work to Start up Again,” in *InsideToronto.com*, 18 March 2009, <http://www.insidetoronto.com/community-story/36065-jameson-road-work-to-start-up-again/> (accessed 24 June 2014). Note: As this article notes, the reconstruction began in the fall and then was put on pause during the Canadian National Exhibition and during the winter months. It was intended to be complete in June 2009, but it was delayed and so it was completed in the fall of 2009.

<sup>711</sup> Robert Mays, Project Officer, Beautiful Streets Program, Public Realm Section, Transportation Services, City of Toronto, in an email to the author, 24 July 2014.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> Robert Mays, “Press Release: Jameson Avenue Residents Leave Lasting Impressions,” in *Toronto*, 30 October 2009, <http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/it/newsrel.nsf/0/39402fdf2613ed998525765f0073f7c1?OpenDocument> (accessed 24 June 2014). For a message about the reconstruction from Gord Perks’ office, see also: Gord Perks, “Jameson Reconstruction—Updated Notice,” in *Gord Perks, City Councillor, Ward 14, Parkdale-High Park*, 2009, [http://dev.gordperks.ca/park\\_post/2009/03/13/jameson-reconstruction-%E2%80%93updated-notice/](http://dev.gordperks.ca/park_post/2009/03/13/jameson-reconstruction-%E2%80%93updated-notice/) (accessed 26 June 2014).

creating a community art project.<sup>714</sup> As part of the revitalization, Toronto Hydro also improved the lighting on the street by upgrading the light fixtures.<sup>715</sup> Thus, *Impressions* represents a small part of a greater city effort to make the avenue safer, brighter, and more beautiful.



Figure 3.7: Photograph documenting the Jameson Avenue Revitalization Project process (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2008–2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.



Figure 3.8: Photograph of Jameson Avenue sidewalk with the old configuration of cobblestones (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, c. 2007–2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.

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<sup>714</sup> Mays, in an email, 2014. Note: Part of this budget was also allocated to cobblestone retention.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.



Figure 3.9: Photograph of Jameson Avenue tree planters prior to the Jameson Avenue Revitalization Project (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, c.2007–2008). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.

The overhaul of Jameson Avenue, and especially the community art component, represents one of the many ways that the Miller administration tapped into creativity and civil society in an effort to transform Toronto into a world class city.<sup>716</sup> As such, it was guided and supported by a number of city divisions. For example, the street reconstruction fell under the Public Realm Section, Transportation Services portfolio as it involved road and sidewalk maintenance, street cleaning, and the development of public spaces, tasks for which the transportation department is responsible.<sup>717</sup> The revitalization was also supported by the City of Toronto’s Economic Development & Culture Division, which is dedicated to providing services that aim to strengthen and diversify Toronto’s economic activities and to promote the city as livable and “culturally vibrant.”<sup>718</sup> Most

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<sup>716</sup> For more on this agenda, see: TMECAC, *Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Agenda for Prosperity*, 1–51.

<sup>717</sup> City of Toronto, “City Divisions: Transportation Services,” in *Toronto*, 1998–2014, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=dc32e03bb8d1e310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>718</sup> The Mural Routes webpage for the project acknowledges the support of this division (See: Mural Routes, “Jameson Avenue Impressions”). The description of this division, is from: City of Toronto, “City Divisions: Economic Development & Culture,” in *Toronto*, 1998–2014,

importantly, to ensure that the revitalization plans would include funding for a community-engaged public art project, Councillor Perks collaborated with the Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat.<sup>719</sup> In addition to reimagining and revitalizing public space, the Clean and Beautiful City initiative aspired to foster civic pride and to increase civic engagement among Toronto residents by creating opportunities to involve citizens in the revitalization process.<sup>720</sup> Many city divisions had a stake in this project, and as such the goals and aspirations of these various divisions played out in the facilitation of, and the final product created by, the community art project.<sup>721</sup>

In preparation for the reconstruction and revitalization plans, project officer of the Clean and Beautiful City initiative (Transportation Services), Robert Mays, sent a call to various arts organizations for the community art component of the revitalization plan. Through this process, the city hoped to find an artist who was living in Parkdale, or even better, on Jameson Avenue, who could create a public art installation that would engage with and reflect the community in some way. As Councillor Perks recalls,

What the project aimed to do was to get away from the formal representations through community agencies, residents associations, and zoning bylaws and simply allow the people who live on Jameson to make visible their presence.<sup>722</sup>

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<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=2669e03bb8d1e310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>719</sup> Perks noted his work with the Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat (in conversation, 2014). This collaboration was also mentioned in: “Jameson Road Work to Start up Again.” For more information about the Clean and Beautiful Secretariat, see: Fareed Amin, “2006 Budget Briefing Note: Clean & Beautiful City Secretariat—Neighbourhood Beautification Program,” in *Toronto*, 2006, [http://www.toronto.ca/budget2006/pdf/bnop2006\\_cleanbeautiful\\_beautification.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/budget2006/pdf/bnop2006_cleanbeautiful_beautification.pdf) (accessed 2 September 2014).

<sup>720</sup> City of Toronto, “Mayor David Miller: Clean City Beautiful City,” in *Toronto*, 1998–2014, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=8a43d21f9f343410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=623633d602943410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (accessed 12 September 2014).

<sup>721</sup> In this discussion, I often refer to the representatives that worked on behalf of the City of Toronto, as “the city.” This is because, with so many representatives involved, sometimes it was unclear online, and understandably sometimes even the interviewees could not recall, which city representatives were involved in each decision.

<sup>722</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

To achieve these goals, the guiding principles were: Who better to rally the community, than a Parkdale resident? Who better to represent the community, than the community members themselves? Reflecting the ethos of the Clean and Beautiful City initiative and the Creative City script, the community art project was intended to articulate, or even better, enhance the existing sense of community pride in Parkdale through civic engagement. Furthermore, by drawing on the expertise of Parkdale residents, this project could better purport to be a genuine representation of the community, which was critical to developing an “authentic” sense of place through the project. This approach reflects what scholar Nikolas Rose has identified as a new relationship between expertise and power in the ‘advanced’ liberal era, which relies on the expertise of individuals and communities to better create truth claims.<sup>723</sup>

The city’s original call described strict parameters for the project; it outlined the site for the project, asserted the need for a local artist facilitator, and then briefly described the project in two parts. The first part of the project involved beautifying the sidewalks lining both sides of Jameson Avenue between Queen Street and Leopold Street. The city provided an example of the hands-on activity that they were interested in, which was to invite community members to press their hands or feet in the freshly laid concrete on the sidewalks to create lasting impressions.<sup>724</sup> These impressions would then be painted to help them stand out and to bring colour to the avenue (perhaps with a view to literally enhance the area’s “vibrancy” through colour). The second part of the Jameson Avenue project required that the artist design and produce inserts that would be installed on the new tree planter boxes. The city indicated that this component needed to be site-specific, to thematically connect to the street impressions in some way, and to fit into two recessed areas on the planters, which would measure approximately 39 inches by 10 inches.<sup>725</sup> Despite this rigid framework, by looking at the final product it is clear that

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<sup>723</sup> Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, 37–64 (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996): 56–57.

<sup>724</sup> Karin Eaton, in conversation with the author, 20 January 2014.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.



there was some room for negotiation.<sup>726</sup> This illustrates the impact of cultures of participation on urban policy and governance at this time, in that the city was open to hearing new ideas and to engaging in a collaborative creative process.

Mural Routes, a Canadian not-for-profit arts organization that has supported and produced wall art, quickly responded to the city's call. This organization is dedicated to "improving communities through mural art," with the belief that public wall art has the potential to inspire community-building.<sup>727</sup> In addition to its role in supporting artistic initiatives, Mural Routes also shares its expertise by offering consultation on art projects, by hosting a semi-annual mural symposium, and by providing outreach and education programming to aspiring, as well as to more established, artists. Mural Routes also serves as a networking "hub" for its members, who are artists, arts administrators, not-for-profit organizations, and businesses, and it plays an important role in connecting its members with opportunities to create art.<sup>728</sup> After reading the city's call, Mural Routes Executive Director Karin Eaton contacted some artists that she had worked with previously and submitted a proposal with a modest budget. It took a while for the city to approve her proposal, and so when the time came, Eaton needed to reconsider who could take on the project. She thought of Bravo because he was a graduate of the Ontario Collage of Art and Design (OCAD), she had worked with him before, and he was once a resident of the Parkdale area.<sup>729</sup> While at OCAD, Bravo majored in drawing and painting and was especially interested in producing large-scale public art, specifically, brightly painted murals.<sup>730</sup> His previous work with Eaton involved a series of paintings on the ground in Parkdale a few years earlier, making his involvement all the more suitable for this project. Bravo accepted the opportunity and from that point on, Mural Routes took on the role of "project manager," responsible for liaising with the city, hiring additional support

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid.

<sup>727</sup> Mural Routes, "About Us," *Mural Routes: Improving Communities through Mural Art*, 2011, <http://www.muralroutes.com/aboutus.htm> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Eaton, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>730</sup> "Jim Bravo," *The Patch Project*, 2013, <http://thepatchproject.com/artists/jim-bravo/> (accessed 12 September 2014).

staff and purchasing supplies, and Bravo was the lead artist, responsible for designing and facilitating the creative work and for collaborating with the city and the community throughout the process.<sup>731</sup> The city took on roles such as: project funding, city permits, and aspects of the installation process. This partnership reflected a working process that was critical to the Miller administration, which involved creating “synergies” that harnessed the creative potential and talents of local citizens, as well as the support of public and private institutions, as a way to propel neighbourhood improvement strategies.<sup>732</sup>

As experienced arts professionals were brought on to the *Impressions* team, some of original ideas for the project began to shift. Eaton and Bravo were not very keen to produce a series of resident handprints in the drying sidewalk cement for the first phase of the project because of health and safety concerns for the participants. Although the city was excited about the handprint idea, Councillor Perks explained they were open to hearing different ideas.<sup>733</sup> Bravo went into the community to talk about the project and in doing this he discovered that the many of the residents that he spoke to felt attached to the original cobblestones that were being torn up as part of the street reconstruction.<sup>734</sup> He notes, “It was requested by residents that I consider the stones in my approach.”<sup>735</sup> Bravo’s idea for this phase of the project involved cleaning and refurbishing the bricks and reconfiguring them into the original designs that are now found at the north end of Jameson Avenue [Fig. 3.10].<sup>736</sup> Despite the tremendous improvement to the sidewalk, the reconfigured bricks did not, nor have they since, received as much interest as the photographic tiles that were mounted as part of the second phase of the project. Bravo himself remarks on this, commenting with a hearty laugh that, “Nobody ever talks about

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<sup>731</sup> Eaton, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>732</sup> For an example of how the Miller administration promoted “synergy,” see: TMECAC, *Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Agenda for Prosperity*, 17–21.

<sup>733</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>734</sup> Eaton, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>735</sup> James Bravo’s artist statement is located here: Mural Routes, “Jameson Avenue Impressions,” *Mural Routes: Improving communities through mural art*, 2009, <http://www.muralroutes.com/news/jameson.htm> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

the cobblestones or the planters themselves.”<sup>737</sup> Admittedly, as the focus of this chapter is the photographic component of the project, I am also guilty of this. Nevertheless, in the context of this discussion, I would be remiss to omit how Bravo’s working process for the first phase of this project illustrates the vital social role that artists can play in redevelopment strategies. For this phase, Bravo, in part, performed the role of a mediator/social worker by explaining the redevelopment plans to people in the community and by finding creative ways to integrate community input into the urban design process.<sup>738</sup> This also hints at the inherent capacity of photo-based community-engagement strategies to overshadow other kinds of representation that are inspired by community input. Here, the portraits of community members have the power to signal community-engagement for people outside of the project, in a way that the bricks, on their own, cannot realize.



Figure 3.10: Photograph of Jameson Avenue with the reconstructed sidewalks and tree planters. Detail of James Thierry Bravo’s redesigned cobblestones (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of the City of Toronto.

<sup>737</sup> Jim Thierry Bravo in conversation with the author, 20 January 2014.

<sup>738</sup> For a discussion of how the creative competitiveness strategy downloads social work onto artists, see: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 198.

As Karin Eaton explains, “as soon as [Bravo] pitched [the idea for phase two, the city] didn’t care so much about the sidewalk anymore because they saw how powerful the other piece was going to be.”<sup>739</sup> For the second phase of the project, Bravo’s idea was to transform the otherwise unused public space on the new tree planters into a low-level gallery of community photographs. Prior to deciding on his concept for the second phase, Bravo had presented several different ideas to the city representatives. He remembers an early conversation as follows:

[The city] said, “We want to get something funky happening on the tree planters.” I said, “Well, how about a mosaic?” I presented a few things: a mosaic, this, that... They were like, “Hmmm, I don’t know, let’s get the community involved.”

He and the city representatives considered Jameson Avenue’s reputation as a “transient place, [or] a transitory place,”<sup>740</sup> and these discussions led to the concept behind the art installation that we see today. Bravo notes,

My idea was based on my perception of Jameson Avenue as a hub of immigration. The plan was to adorn the newly installed tree planter boxes with passport-style portraits of community residents, images of social activities, and various landmarks.<sup>741</sup>

This concept involved the local residents by asking them to pose for the portrait photographs that were later used in the installation. Bravo originally hoped to create a full passport-style display for each participant, which would include a portrait photograph on one side and information about the subject such as their name and the country from which they emigrated on other side. While the idea to include text was rejected by the city, the plan to create passport-style photographic portrait tiles, as well as tiles with streetscape images, moved forward. Due in large part to photography’s longstanding, albeit contested, reputation for capturing “photographic truth,” it is possible that city

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<sup>739</sup> Eaton, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>740</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid. See also, Bravo’s artist statement, which is posted on the Mural Routes website and which is referenced above.

representatives saw the potential for photography, and especially identification-style portrait photographs and documentary-style streetscape photographs, to powerfully convey “authentic” impressions of the community and to represent the visible diversity of the neighbourhood.

When asked about the title for this phase of the project, Bravo is hesitant to claim it as his own, remarking with candor, “It doesn’t sound very much like me. [...] It’s a good name though.”<sup>742</sup> It seems as though the idea for the title was inspired in part by the city’s original handprint idea, which played with the different definitions of the word, “impression.”<sup>743</sup> For instance, the community handprints would have asked the residents to literally impress, or make their mark in, the urban environment, with the hopes of both making an impression on, and possibly impressing, viewers.<sup>744</sup> Bravo’s new approach relied on photography to create impressions of the community, and as such this phase of the Jameson Avenue project was entitled, *Jameson Avenue “Impressions,”* or simply, *Impressions*.

As soon as photography became a large component of the project, Bravo knew that he would need to recruit a professional photographer. In a serendipitous twist of fate, he remembers running into an acquaintance, photographer Kate Young, one evening at a bar on Queen Street West. He explained the project and his need for a photographer to Young, and her response was, “I’m free! I’m here! [...] I live on Jameson!”<sup>745</sup> The night of their fortuitous meeting was the same night that she had returned from the West Coast to live in Toronto and at this time, she was subletting an apartment on the avenue. Though not a part of the *Impressions* narrative, this chance meeting of two young, talented, creative individuals at a downtown bar is easily a page torn directly from the Creative City script. Here we see an example of what scholar and activist Angela

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<sup>742</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>743</sup> Karin Eaton discussed the connection between the original idea for hand impressions and the title, in conversation with the author, 20 January 2014.

<sup>744</sup> For the various definitions of the term, “impression,” see: “Impression,” *Dictionary.com*, 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/impression> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>745</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

McRobbie calls “good luck” work, to describe how young professionals, or rather “pioneers of the new economy,” acquire creative employment through casual networking.<sup>746</sup>

Bravo, who was more accustomed to painting and murals, and Young, who describes her style of photography as “more controlled [and] conceptual,”<sup>747</sup> now faced the daunting task of facilitating this community-engaged photographic art project, which challenged them both to step outside of their comfort zones. In fact, this project pushed many of the stakeholders out of their comfort zones and several interviewees admit to entering the project with some concerns. It is important to include a discussion of these concerns because it helps to enrich our understanding of the different intentions and goals of the people who were working within a largely predetermined, politically inflected, framework to create *Impressions*. For instance, as noted earlier, Councillor Perks had some concerns about issues of representation and felt that it was important that a local artist work with his constituents in a way that was direct and personal. Councillor Perks also explains that while he was involved in the planning discussions along the way, he is generally cautious about the relationship between politics and art, and that as such he wanted to make sure that he was not making all of the decisions. Elaborating on this concern, he states, “I don’t think governments should ever tell anybody what is and is not art.”<sup>748</sup> One challenge that Councillor Perks may have faced was ensuring that the project would represent his constituents, while also fitting into the different goals and mandates of the city divisions that were supporting the initiative. He would have had to carefully consider his different roles as civic actor and elected official for this project, and to work

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<sup>746</sup> McRobbie defines “good luck jobs” as the following, in a footnote: “Good luck jobs[:] Good looking young guy sitting in bar in Soho, has dropped out of Goldsmiths College and is working as a DJ but not earning more than a pittance. Girl chats him up, asks him if he is interested in sound production for films, next day he drops by the studio, gets a job, six months later he is fully skilled, highly trained working in the film industry based in London but travelling regularly to L.A.” See: Angela McRobbie, “‘Everyone is Creative’: Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?” in *Be Creative*, 2003, [http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text\\_5.html](http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text_5.html) (accessed 1 October 2014). Available in print in: Elizabeth B. Silva and Tony Bennett, eds., *Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life*, 186–202 (Durham: Sociology Press, 2004).

<sup>747</sup> Kate Young in conversation with the author, 20 January 2014.

<sup>748</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

in a way that was simultaneously organic and deeply bureaucratic. Considerations of his political identity, as well as his political power, informed some of Councillor Perk's decisions throughout the process. For example, he decided not to include his own photograph in *Impressions* when he was asked if he would like to participate. Of this decision, he explains that although he loves the street and would love to be affiliated with it in this way, "there are certain things that [he has] to give up in exchange for the privileges and power of office."<sup>749</sup>

Eaton had other concerns going into the project, many of which had to do with practical aspects, such as the use of an unfamiliar artistic practice and the location of the work. She remembers being hesitant about the low placement of the tiles, although in conversation she did not elaborate on how the discussions about the potential vulnerability of the project played out with among the collaborators. Instead, she explained, "We always knew they were going to be vulnerable. I was a little saddened by how low they were to the ground because I knew we were going to have problems."<sup>750</sup> Based on previous projects, she was aware of how snowplows, people, and the elements, could damage low-placed mosaics. The unique garbage situation on Jameson Avenue presented an even further threat to the work. Jameson Avenue is one of the few streets in Toronto on which apartment building tenants and management put garbage out for curbside collection. Perks explains that this goes back to the 1950s and 1960s and that it is the consequence of unfortunate business practices and poor development standards at that time. As a result, the buildings on Jameson Avenue do not have adequate garbage storage facilities, which means that the sidewalks are often littered with large items such as old mattresses and unwanted furniture. On a street where there is a high rate of resident turnover and where there are pest issues (the scourge of many urban apartment dwellers), this is a persistent issue. Perks admits, "Nothing is perfect. Yeah, you live with it."<sup>751</sup> For Eaton, this was not the first time that Mural Routes had taken on the challenge of working within specific environmental parameters, and she confesses that while the

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<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

<sup>750</sup> Eaton, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

vulnerability of the tiles on the avenue is unfortunate, she has “come to terms with it.”<sup>752</sup> The fact that the tiles were placed so low, despite Eaton’s past experience, speaks to the rigidity of the city’s framework with regard to the physical space that was allotted for the community art project, as well as the city’s keen interest in mounting the photographic tiles, even though the location posed serious issues. Eaton was also a bit uncertain about the idea of transferring images onto tiles because it was a new process for the organization and she was not sure what materials to use to best protect the final product. Nonetheless, she was keen to try Bravo’s idea because Mural Routes seeks opportunities to be experimental and to expand the conceptions of, and the practices used in creating, wall art.<sup>753</sup>

Finally, beyond the challenge of trying a new artistic approach, Bravo and Young had some concerns about the possibility of having awkward social interactions with subjects who might not want to have their photographs taken. In light of this, they realized that they had to be careful to respect people’s different religious and philosophical values in the process. The artists also knew that establishing a good rapport with the subjects was going to be key to the success of the project. Young had the challenging task of meeting the photographic subjects on the spot, quickly explaining the project, obtaining permissions, and making the subjects comfortable enough in front of the camera to capture quality portraits.<sup>754</sup> Bravo and Young wondered if they would be able to get the number of participants that were needed to complete the tiles for all of the planter boxes. Bravo notes, “We were worried. We thought, ‘We’re lucky if we get 80 people.’”<sup>755</sup> In the end, they were pleased to discover that the people to whom they spoke were generally affable and, as noted, the artists collected hundreds of photographic portraits. The sheer number of photographs speaks to the artists’ success in performing

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<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid. It is important to recognize that the photo transfer process was an experimental process for the facilitators because it helps to illustrate that the tiles are eroding today despite their best efforts, which at that time were informed by very little prior experience.

<sup>754</sup> Young, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>755</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.



the “social work” that this project entailed, despite having very little prior experience with social engagement.

The work to produce and mount the photographic tiles was executed from the summer of 2009 to the fall, over a period of five months. To obtain the portraits of various community members, Bravo, Young, and another woman who was hired as an administrator for the project, Bridgette Estrela, used several strategies.<sup>756</sup> For example, Young and Bravo approached an ESL class that was held for people from the Tibetan community. Here they were met with much excitement from the students, but they were told to come back another day so that the students could have their photographs taken in their traditional Tibetan clothing. Another strategy that garnered the most portrait photographs was “piggy-backing” on community events. Young and Bravo attended community events such as the Parkdale Food, Earth and Culture Festival, which celebrates the annual harvest of HOPE Community Garden with a potluck and a variety of performances representing African, hip-hop, and Tibetan cultures.<sup>757</sup> Young comments that it was much easier to take photographs at these types of community events because “it gets contagious” and people become braver to participate.<sup>758</sup> Also, these family-friendly events were very helpful because when there were children around it was much easier to recruit adults. As a result, in many of the portraits there are images of parents with their children. To attract more participants, the *Impressions* team also hosted two pizza parties on the front lawns of apartment buildings on Jameson Avenue. Bravo recalls that by offering free food they got a very good response and they were able to reach out to the “real characters” of Parkdale.<sup>759</sup> Bravo and Young also approached schools in the area, but only one expressed an interest in participating. Finally, Young also took to the

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<sup>756</sup> These various strategies were described in conversations with Eaton, Young, Bravo, and Estrela (2014).

<sup>757</sup> This event is now called the Parkdale Earth, Food and Culture Festival. In 2009, this took place on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at Masaryk Park. See: “Parkdale Food, Earth and Culture Festival,” in *H.O.P.E. Garden Blog: Healthy Organic Parkdale Edibles*, 1 September 2009, <http://hopecommunitygarden.wordpress.com/2009/09/01/parkdale-food-earth-and-culture-festival/> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>758</sup> Young, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>759</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

street using a strategy described by Bravo as “guerrilla photography.” Importantly, although “guerrilla photography” is often associated with photography that is done without permission or permits, or more recently with the spontaneous picture taking of one’s self or one’s friends intended for sharing on social network sites,<sup>760</sup> neither was the case in this project. In the context of this project, the term, “guerrilla photography,” was used by Bravo to describe the act of approaching strangers, asking them to participate, and making sure that the subjects sign photographic releases.<sup>761</sup> Regardless of the steep learning curve involved in the outreach and picture-taking processes, the artists remember the process fondly and explain that by engaging with the community in this way, they collected not only hundreds of photographs, but also countless stories.

The portraits first existed as a collection of striking digital image files, and were the result of a flexible and somewhat spontaneous photographic process. There were no guidelines for selecting the subjects other than that they must live in the neighbourhood and give their permission. Generally, the subjects were photographed in whatever attire they were wearing on the day that they agreed to participate. Many of the portraits show subjects who wear various markers of identity, such as cultural costumes, brands, hairstyles, and accessories. For instance, in one image, a beaming woman wears a Canada t-shirt and a small heap of crosses on chains [Fig. 3.11], which connote ideas of immigration or tourism and Christianity, respectively.<sup>762</sup> In another photograph, a tattooed man presents us with more subversive markers of identity including, dark sunglasses, a leather hat, a chain with a playing card charm, and an outfit that is covered

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<sup>760</sup> For different definitions of “guerrilla photography,” see, for example: Noam Kroll, “Shooting Guerrilla Style (At Your Own Risk): The 8 Tips You Need to Know,” in *IndieWire*, 10 October 2013, <http://www.indiewire.com/article/shooting-guerilla-style-at-your-own-risk-the-8-tips-you-need-to-know> (accessed 1 October 2014); and “Guerrilla Photography,” in *Urban Dictionary*, 2011, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Guerrilla%20Photography> (accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>761</sup> Here I will note that aside from a slice of pizza here or there, none of the participants received compensation of any kind to participate in the project.

<sup>762</sup> For a seminal work on visual semiotic analysis, see: Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image,” in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: The Noonday Press, 1997; orig. 1964): 52–68; and Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications Limited in association with The Open University, 1997): 13–74.

with skull and flame designs [Fig. 3.12]. By comparing just two of the *Impressions* portraits, we are reminded of scholar Kathryn Woodward's work on identity and difference, which describes "identity" as relational and defines "difference" as the "symbolic markings" of identity that are considered *in relation to others*.<sup>763</sup> Importantly some aspects of identity and difference may be obscured or invisible, which might include gender and class identities, as well as identities that are associated with beliefs or ideologies.<sup>764</sup> As such, many aspects of identity and difference may elude photographic portraiture. Despite these potential omissions, the *Impressions* portraits convey a powerful message of diversity and difference as we consider the hundreds of images in relation to each other. Furthermore, due to its focus on community, and to the spontaneous process of capturing everyday subjects, these portraits are more easily aligned with ideas of "authenticity."



Figure 3.11: Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009.  
Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.

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<sup>763</sup> Kathryn Woodward, *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications Ltd with the Open University, 1997): 9–10.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid*, 12.



Figure 3.12: Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009.  
 Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.

Similar to the selection of subjects, the settings that were captured in the portrait photographs were also the result of an impromptu process. Young did not have a portable studio set up at any of the locations. Instead, she took the photographs using on-location photographic techniques, working with whatever lighting and backgrounds were available in the moment. The resulting portraits help to tell this story. There are photographs of subjects who pose in front of dark grey or bright white backgrounds and portraits of schoolchildren posing in front of bookshelves [Figs. 3.13–3.15]. Some subjects were photographed in front of a community mural that Bravo describes as a “psychedelic swirl shack”<sup>765</sup> in a local park. Other subjects were photographed in front of brick backgrounds or in front of walls covered in small square tiles typical to those found in the lobbies of 1950s and 1960s era apartment buildings. Finally, some portraits represent people standing in natural environments. For example, in one image, a mother and son embrace in front of large trees. Through this process, Young captured the diverse people of, and showed glimpses of the familiar places around, the Parkdale community.

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<sup>765</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.



Figure 3.13: Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009.  
Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.



Figure 3.14: Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009.  
Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.



Figure 3.15: Kate Young, Portrait of a Parkdale Resident, 2009.  
 Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.

At one point in the process, it was decided that in addition to the portrait photographs, there should also be images of the neighbourhood. Bravo explains that in part, this decision came out of the concern that there would not be enough participants to create a large collection of portrait photographs. Young was asked to take a set of streetscape images and so, she also photographed local shops, restaurants, institutions, street signs, and domestic residences.<sup>766</sup> The photographs of restaurants speak to the cultural demographics of the area, with names such as: Taste of Tibet, Mother India, Shangri-La, and Roti Lady [Fig. 3.16]. Young also took photographs that highlight environmental and architectural details found in the neighbourhood. For example, walking along the installation, viewers see photographs of pigeons, rustic doorways, rooftops, windows, fences, fire escapes, monuments, and local graffiti. The streetscape images were shot to reflect a variety of vantage points that would be familiar to residents, including several views taken from different high rise balconies [Fig. 3.17]. There are also images of the civic infrastructure that surrounds the community, including images of bridges, the Gardiner Expressway, and hydro lines [Fig. 3.18]. In addition to images of hard infrastructure, Young captured countless images that allude to the neighbourhoods' soft infrastructure, including photographs of health and recreation centres, churches,

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<sup>766</sup> In my interviews, it is unclear as to who exactly made these decisions. This is quite common in a fast-paced, collaborative project.

schools, and social welfare organizations. As a result, the narrative of the diverse community and the places of the neighbourhood that is told through the portraits is further supported by the intermittent photographs of local urban space. In addition to filling the potential gaps left by an insufficient number of portrait tiles, these images contribute to civic placemaking goals by showcasing various civic investments alongside visual evidence of the community's entrepreneurial spirit represented by the storefront images of small businesses.

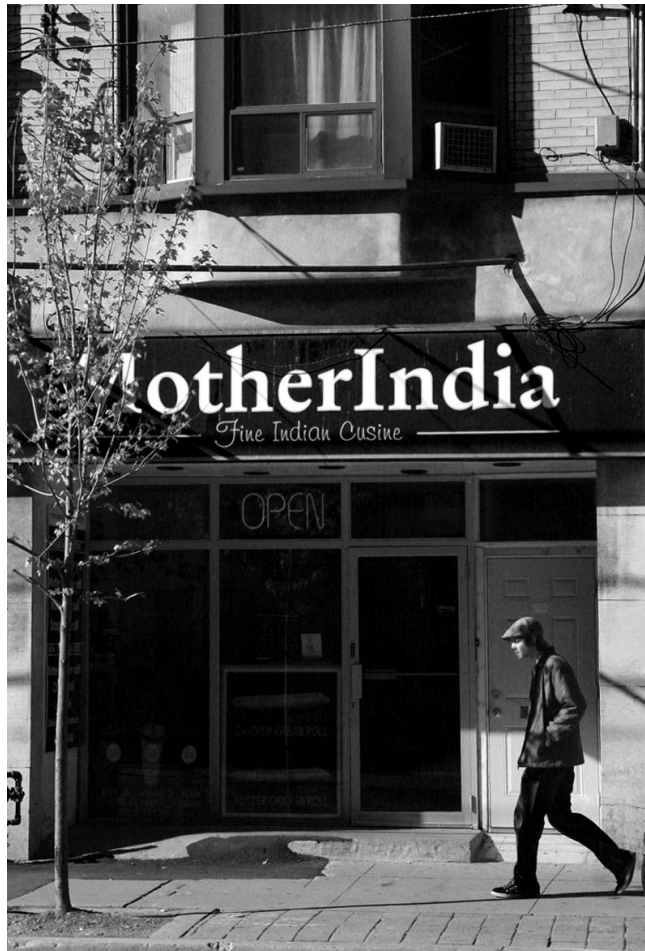


Figure 3.16: Kate Young, Photograph of Mother India, Fine Indian Cuisine restaurant storefront for *Impressions* (1456 Queen Street West, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.



Figure 3.17: Kate Young, Photograph of a view from a balcony for *Impressions* (Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.



Figure 3.18: Kate Young, Photograph of traffic on the Gardiner Expressway for *Impressions* (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Kate Young.



Young's photographs were intended to capture the people and places that compose the "vibrant Parkdale community," and as such it is important to make a brief comment on why the image tiles are black-and-white, and not colour, representations. For example, Mother India's sign has bright orange text set against a lime green background. Why not use colour photographs to capture this vivid design? Many of the formal qualities of the photographic tiles are the result of practical decisions based on the materials that were used. The tiles that were purchased for the project were stark white, Italian porcelain, which were selected with the hope that they could sustain freezing winter temperatures. The photographs, originally taken in colour, were then converted to black-and-white for the project. When asked about the choice to use black-and-white instead of colour images on the tiles, the artists note that colour images would have been much more expensive and that possibly colour images would not transfer as well to the tiles as those in black-and-white. At the time, the artists also thought that colour images may fade under the sunlight and that the contrast of black and white would create a sharper image. Young adds that one of the benefits of black-and-white photography is that it helps to tie all the images together and gives the images a somewhat timeless quality.<sup>767</sup> However, Bravo notes that this choice was contested and that, "someone said they thought that black-and-white would be too morbid, [that] the area's already kind of downtrodden" and that perhaps these issues could be resolved with a more colourful approach. Bravo admits that, "Colour would be amazing," as it would reflect everything from brightly painted backgrounds to vivid make-up and wildly colourful clothing choices.<sup>768</sup> Certainly the use of colour would help to make the concept of "vibrancy" more accessible and immediate for viewers. Nevertheless, their decision ultimately rested on cost, as well as decisions about which materials they thought would work the best and what could potentially last the longest.

The process of transferring the images onto the tiles was labour intensive and the majority of the work was done in a small studio apartment near the installation site. The

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<sup>767</sup> Young, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>768</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

digital images were reverse-formatted on the computer and then printed onto white printer paper. To create a photographic tile, Bravo applied primer to the tile and gel medium to the printed image. He then placed the image face-down on the tile and smoothed out all of the air bubbles to make sure that it was pressed against the tile's surface. The image set after several hours and at this point Bravo sprayed the paper with water and rubbed the surface with his hands to remove all of the pulp from the tile. When the paper was removed, the image was revealed in its original format, composed of the various shades of black ink from the printed image against the bright white tile. The photographic tile was then baked in a standard kitchen oven and sealed. To create the hundreds of tiles, Bravo repeated these steps several hundred times, with the help of Estrela, Young, and a few volunteers [Fig. 3.19]. Young recalls, "We were doing this in the summer, with the oven on the whole time. [...] It was an open studio space, and the kitchen was open with the living space. So it was hot!"<sup>769</sup> With the clarity of hindsight Bravo adds, "If we have to do this again I'm going to buy a kiln and do it somewhere else."<sup>770</sup> This process was remarkably low-tech and low in cost, compared to other civic investments at this time, such as the renovations slated for Union Station. Whereas the former represents a small, civic investment in a DIY community arts project that cost a fraction of \$200,000 and that relied on the labour of the artists and volunteers, as well as the goodwill of citizens who agreed to be photographed, the latter received an approved budget of \$640-million from all levels of government in 2009.<sup>771</sup> This helps to illustrate scholar Jamie Peck's point that the tools in the creative city toolkit are generally low-risk and affordable investments in arts and culture that are fairly easily incorporated into some forms of municipal action, especially when they are compared to larger investments in hard infrastructure.<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>769</sup> Young, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>770</sup> Bravo, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>771</sup> See: Natalie Alcoba, "With Union Station Makeover Costs Heading Well Over-Budget, City Council Looks for Provincial, Federal Help," *National Post*, 15 October 2013.

<sup>772</sup> See: Jamie Peck, "Struggling with the Creative Class," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 4 (2005): 740–770.



Figure 3.19: Photograph of Bridgette Estrela sealing up tiles and Kate Young sorting tiles at Bravo's temporary studio (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.

After the hours of sweaty, arduous, and monotonous labour required to produce the photographic tiles, there was still a lot more to do to prepare the tiles for installation. When the tiles were completed, they were sorted and stacked according to the sequence in which Bravo and Young wanted them to be mounted [Figs. 3.20–3.21]. This was also a time-consuming process and the artists recall that attempts to create a narrative out of the hundreds of images was a somewhat daunting task. Bravo and Young had to consider how the images would flow throughout the entire installation—from north to south and from south to north—as it stretched up and down the avenue. They also had to consider how the images would be placed left to right on each side of the planter boxes. The final sequence that is found on the tree planter boxes reflects a variety of decisions based on: their experiences taking the photographs, their thoughts on what images looked nice side-by-side, and ultimately, how the City of Toronto workers mounted them to the planter boxes. Even though Bravo worked with the installer, there were still some hiccups, such as tile mix-ups, along the way. Upon seeing tiles in the wrong order, Bravo and Young

thought, “Ah! That doesn’t work, but it’s going to have to work.”<sup>773</sup> Unfortunately they did not have the resources or time to correct the tiles once they were installed, but fortunately, due to the sheer number of tiles and the size of the installation, it is unlikely that viewers would easily identify the misplaced tiles.



Figure 3.20: Photograph of Kate Young sorting tiles at Bravo’s temporary studio (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.



Figure 3.21: Photograph of portrait tiles sorted on the studio floor (Toronto, Ontario, 2009). Photograph and permission courtesy of Jim Thierry Bravo.

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<sup>773</sup> Young, in conversation, 2014.

The work for *Impressions* involved extensive social and physical labour and required that the artists be strategic, flexible, and spontaneous, as well as incredibly dedicated to the success of the project by working long, and at times irregular hours. It is critical to understand the nature of the labour that the artists undertook, as well as their enduring enthusiasm for the project, for several important reasons. First and foremost, this work is otherwise undocumented. Secondly, this account arguably helps to show how these artists served as “willing work-horses,” a term used to describe the tireless class of arts and culture workers that have emerged out of neoliberalism.<sup>774</sup> Finally, this account enables us to see how various decisions were made and to better understand the project’s framework for participation, which was heavily influenced by, or at the very least expedient to governmental agendas, despite Councillor Perk’s efforts to limit his own decision-making throughout the process. More specifically, through this discussion, we can better situate *Impressions* within the practice of urban placemaking in Toronto.

### 3.5 First *Impressions*, Then

*Impressions* was launched on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at a small ceremony that took place from 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the lawn of the apartment building at 182 Jameson Avenue.<sup>775</sup> The launch was announced via a City of Toronto press release two days before the event to encourage the press to cover the unveiling. Attendees at the event included Mayor David Miller, Councillor Gord Perks, Toronto Poet Laureate Dionne Brand, Eaton, Estrela, Bravo, and Young, as well as some Parkdale residents. Despite the short notice, the cold weather, and the fact that the event took place for a brief time that conflicted with work or dinner hours, Bravo recalls that there were a fair number of community members in attendance. Photographs of the event show the facilitators proudly posing in front of freshly installed tiles, as well as the small crowd listening

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<sup>774</sup> McRobbie, ““Everyone is Creative.””

<sup>775</sup> Jennifer Yap, “Jameson Avenue Residents Leave Lasting Impressions—Photo Opportunity,” in *Toronto*, 28 October 2009, <http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/it/newsrel.nsf/11476e3d3711f56e85256616006b891f/5fdd413f46a67e728525765d0057e881?OpenDocument> (accessed 24 June 2014).

intently to the opening remarks. Councillor Perks remembers fondly how both Mayor Miller and Brand were able to gesture toward their first Toronto homes from the podium on Jameson.<sup>776</sup> Miller credited the project with creating a new “point of interest” in Parkdale and in honour of the unveiling, Brand read a poem entitled, “for Jameson Ave.” Finally, the *Impressions* team could celebrate the culmination of the project with the community. Unfortunately, the launch was just in time for winter and the snow would soon cover up their efforts until spring.<sup>777</sup> In the end, the poor timing of the launch was just one of the many lessons learned in the intensive process of creating what was being hailed by the City of Toronto as, “one of North America’s largest outdoor photographic installations.”<sup>778</sup>

At this time, much of the discourse on *Impressions* stressed that the art installation presented an *authentic* representation of Parkdale’s thriving and diverse community. The use of photography as a medium helped to position the installation as “authentic”—these photographs represented the *real* people living in Parkdale. The sense of authenticity attributed to the project was also enhanced by references to its participatory, or community-engaged, nature. At the launch, many of the comments stressed how the community’s sincere efforts helped to shape the final product. For instance, Bravo described *Impressions* as an “enormous exercise in community engagement,” noting that the project included not only the images of community members, but also their input.<sup>779</sup> The mayor also congratulated the artists and the residents on their efforts and he noted that through the project, their “community spirit is reflected back to us in the images of this meaningful and engaging art work.”<sup>780</sup> This theme was taken up by the press, as one

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<sup>776</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>777</sup> Bravo and Young, in conversation, 2014. Both artists mentioned that if they could do it again, they would have liked to see the unveiling postponed until the spring.

<sup>778</sup> Jennifer Yap, “Jameson Avenue Residents Leave Lasting Impressions.”

<sup>779</sup> Jim Thierry Bravo quoted in: Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> David Miller quoted in: Robert Mays, “Press Release: Jameson Avenue Residents Leave Lasting Impressions.”

magazine article described the installation as an “authentic advertisement of life south of Queen.”<sup>781</sup>

The installation was also credited for showcasing Parkdale’s *diversity* and *vibrancy*. As noted earlier, the didactic tiles tell viewers that the photographs capture “the vibrant Parkdale community.” At the opening, Councillor Perks commented that,

By examining this photographic installation, visitors and the next wave of residents can see the community of Jameson Avenue today, and through them glimpse Toronto’s diverse and vibrant communities.<sup>782</sup>

Furthermore, Brand’s poem, though it did not use the same terminology, spoke of Jameson Avenue as a “nomadic highway” that is “surging with life,”<sup>783</sup> thereby supporting the narrative of Parkdale as a diverse and vibrant place. Even the sparse online discourse about the project reflected these same themes. For example, on the Mural Routes webpage, the project description stresses that Jameson Avenue is a “culturally and economically diverse” street.<sup>784</sup> Thus, *Impressions*, was celebrated in the spirit of optimism and good-will and its positive messages about Parkdale were conveyed to broader audiences at the launch and through the press. *Impressions* was meant to invigorate the community through art and to engender citizens with a sense of civic pride. Additionally, as the discourse reveals, this art project was used to endorse Toronto’s motto, “Diversity Our Strength,” and to market the city as a “city of difference.”<sup>785</sup>

*Impressions* represents a shift in artistic placemaking strategies, which has moved toward finding new ways to celebrate the heterogeneity of urban life.<sup>786</sup> As scholar Julie

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<sup>781</sup> Eric Mutrie, “Street Stories: Jameson Avenue,” *Spacing Magazine*, 4 November 2010, <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2010/11/04/street-stories-jameson-avenue/> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>782</sup> Gord Perks quoted in: Ibid.

<sup>783</sup> Dionne Brand, “for Jameson Ave.,” *Mural Routes*, 2009, <http://www.muralroutes.com/news/jameson.htm> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>784</sup> Mural Routes, “Jameson Avenue Impressions.”

<sup>785</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20; 85–98.

<sup>786</sup> Julie Boivin, “Emerging Urban Aesthetics in Public Art,” in *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Annie Gérin and James S. McLean, 249–264 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 250.

Boivin states, “In the contemporary moment when plural histories are valued over great narratives, urbanity feasts on heterogeneity of culture, of experience, of invention,” and as she explains, artists have, and continue to, play an active role in expressing these shifting concepts of urbanity.<sup>787</sup> We can certainly see this idea of heterogeneity play out in *Impressions*, not only in the surrounding discourse, which stressed the diversity of the area, but through the vast collection of photographs through which community diversity is made legible. Bravo’s artistic concept and Kate Young’s images referenced the global flows of people in an era of globalization, through passport style photographs and captured the visible diversity of the neighbourhood’s residents through photography. As viewers, we can interpret signs of cultural diversity and difference through the shades of grey on the tiles, and we can compare and contrast visual codes for different religious beliefs, values, and experiences. Though perhaps uncertain, or a little unclear, viewers may piece together an impression of Parkdale as a thriving, multicultural neighbourhood through the photographic tiles.

In its original form, *Impressions* composed a neo-reformist vision of community—it celebrated diversity, advertised a positive image of Toronto’s quality of life, beautified a major thoroughfare, and embodied a sense of civic participation. This project spoke to the creative class and demonstrated a commitment to enhancing Toronto’s “culturally vibrant” neighbourhoods.<sup>788</sup> However, just as neo-reformism has been critiqued for appropriating aspects of neoliberalism, this project also, perhaps inadvertently, created a *neoliberal* image of community. Though not the intention of the artists, or perhaps even the civic stakeholders, this community-engaged project was inflected with aspects of urban neoliberalism, and can be considered, at the very least, accidentally neoliberal. *Impressions* represented Parkdale as a unified whole; however, as noted, this area has experienced, and continues to experience, growing internal divisions due to the effects of urban neoliberalism, including gentrification, downloading, and disinvestment. This art installation, in its original form, did not give the impression that

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<sup>787</sup> Ibid.

<sup>788</sup> Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 188–189.



Parkdale suffered from growing housing inequities, intense population density, or what Perks describes as “all the issues of race, class, orientation, and gender [...] that lives on the street every day in Parkdale.”<sup>789</sup> Instead, *Impressions* created an image of a harmonious and livable neighbourhood through what is quite literally a “smiling multicultural mosaic.”<sup>790</sup> In doing so, *Impressions*, albeit unintentionally, normalized and concealed some of the social realities experienced by its subjects, who were both the public face of the entrepreneurial city’s diversity and the targets of neoliberal rationalities or technologies of government, such as the removal of rent controls and development controls.<sup>791</sup> The framework of the project also contributed to the normalization of publically-funded artists working in the social sphere, serving as mediators for civic redevelopment plans and possibly even performing important social- and consensus-building work in the community.<sup>792</sup> Peck argues that creative strategies are based on, and suited to, urban neoliberalism—they commodify the arts, cultural resources, and “even social tolerance itself,” and reconfigure them as economic assets in urban competition.<sup>793</sup> Peck discusses how, recently, publicly funded creative projects serve largely neoliberal-inspired economic imperatives that are concerned with “interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption, and place-marketing.”<sup>794</sup> Furthermore, Peck considers how government-funded creative strategies reconfigure existing elements of urban neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism to seduce the creative class in the guise of authentic community-engagement to promote economic development.<sup>795</sup> In light of this critique, perhaps we can see how the *Impressions* portraits revealed subjects who were both at the heart of, and marginalized by, urban neoliberal, or neoliberal inspired, political and economic developments at this time.

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<sup>789</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>790</sup> Levin and Solga, “Building Utopia,” 38.

<sup>791</sup> These are listed in: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 204.

<sup>792</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>793</sup> Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 740; 764.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid.

<sup>795</sup> Ibid., abstract; 765; 767–768.

### 3.6 First *Impressions*, Now

Is it wrong to appeal to a community's sense of local civic pride and to use residents' images in a project that serves as both a public art work and an advertisement for Toronto's "diversity?" As the description of the project reveals, at its core, *Impressions* was part of a community investment strategy, which sought to *improve* and *strengthen* the community, even if these goals also served largely economic motives. Furthermore, the participants that are represented agreed to participate and, as the facilitators described in interviews, in many cases they were quite enthusiastic. While ethical considerations are important, here I am interested in how the discourse surrounding *Impressions* did not offer a complete picture of the project's goals and parameters for participation, and how the narrow framing of the project as a celebration of a vibrant community omitted some of the social and political contexts that surrounded the project.

Furthermore, as historian Elizabeth Edwards' work on photography and materiality informs us, the material conditions of photographs deeply inform their meanings.<sup>796</sup> Edwards argues, "The materiality of the photograph is integral to its affective tone as an *image*."<sup>797</sup> As such, there is much more that can be said about the current state of *Impressions*, how it relates to the ever-shifting urban terrain as it is variably impacted by forms of neoliberalism, and to new ways of interpreting the work that have emerged since 2009. *Impressions* was conceived in a period of creativity after austerity under the leadership of Toronto Mayor David Miller, but it was left to decay under Mayor Rob Ford's tenure (2010–2014). Ford's politics were variously described as populist, pragmatic, and loosely Conservative, and often his discourse promoted anti-governmental, anti-elitist, and pro-suburban themes.<sup>798</sup> Furthermore, as I elaborate in the chapter 4, Ford's administration, in part, reflected a return to neoliberal austerity politics. While this chapter has primarily explored many of *Impressions*' intended, and in some cases, necessary, visual outcomes, it is also worth analyzing its more recent, unintended

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<sup>796</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in *Material Memories*, eds. Marius Kwant, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 221–236.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>798</sup> Andrew Coyne, "Rob Ford and His Critics Agree, the Toronto Mayor is a Bastion of Conservatism. Except that Isn't True," *National Post*, 16 December 2013.

visual effects, which create powerful and antagonistic statements about the “quality of life” experienced by the Parkdale community. Of course, it may not be entirely fair to attribute all of the current visual outcomes to the Ford administration. The project was designed during Mayor Miller’s term, and many of the effects that I will discuss would have taken place during his tenure as well. However, in the lifespan of *Impressions*, it is reasonable to say that the Ford administration has thus far had the longest season. Additionally, whereas Miller’s administration was focused on beautifying the downtown core, Ford’s politics were more centred on the needs and interests of Toronto’s suburban communities.

The tiles’ current state of disrepair betrays the project’s original goal to celebrate the vibrancy of the Parkdale community and instead presents us with unsettling images of community division and neglect. As the photographic tiles peel, they lose their ability to serve as a celebration of community or their power as a talisman for the Miller administration’s vision of a beautiful Toronto composed of vibrant neighbourhoods. As they are sprayed with the salty sludge from the streets in the winter or hidden by heaps of curbside garbage [Figs. 3.22 & 3.23], they do little to promote the quality of life along Jameson and instead they start to conjure up the devastating past images of Parkdale as a “dumping ground for the poor.”<sup>799</sup> As tiles are smashed by anonymous viewers, we begin to see them literally crack under the pressure of the growing social divisions that Parkdale faces. This is further emphasized by the tiles that are marked with graffiti, which illustrate that there are competing efforts to visually (re)claim the space along the avenue or which make visible the existing tensions in the community [Fig. 3.24]. Meanwhile, the tiles that remain in good repair perhaps say something about the resiliency of the Parkdale community despite its internal conflict and the area’s growing needs. Of course, none of these effects or possible interpretations were planned by the *Impressions* team, but this does not make their cultural impact today any less real.

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<sup>799</sup> As referenced above: Carole Corbeil, “Lament for a Neighbourhood,” *The Globe and Mail*, 13 September 1980. Noted in: Whitzman, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village*, 3.



Figure 3.22: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail of tiles covered in mud and snow (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 5 February 2014). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.



Figure 3.23: Jameson Avenue tree planter box covered in snow and garbage (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 5 February 2014). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.



Figure 3.24: Jim Thierry Bravo and Kate Young, *Impressions*, 2009. Detail showing graffiti (Jameson Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, 4 December 2013). Photograph by Jennifer Orpana.

Is it fair to read into the unintentional antagonism that the current state of *Impressions* seems to represent? It is in fact critical to recognize the antagonism that exists in *Impressions* today so that we can see this project as more than simply a rundown community art project and better recognize how its material decay has shifted its cultural meaning. Many scholars have called for more consideration of how antagonistic qualities function in public and participatory art, and have suggested that in some cases antagonism may be *more* representative of the social realities faced by communities.<sup>800</sup> To borrow language from art scholar Claire Bishop's work on antagonism in contemporary art, *Impressions* has transformed from a "micro-utopian" image of

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<sup>800</sup> For a discussion about the need to reconsider our expectations of site-specific art and about the critical potential of non-assimilative public art, see: Kwon, "Sittings of Public Art," 56–99. For a discussions about the potential for antagonistic art to better reflect social realities or to play vital critical roles, see: Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 1, 2 (Summer 2007): 1–5; or Claire Bishop (2004; 2006; and 2012).

community to one that exudes a sense of “relational antagonism.”<sup>801</sup> It exposes us to awkwardness, discomfort, and friction, which are characteristics that the project in its original form repressed. Through its antagonistic visual effects, *Impressions* now critiques the role that financial stakeholders have had in representing the community for over a century. The installation hints at the long-term social impact of neoliberal forms of disinvestment in urban communities and it exposes the issues pertaining to creative city strategies that coopted marginalized communities for short-term bursts of civic placemaking and city branding. By reflecting on its antagonistic qualities, we can see how over time, *Impressions* has become as a civic placemaking strategy that has been turned on its head. In other words, more and more, *Impressions* acts as its own counter-discourse as it challenges the utopian and hegemonic image of Parkdale that it once reflected.<sup>802</sup> Now, we are confronted with an art installation that has taken on an abject quality, which at worst, accidentally naturalizes an impression of the Parkdale community as a derelict neighbourhood. While the art installation’s *utopic* image of community may not have offered a comprehensive representation of Parkdale, and more specifically the South Parkdale site, this new outcome is deeply troubling, in that it largely empties out the possibility for the project to convey positive community characteristics, such as optimism, spirit, and pride. So while the latter may not have fully embodied the authentic portrait of Parkdale that its civic discourse promised, the former fails to meet the promises that were made to the community leaders, the artists, and the photographic subjects. As I feel my critical analysis swinging back-and-forth between seeing what *Impressions* represented then—a publically-funded community art project/civic placemaking strategy—and what it represents now—a community art project that is crumbling due to disinvestment—I find myself in the midst of trying to sort out what Jackson describes as the “ambiguities and puzzles that have emboldened and

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<sup>801</sup> For a discussion of antagonism and relational aesthetics, see: Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79.

<sup>802</sup> For a discussion of counter-hegemonic interventions/practices through antagonism, see: Mouffe, “Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces,” 1–5.

plagued socially engaged art debates throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.”<sup>803</sup>

From a strictly legalistic point of view, the artists and participants, and even many of the public servants, agreed to create a *visual celebration*, and certainly not something that might cast a negative light on the community. As such, was it not the obligation of the civic government to keep this installation in a state of good repair? As I conducted interviews for this chapter, many of the stakeholders with whom I spoke lamented the state of the project and reflected that, in retrospect, a long-term plan for upkeep should have been in place. When I interviewed Perks, which was near the end of Mayor Ford’s tenure, Perks commented that people in the community sometimes call him or confront him to ask for the art installation to be repaired. He added that he had made several calls to the Department of Transportation to fix the tiles, but noted that under the Ford administration, community art projects [were] considered “gravy.”<sup>804</sup> This raises an important question about the vicissitudes of civic investments in creativity and community—what happens to these endeavors when political administrations change and civic priorities shift?

When asked what he would like to see happen, Perks comments that ideally the broken and vandalized tiles would be repaired first, along with the tiles that have lost their photographic images.<sup>805</sup> However, the fate of this project is contingent on the political policy moving forward under the new leadership of a historically conservative politician, Mayor John Tory.<sup>806</sup> So far, it seems like things might improve for this project. Recently, Bravo revealed by email,

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<sup>803</sup> Jackson, *Social Works*, 212.

<sup>804</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014. Here he was quoting a catchword that was used by the Ford administration to describe a range of social, environmental, cultural, and educational programs that were on the budgetary chopping block. See, for example: Christie Blatchford, “The Logic behind Rob Ford’s Bid to Derail the ‘Gravy Train,’” *The Globe and Mail*, 24 August 2010.

<sup>805</sup> Perks, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>806</sup> Tory was once the former Ontario PC leader, but as this news article reports, so far he has seemed open to liberal strategies. See: David Rider, “Federal Conservatives Cannot Count on Mayor Tory Saying That Their Policies are Best for Toronto Voters,” *The Toronto Star*, 9 May 2015.

We are in fact just beginning the revitalization effort to replace/re-do the project due to damage/excessive weathering etc. It is an effort to make the plates more permanent by exploring other more durable means of transfer.<sup>807</sup>

I look forward to continuing to follow the story of this project and to see what changes are made to *Impressions*. However, I do wonder about how they will approach the problematic placement of the tiles in these plans, because regardless of their new durability, these images will continue to be sprayed with sludge and covered with street-side garbage. For now, I am fascinated by everything that this project represents, including: a past effort to beautify the community and to engage, albeit minimally, its residents; visual evidence of a period when art, creativity, and communities were at the centre of urban economic policy; a bold visual statement against the eroding “quality of life” that this community has experienced; and a puzzle about the use of community-engaged photographic portrait projects within the parameters of civic placemaking.

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<sup>807</sup> Bravo, email to the author, 12 December 2015.



## CHAPTER 4

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### 4 TURNING TORONTO *INSIDE OUT*: PERFORMING NEOLIBERAL CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNITY

On the cover of the 2011 edition of the Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture festival magazine, there is an image of a young boy holding a long-handled paint roller, which he uses to wheatpaste an enormous self-portrait on a brick wall [Fig. 4.1]. The boy is Denzel Benitez Ortega, a young resident of the Parkdale neighbourhood.<sup>808</sup> While he was not really the one to paste his portrait on the wall, this image honours his participation in a long photo shoot during which he had to hold “crazy poses” to achieve the shot that was used for the poster.<sup>809</sup> This portrait shows Denzel with a broad smile, reaching both arms up to the sky and extending five fingers on his right hand. After conducting the photo shoot with Denzel, photographer and then Executive Director of Manifesto Che Kothari put up the poster as a birthday surprise for Denzel who was turning five years old and as a part of Manifesto’s fifth anniversary celebrations, which included a range of events taking place from September 15<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> [Fig. 4.2].<sup>810</sup> An online video captures the moment that Denzel saw his poster for the first time.<sup>811</sup> In the video clip, Kothari asks him, “What do you think?” With sincerity and wonder, Denzel says, “That’s very cool,” and asks, “How did you make this?” Kothari cheerfully offers a brief explanation of the wheatpaste process, stating, “I printed it out and then I cut it up and then I came and pasted it [...]”

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<sup>808</sup> Denzel Benitez Ortega’s identity is publically available in an online video on the Manifesto website: LaPointe Productions, “A Message of Love,” video posted on: “Behind the Scenes of Manifesto Guidebook Cover Shoot [Video],” in *Manifesto*, 11 September 2011, <http://themanifesto.ca/behindthescenesguidebook/> (accessed 27 May 2014). The video is also posted on: *vimeo*, 2011, <http://vimeo.com/28648831> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>810</sup> Greg Drakes, “Behind the Scenes of Manifesto Guidebook Cover Shoot [Video],” in *Manifesto*, 11 September 2011, <http://themanifesto.ca/behindthescenesguidebook/> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>811</sup> LaPointe Productions, “A Message of Love.”

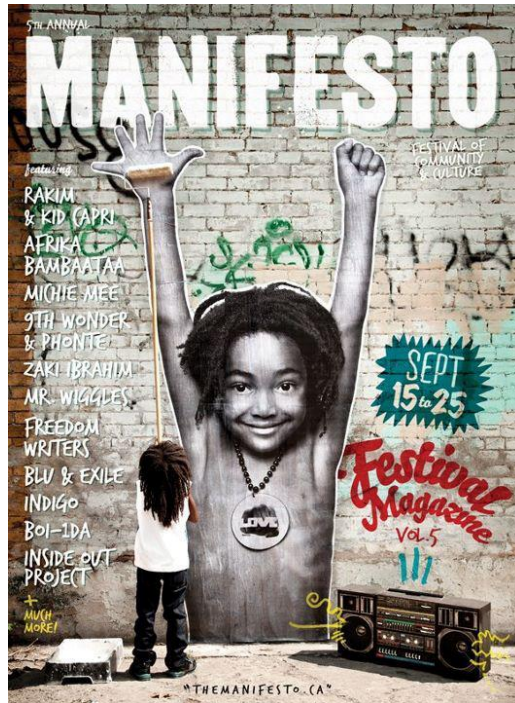


Figure 4.1: Cover of *Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture Festival Magazine*, Vol. 5 (2011). Photograph by Che Kothari. Permission courtesy of Che Kothari and Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture.



Figure 4.2: Che Kothari wheatpasting Denzel's portrait to the wall (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph by Brian LaPointe. Permission courtesy of Che Kothari and Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture.

Inside the magazine, we learn that in addition to Denzel's large portrait poster, the Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (henceforth Manifesto) pasted over 400 large, rectangular portrait posters in Toronto as part of street artist JR's global participatory art project entitled, *The Inside Out Project* (2011–present) [Fig. 4.3].<sup>812</sup> Beyond giving hundreds of Torontonians the opportunity to participate in a global art project and enriching the festival's anniversary programming, Manifesto's *Toronto Inside Out Project* was engaged with civic politics in two important ways.<sup>813</sup> First, it sought to represent how Toronto communities are intergenerational and diverse by engaging participants of all ages and backgrounds, in support of Toronto's at times contested city motto, "Diversity Our Strength."<sup>814</sup> Secondly, this project emerged at a critical political moment in Toronto during which there was "an awakening of a new civic activism and organized opposition" to Mayor Rob Ford's proposed austerity measures, which threatened the livelihoods of, and the quality of life experienced by, many Toronto citizens.<sup>815</sup> In this regard, Manifesto used *Inside Out* as a platform to oppose the proposed cuts to art and community services and to assert that funding community arts is important. As explained by Kothari, they wanted to "show the people of Toronto, and the faces of Toronto," that get affected by the decisions made at City Hall.<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, *Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, Festival Magazine*, September 2011, [http://issuu.com/manifestomagazine/docs/manifesto\\_festivalmagazine\\_vol5/1?e=1339367/3397308](http://issuu.com/manifestomagazine/docs/manifesto_festivalmagazine_vol5/1?e=1339367/3397308) (accessed 27 May 2014). See also: Drakes, "Behind the Scenes."

<sup>813</sup> This project has been given a variety of names: *Toronto Inside Out Project*, *Manifesto: Inside Out Project*, and *The Manifesto*. For the purposes of this paper I will use: *Toronto Inside Out*.

<sup>814</sup> Che Kothari in conversation with the author, January 28, 2014.

<sup>815</sup> Daniel Dale and David Rider, "Ford Unswayed by 22 Hours of Talk, Teen's Tears," *The Toronto Star*, 30 July 2011. See also: Paul Terefenko, "How Rob Ford is Politically Energizing Toronto," *National Post*, 6 August 2011.

<sup>816</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.



Figure 4.3: *Toronto Inside Out* Poster being wheatpasted near the intersection of Queen Street and Spadina Avenue (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Ahmed Sagarwala.

This chapter offers a background to JR's *Inside Out* methodology and explores how this global project “touched down” in Toronto through Manifesto's group action, *Toronto Inside Out*.<sup>817</sup> As I will discuss, JR's project invites communities to use photographic portraiture and street art techniques to try to “change perceptions of the world” and to make themselves, and their causes, visible.<sup>818</sup> Admittedly, it is quite challenging to gauge the extent to which *Toronto Inside Out* changed peoples' perceptions—for one thing, it did not receive much media attention.<sup>819</sup> Nevertheless, *Toronto Inside Out* offers a rich opportunity to explore how individual and collective

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<sup>817</sup> This comment is inspired by Magrit Mayer's discussion of how cities are “the scale where global neoliberalism ‘touches down’ to make itself felt, [and] where global issues become localized.” See: Magrit Mayer, “Contesting the Neoliberalization of Urban Governance,” in *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers*, eds. Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S. Sheppard, 90–114 (New York: Guildford Press, 2007): 93.

<sup>818</sup> JR, “My Wish: Use Art to Turn the World Inside Out,” in *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, 2011, [http://www.ted.com/talks/jr\\_s\\_ted\\_prize\\_wish\\_use\\_art\\_to\\_turn\\_the\\_world\\_inside\\_out](http://www.ted.com/talks/jr_s_ted_prize_wish_use_art_to_turn_the_world_inside_out) (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>819</sup> Che Kothari noted that he was surprised that the Manifesto group action did not get more attention in the press (Kothari, in conversation, 2014). In contrast, JR's methodology has been widely covered in the press and marketed by the TED Conference.

actions have emerged out of “the fissures” created by urban neoliberalism in Toronto.<sup>820</sup> In this chapter, I consider how *Toronto Inside Out* helped to *articulate* new perceptions of self and community that were asserted by many Torontonians at this time through political actions and in the press. Furthermore, through this discussion, I address the complex role that this community-engaged portrait project played, both in its execution and its final product, in performing neoliberal ideas of citizenship and community in Toronto.<sup>821</sup>

## 4.1 JR’s Global Art Project

In 2011, the organizers of the TED Conference gave a quasi-anonymous street artist and “photographeur,” known by the initials, “JR,” an opportunity to “change the world” by granting him the TED Prize.<sup>822</sup> TED is a non-profit organization that promotes innovative ideas in such fields as technology, education, and design, by mounting conferences worldwide and disseminating online videos of talks on almost any topic imaginable, including: global issues, new inventions, culture, self-help, food, sex, and even, “life hacks.” In recent years, some critics have chastised the TED conference for a number of issues—it has been simultaneously accused of elitism, due to its incredibly high cost of attendance, and of populism, due to the way that presenters may over-simplify complex content to appeal mass audiences.<sup>823</sup> Critics have also argued that TED ultimately lessens

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<sup>820</sup> For a discussion of how urban neoliberalism creates “fissures,” see: Roger Keil, “‘Common-Sense’ Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada,” in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, ed. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, 230–253 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002): 231.

<sup>821</sup> A version of this chapter was published previously. See: Jennifer Orpana, “Turning the World Inside Out: Situating JR’s Global Art Project within Cultures of Participation,” *RACAR Canadian Art Journal* (Summer 2014): 57–66.

<sup>822</sup> JR, “My Wish.”

<sup>823</sup> These critiques are addressed in: See: Nathan Jurgenson, “TED Talks is the Urban Outfitters of the Ideas World,” in *Rodrigo Cañete’s ‘The Pill,’* 2014, <http://taboofart.com/2014/10/09/ted-is-the-urban-outfitters-of-the-ideas-world/> (accessed 17 November 2014); Benjamin Bratton, “We Need to Talk about TED,” in *Bratton.Info*, December 2013, <http://www.bratton.info/projects/talks/we-need-to-talk-about-ted/> (accessed 17 November 2014); and Nilofer Merchant, “When TED Lost Control of its Crowd,” in *Harvard Business Review*, April 2013, <https://hbr.org/2013/04/when-ted-lost-control-of-its-crowd/> (accessed 11 June 2015).

the appeal of “cool ideas” by entering them into the mainstream, embodies corporatism through its sales-pitch style of talks, and “masks capitalism.”<sup>824</sup> Alternatively, the TED conference has been praised for the way that it has broken down the “expert/audience” barrier and for its pedagogical framework that engages people with information ways that move beyond passive reception.<sup>825</sup> It has also been recognized for addressing accessibility issues by freely disseminating conference material online or by hosting smaller events, such as TEDx.<sup>826</sup> Thus, although TED has been called everything from “the Urban Outfitters of the ideas world” to “middlebrow megachurch infotainment,” it has been a powerful platform for its speakers.<sup>827</sup> As social media theorist and critic of TED’s epistemic style Nathan Jurgenson admits, the TED conference has shared over 1,100 talks online and many of these videos have been viewed over a million times.<sup>828</sup>

Every year, the TED Prize is presented to an individual who has the potential to develop an initiative that can “spark global change.”<sup>829</sup> Each TED Prize winner launches their idea in a talk at the conference, which is filmed and posted on the TED website.<sup>830</sup> As the winner of the prize, JR received \$100,000 and access to TED’s vast resources and professional networks.<sup>831</sup> By receiving this prize, JR joined the roster of previous winners, including Edward Burtynsky (2004), Bono (2005), Bill Clinton (2007), Sylvia Earle (2009), and Jamie Oliver (2010), whose TED Prize projects have addressed such

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<sup>824</sup> Ibid. Quote is by Mike Bulajewski, quoted in: Jurgenson, “TED Talks is the Urban Outfitters of the Ideas World.”

<sup>825</sup> Guisepina Scotti di Carlo, “The Role of Proximity in Online Popularizations: The Case of TED Talks,” *Discourse Studies* 16, 5 (2014): 591–606.

<sup>826</sup> Jurgenson, “TED Talks is the Urban Outfitters of the Ideas World.”

<sup>827</sup> Ibid., and Bratton, “We need to talk about TED.”

<sup>828</sup> Jurgenson, “TED Talks is the Urban Outfitters of the Ideas World.”

<sup>829</sup> TED, “TED Prize,” in *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, 2014, <https://www.ted.com/participate/ted-prize> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>830</sup> See, for example: JR, “My Wish.” These videos are also accessible via the popular video-sharing website, YouTube, as well as through Netflix, an on-demand video streaming site.

<sup>831</sup> TED, “Prize-Winning Wishes.” Earlier versions of the website explained that winners received \$100,000, but the website now notes that TED Prize winners receive \$1 million to put toward their wish.

causes as environmental issues, poverty in developing countries, and the rise of childhood obesity.<sup>832</sup>

In his filmed talk, JR, donning sunglasses and a hat, began by sharing his feelings about the daunting task presented to him through this opportunity.<sup>833</sup> Charismatically, he mused on the enormity of “changing the world” in the face of significant social, political, and environmental crises. Framing his talk around the question, “Can *art* change the world,” JR offered highlights from his impressive body of socially engaged work. His artistic practice mixes “art and action”<sup>834</sup> using collaborative art, portrait photography, and street art techniques to draw attention to the lives of people in marginalized, or misrepresented, communities. Behind him, a slideshow flashed stunning images of his work, from his earlier experiments mixing photography and graffiti in the streets of Paris (*Expo 2 Rue*, 2001–04), to his recent wheatpaste poster projects that compose the 28 *Millimeters* series. The latter involved taking often highly animated, close-up portrait photographs of participants, reformatting the images into enormous black-and-white posters, and pasting them in sites that were meaningful to the subjects. JR has worked with a range of groups, including youth from a Paris housing project in *Clichy-sous-Bois* (*Portrait of a Generation*, 2004–06); people living in cities on both sides of the border wall separating Israel and Palestine (*Face 2 Face*, 2007) [Fig. 4.4], and women living in *favelas* and slums located in developing countries (*Women Are Heroes*, 2008–10). In his talk, he drew on these examples to support his thesis that it is possible for art to change

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<sup>832</sup> TED, “Prize-Winning Wishes,” *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, 2014, <https://www.ted.com/participate/ted-prize/prize-winning-wishes> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>833</sup> JR, “My Wish.”

<sup>834</sup> Marco Berrebi, “JR—The Biggest Art Gallery,” in *Women Are Heroes: A Global Art Project*, by JR with text by Christian Caujolle et al. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2012): n.p. There have been several attempts to define JR’s style of work. He has been described as a “*photographeur*,” a term that recognizes his use of photography and street art traditions, and an “artist,” a term that notes his interests in art and activism. For more examples see Bertie Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy: The Global Art Project of JR,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, 3 (September 2012): 12; Elizabeth Day, “The Street Art of JR,” *The Guardian: The Observer*, 7 March 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/mar/07/street-art-jr-photography> (accessed 5 August 2013); and Christian Caujolle, “A Word to the Wise,” in *Women Are Heroes*, n.p.



our *perceptions* of the world by starting conversations and addressing stereotypes through creative strategies that make people, and their causes, more visible.<sup>835</sup>



Figure 4.4: JR, *28 Millimeters, Face2Face*, March 2007 (Separation Wall, Palestinian Side in Bethlehem). Photograph and Permission Courtesy of JR.

The wish that JR announced at the end of his talk was the launch of the *Inside Out Project*, a global participatory art project that encourages people to embark on “group actions” inspired by his collaborative, and often subversive, artistic methods, with the help of an instructive website.<sup>836</sup> It was JR’s hope that by getting involved in *Inside Out*, participants could generate their own images, contributing to the production of knowledge and discourse, and, as he puts it, creating “something that the world will remember.”<sup>837</sup> In the four years since JR appealed to the TED Conference audience to help him “turn the world *Inside Out*” by mounting public portrait projects to help generate dialogue, raise awareness, tell stories, or make communities visible, over

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<sup>835</sup> JR, “My Wish.”

<sup>836</sup> JR, *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2014, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>837</sup> JR, “My Wish.”



234,382 portraits have been displayed worldwide.<sup>838</sup> For example, in North Dakota, the Lakota tribe used the *Inside Out* process to help spread the message, “We still exist” (2011).<sup>839</sup> In Karachi, twenty-five *Inside Out* posters were mounted to raise awareness about religious persecution in Pakistan (2011).<sup>840</sup> *Inside Out* has been used to “kick out violence” in Luanda (2013),<sup>841</sup> to fight for LGBT rights at the Russian Embassy in Berlin (2011),<sup>842</sup> and to help the efforts to “Save the Arctic” at the North Pole (2013).<sup>843</sup> As the interactive map on the *Inside Out* website suggests, group actions are popping up in countries worldwide and Canada is no exception. Canadian group actions have addressed such themes as respect for the elderly (Vernon, B.C., 2012) and the need for better health care services for rural women (Powell River, B.C., 2013).<sup>844</sup> *Inside Out* has been used in neighbourhood revitalization projects that seek to lower crime rates (Southwood Community, Calgary, Alberta, 2012),<sup>845</sup> and as I have already noted, it has been used to celebrate community diversity and to protest government cutbacks (Manifesto, Toronto,

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<sup>838</sup> The *Inside Out* website keeps an ongoing tally of all of the portraits, group actions, and project locations associated with this project. As of July 11, 2015, the *Inside Out* website reported that the project had generated 234,382 portraits through 1,164 group actions and that these projects took place in approximately 124 countries. See: JR, “Explore,” *Inside Out*, 2015, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/map> (accessed 11 July 2015)

<sup>839</sup> “We Still Exist,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2011, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/usa-north-dakota> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>840</sup> “Ted X Karachi,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2011, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/pakistan-karachi> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>841</sup> “Kick out the Violence,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2013, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/angola-luanda> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>842</sup> “LGBT Rights in Berlin Germany,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2011, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/fr/group-actions/germany-berlin> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>843</sup> “Save the Arctic,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2013, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/north-pole-north-pole> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>844</sup> See: “Learning for Life,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, c. 2011, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/canada-vernon> (accessed 25 September 2013); and “The Women of Powell River,” in *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, 2012, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/fr/group-actions/canada-powell-river> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>845</sup> Celeste de Muelenaere, “Southwood Community Mural Erected to Hinder SW Calgary Criminals,” *Metro*, 13 August 2013, <http://metronews.ca/news/calgary/335937/southwood-community-mural-erected-to-hinder-sw-calgary-criminals/> (accessed 25 September 2013).

Ontario, 2011). With over 1,164 group actions to date and a steady stream of new projects being posted on the *Inside Out* website and the project's Facebook page, this global phenomenon continues to grow.

## 4.2 Goals and Parameters of *Inside Out*

*Inside Out* is intended to be “the people’s art project” and aspires to “transform messages of personal identity into art.”<sup>846</sup> This process is accomplished through independently organized “group actions,” which occur when people—photographers, activists, community organizers, social workers, professors, students, and so on—use the resources available through the website to mount their own large, black-and-white photographic portrait posters in the name of an important cause.<sup>847</sup> The website instructs prospective participants as follows:

Gather 5 or more people around a same statement, submit their photographs, [and] we will print them as posters and send them to you so you can create and coordinate an exhibit together by pasting them in your community.<sup>848</sup>

These seemingly simple instructions belie the fact that to successfully mobilize a group and facilitate a group action, *Inside Out* participants must not only have the conceptual and artistic skills to develop a statement and to take portrait photographs, but also a range of other professional skills similar to those of community outreach or arts and culture workers in the not-for-profit sector. For example, each group must administer all stages of their group action, including recruiting the participants, acquiring photo permissions, selecting sites for the posters, collecting the materials needed to mount the posters, and in some cases, fundraising in order to pay the suggested donation of \$20 USD per poster. Importantly, while donations help to fund the project, the total amount may be adjusted or

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<sup>846</sup> JR, *Inside Out*.

<sup>847</sup> JR, “Participate,” *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project*, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/participate> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>848</sup> Ibid.

waived if a group cannot secure the funds.<sup>849</sup> Thus, there are wide-ranging opportunities for participation within an *Inside Out* group action, from having one's photograph taken to the rather sophisticated, professional tasks involved in the management of the action's execution.

As the website explains, once a group uploads a statement and the digital files of their portraits to the website, the *Inside Out* team converts the images to black-and-white and prints 36-inch by 53-inch portrait posters, which are then sent back to the group to be mounted in their sites [Fig. 4.5].<sup>850</sup> Participants are encouraged to place their portraits in highly visible locations, either legally or illegally ("if you're willing to take the risk").<sup>851</sup> Groups hoping to paste the posters with consent need to apply for permits in advance or otherwise negotiate with landholders, such as business owners, institutions, or urban developers, to obtain the rights to use their selected spaces. Groups that paste up the portraits illegally may not have to worry about the bureaucratic process of applying for permissions to use public or private space; however, they must consider other issues such as personal safety and the possible legal repercussions of putting up posters without consent. Recognizing that not all prospective participants can, or will, break the law if needed, the website offers an alternative suggestion to help make the portraits visible, which is to hold the posters up as part of a demonstration.<sup>852</sup> The consequences of pasting up the images without consent or staging a demonstration vary depending on the site. For example, the risks of participating in an *Inside Out* group action in countries that are rife with religious, ethnic, or political persecution are quite different than those in countries where there is a greater freedom of speech and more tolerance for ephemeral street art or identity-based community art projects. With this in mind, facilitators must also carefully explain the potential risks of participation to their group members.

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<sup>849</sup> JR, "FAQ," in *Inside Out: The People's Art Project*, 2014, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/faq> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>850</sup> JR, "FAQ."

<sup>851</sup> JR, "Group Action Guidelines," in *Inside Out*, 2014, [http://www.insideoutproject.net/sites/all/themes/insideout/documents/Group\\_Action\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.insideoutproject.net/sites/all/themes/insideout/documents/Group_Action_Guidelines.pdf) (accessed 1 April 2014): 4.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid.



Figure 4.5: Photo documentation of the *Toronto Inside Out* group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan.

The *Inside Out* website states that the project is open to anyone; however, there are a few guidelines that prospective participants must follow. First, there are types of messages that will not be supported by this project. For instance, JR's rejection of branding and corporate sponsorship in his professional work extends to the *Inside Out* project, and thus the directions explain that groups may not use the project as a vehicle to sell a brand or to promote an institution of any kind. Nor may people use the project to convey messages of "hatred, violence, racism, or extremism," or any other negative sentiment or action that *Inside Out* essentially seeks to challenge.<sup>853</sup> Put frankly, prospective participants are told, "Don't be mean,"<sup>854</sup> establishing that this project is intended to support messages that are celebratory, optimistic, or otherwise geared toward productive social change.

In addition to the guidelines regarding the types of messages that *Inside Out* will promote, there are also several photographic guidelines that participants must follow. For

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<sup>853</sup> JR, "Participate."

<sup>854</sup> JR, "FAQ."

example, there may be only one subject in an image, and no photographs of animals, objects, or people in disguises that mask their faces.<sup>855</sup> Portraits must be framed closely around the subject's face and the inclusion of other parts of the body in the image is discouraged. Participants may refer to the "Group Action Guidelines" document, which offers important tips, such as:

The best portraits are expressive, emotional, and captivating. They are more than pictures of smiling faces; they seem to reflect the personality and story behind the face.<sup>856</sup>

This document offers a handful of tightly-cropped, black-and-white photographs to serve as examples for prospective participants, including an image of a young man smiling earnestly, a photograph of a child with a huge toothy grin, and a playful portrait of an older gentleman who cheekily sticks out his tongue. The examples have a shallow depth of field and, with the exception of one image, the portraits were shot in front of neutral backdrops such as white or grey walls. Naturally, these guidelines have a significant impact on the final images produced by the groups. As a result, *Inside Out* group actions not only share a visual trope of striking, black-and-white, street art inspired posters that are grouped together in public space, but they also generally feature close-up portraits that are composed and framed in a manner similar to identification portraits such as passport photographs, school photographs, and even forward-facing mug shots.<sup>857</sup> However, unlike many forms of identification portraits, *Inside Out* participants are encouraged to overtly perform for the photograph. As they pose playfully for the camera, participants break away from the rigid guidelines imposed on the subjects of identification portraits, which tend to demand neutral countenances. Performativity is a significant aspect of the *Inside Out* portraits because when the posters are mounted and left in their various sites they need to draw attention. This is key, because in order to

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<sup>855</sup> JR, "Group Action Guidelines," 6.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> Some *Inside Out* photographs have a graphic backdrop of black dots on a white background, or other simple black-and-white patterns.

succeed as a discursive strategy, *Inside Out* needs to recruit an audience.<sup>858</sup> Arguably, to do this the portraits must create an illusion of “speaking likeness,” which curator Karen Love describes as the fraught belief that portraits can convey ideas about the personality of the subjects or even “the individual’s relationship to his or her social or political environment.”<sup>859</sup>

Performativity is central to the *Inside Out* project, as it is involved not only in how the portraits are created but also, in how they are intended to function *in situ* as street art. As graffiti and street art scholar Anna Waclawek explains, street art aspires to create a performative space in which the artist, the work, the viewer, and the selected site all *play integral roles*.<sup>860</sup> “The myriad performances of the piece,” Waclawek explains, depend on, “the artist through the process of diffusion, the work and the viewer by virtue of reception, and the location by providing the site of confrontation.”<sup>861</sup> In a recent article, performance scholar Bertie Ferdman identifies how performativity functions in JR’s own work, as well as in his global participatory art project. For example, Ferdman describes the decision-making process that leads up to the mounted portrait posters as a “performance of mediated images that defines the work.”<sup>862</sup> As people paste up their portrait posters, Ferdman argues, they are “performing [the] city” by re-inscribing and redefining urban space.<sup>863</sup> Ferdman explains that the portraits “perform alternative narratives of city spaces by giving a voice through the medium of photography, to actors/inhabitants who are otherwise ignored by the mainstream media, and who often live in poverty.”<sup>864</sup> Finally, by drawing on an example of *Inside Out* in Tunisia, Ferdman argues that in this instance, *Inside Out* served to mediate the “performance of freedom,”

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<sup>858</sup> Kathryn Woodward, *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications in association with The Open University, 1997): 39.

<sup>859</sup> For a description of the “speaking likeness” conveyed by portraits in general, see: Karen Love, “The Bigger Picture: Portraits from Ottawa,” *Ciel Variable*, 1 December 2003, <http://cielvariablearchives.org/fr/component/content/article/453-the-bigger-picture-portraits-from-ottawa.html> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>860</sup> Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.): 96.

<sup>861</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>862</sup> Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy,” 19.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

which enabled spectators to “participate in their own democracy.”<sup>865</sup> Therefore, as Waclawek and Ferdman illustrate, the subjects looking out from the portrait posters are not the only “players” in the work.

Like much street art, as viewers stumble upon the *Inside Out* posters they perhaps unknowingly assist in what Waclawek describes as “transitory completion” of the work as street art.<sup>866</sup> While the possible reactions to the posters are limitless, it is important to examine, albeit somewhat generally, how the posters might function *in situ* for passers-by, or rather, to consider what questions could arise for viewers as they participate in the performance of the work. How does JR’s paradigm work as a “system of representation” in the public sphere, serving as a stage from which the subjects speak out?<sup>867</sup> How might we as viewers piece together visual clues to root out the intended meaning of these projects? Finally, what can a consideration of the viewer’s experience reveal to us about the relationship between performativity, photography, and affect in *Inside Out*?<sup>868</sup>

The portrait posters deny us many of the conventional markers of identity such as names, costumes, props, backdrops, or gestures, many of which are included in formal portraiture. Asking ourselves, “Who are these people?” we may explore the portraits for discernable signs of identity, which might offer clues about the race, age, or gender of the people in the photographs. We engage with the photographic subjects who invite us into a “dialogue” by making silly faces at us, gazing at us, or provoking us in some way.<sup>869</sup> These gazes play a central role in establishing our first impressions of the images’ affect, which scholar Tina Campt has shown can serve to disarm us and open us up to the subjects in the photographs.<sup>870</sup> Noticing that these are portraits of individuals that have been grouped together, we may start to wonder what the subjects of this unconventional

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<sup>865</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>866</sup> Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 96.

<sup>867</sup> Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 14.

<sup>868</sup> This line of investigation is inspired by: Laura Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography,” *Photography & Culture* 2, 3 (November 2009): 327–329; and Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, *Feeling Photography* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>869</sup> Berrebi, “JR—The Biggest Art Gallery,” n.p.

<sup>870</sup> Tina Campt, *Images Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012): 79.

group portrait share in common: an experience, a wish, an issue, a cause, or perhaps an achievement? To draw on scholar Alan Trachtenberg's analysis of group photographs, *Inside Out* posters similarly invite us to ask, "Is there a story here, something to uncover, secrets for us to savor?"<sup>871</sup> The visual strategies used—the shallow depth of field, the tight framing, and the lack of a receding background—draw our attention to what photography scholar Christopher Pinney has coined as "the surface of the image" and suggest that we cannot find our answers by looking deeper *into* the photographs.<sup>872</sup> For example, the photographs do not impose temporal or spatial frames onto the subjects.<sup>873</sup> Instead, the portraits appear to us *here* and *now* and so we start to look outside of the frames and to consider the context in which the photographic subjects find themselves.

Uninhibited by the traditional rules and regulations of a gallery spectatorship, we can run our hands along the posters when we look at them *in situ* if we can reach them. We can feel where the paper has bubbled up or tug at the corners that are peeling away. By touching the images, we glean a better understanding of the ephemerality and vulnerability of the wheatpaste method. Furthermore, as historian Elizabeth Edwards has established, "what things are made of—how they are materially presented—relates directly to their social, economic, and political discourses,"<sup>874</sup> and this is exceedingly important when interpreting *Inside Out* posters in public space. The street art aesthetic of the black-and-white posters complicates our reading of the portraits by signifying that the subjects are asserting a *counter*-narrative, that they are reclaiming public space, and that they are perhaps even breaking the law to do so. With this in mind, we might start to

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<sup>871</sup> Alan Trachtenberg "The Group Portrait," in *Multiple Exposure*, by Leslie Tonkonow and Alan Trachtenberg, 17–23 (New York: Independent Curators Inc., 1995): 17.

<sup>872</sup> Christopher Pinney, "Notes from the Surface of the Image: Photography, Postcolonialism, and Vernacular Modernism," in *Photography's Other Histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, 202–220 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 204.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.*, 213. Pinney discusses how Nagda portraiture does not impose spatial or temporal frames, and how this helps to draw our attention to the surface of the image. Later, he argues that much African and Indian photographic portraiture reject the idea of the photograph as a window to reality in favour of a conceptualization of the photograph as a *surface* on which self-representations are created (219). Here, I am drawing on Pinney to help illustrate how the *Inside Out* images similarly draw our gaze to the surface of the image.

<sup>874</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, "Photography as Objects of Memory," in *Material Memories*, eds. Marius Kwant, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley, 221–236 (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 223.



wonder, who these “transgressors” are and what social predicament they share.<sup>875</sup> This line of thought may lead to feelings of concern if we are faced with photographs of people who are not the “usual suspects,” especially if our gaze falls upon portraits of children, the elderly, or people whose facial expressions appear approachable. We question the political circumstances that have led this cast of people to struggle to assert themselves in this way. We may even try to negotiate how the subjects represent both courage *and* vulnerability, and how both of these qualities relate to their willingness to be exposed in public space in this manner.

*Inside Out* establishes an ambiguous “space of encounter,”<sup>876</sup> in which we are filled with questions. Additionally, by considering the “performative encounter”<sup>877</sup> between the spectator and the photographic subject, we can begin to understand the affective potential of the project. *Inside Out* creates a space where we can touch the posters and *be touched*, or rather be affected, by them, and where an emotional response can lead to a range of actions, from searching for answers and telling others about what we saw, to defacing the images or even tearing them down.<sup>878</sup> Of course, there is the potential for “performative misfires,” which is a term that performance studies scholar Laura Levin uses to refer to the moments when our interpretations of photographs stray from their intended messages.<sup>879</sup> Nevertheless, it is through this kind of process that the work fulfills its role as street art, as it establishes performative spaces and engages viewers.

For viewers that are hungry for answers, on the lower right side of each poster, there is the *Inside Out* web address. To better convey their stories and to help “share their messages with the world,”<sup>880</sup> *Inside Out* suggests that participants document all the stages

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<sup>875</sup> Trachtenberg, “The Group Portrait,” 18.

<sup>876</sup> Berrebi, “JR—The Biggest Art Gallery,” n.p.

<sup>877</sup> Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography (Review Essay),” 328.

<sup>878</sup> For a more in depth discussion of the relationship between touch, photography, and affect, see: Brown and Phu, “Introduction,” *Feeling and Photography*, 1–25; and Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>879</sup> Levin, “The Performative Force of Photography,” 331.

<sup>880</sup> JR, “Group Action Guidelines,” 7.

of their group action and encourages groups to share their images online. Each group action is provided a webpage on the *Inside Out* website where they may post their statement, as well as film or photo documentation of their group action and/or their portrait photographs. In addition, photographs of *Inside Out* group actions are found on countless social media, photo sharing, and global media sites. *Inside Out* circulates online through three genres of photography, which are street art, portrait, and documentary photography. Importantly, while experiencing group actions *in situ* gives viewers access to an important dimension of the work, it is much more common for viewers to encounter *Inside Out* online.

Sharing photo documentation of the projects online allows for the *Inside Out* group actions to have what may be seen simultaneously and yet somewhat antithetically as a vital online presence and a digital afterlife. As if with its digital legacy in mind, JR has posted stipulations for the media discourse that surrounds all iterations of *Inside Out*. While JR and the TED Conference provide support for group actions, the goal is that these actions will draw attention to the *participants* and their messages. As a result, press guidelines provide explicit language for participants to use when promoting their projects, which aim to clarify that the message of the group action is their own, and not that of TED or JR.<sup>881</sup> Through these guidelines, *Inside Out* provides a discursive framework in an attempt to avoid subsuming these collective actions into JR's rapidly growing professional portfolio or the TED Conference brand.

On a practical level, the online images of the *Inside Out* portraits are important considering the ephemerality of the posters in the face of weather conditions and interventions by viewers. As JR notes,

When you paste an image, it's just paper and glue.  
People can tear it, tag on it, or even pee on it—some  
[posters] are a bit high for that...but the people in the

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<sup>881</sup> JR, "Press Guidelines for Participation in the *Inside Out Project*," in *Inside Out: The People's Art Project*, 2014, [http://www.insideoutproject.net/sites/all/themes/insideout/documents/Press\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.insideoutproject.net/sites/all/themes/insideout/documents/Press_Guidelines.pdf) (accessed 1 April 2014).

street, they are the curator[s]. The rain and the wind  
will take them off anyway. They are not meant to  
stay.<sup>882</sup>

Posters placed in sites of contestation or put up illegally are also vulnerable, as they may be defaced by dissenters or ripped down by authorities. While many scholars agree that without photography, we would not have access to the history of the street art movement, they have also expressed many concerns about how photography obscures or limits our understanding of the work.<sup>883</sup> Some scholars argue that although photography serves an important role in helping to document and to make the street art movement accessible, it can distance the viewer from the experience of the work.<sup>884</sup> For examples, cultural studies scholar and photographer Ella Chmielewska notes that street art photography removes the work from its “tentative presence” in public space.<sup>885</sup> Photographs of freshly pasted posters do not capture the temporality and ephemerality of the work; thus, they may obscure our understanding of the “lifecycle” of street art, which includes its eventual decay.<sup>886</sup> This is why Chmielewska argues for a photographic practice that establishes a kind of “visual archeology”<sup>887</sup> of street art and graffiti, which involves documenting how the work is built up or torn down over time. Certainly photograph documentation of *Inside Out* can be, and has been, done to capture the works as they peel away from their surfaces. However, what we tend to see on online platforms such as the *Inside Out* website, are crisp and arresting photographs that are posted in celebration of the final products. This taps into photography’s potential to elevate the subject matter, which is a benefit of street art photography that many scholars acknowledge. Chmielewska explains, “While graffiti forces itself into the visual space of the city, photography adds graffiti to

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<sup>882</sup> JR, “My Wish.”

<sup>883</sup> Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 178.

<sup>884</sup> Ella Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality: Montreal Graffiti in Photography,” in *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Annie Gérin and James S. McLean, 271–292 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 2009): 271–274; and Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 178.

<sup>885</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality: Montreal Graffiti in Photography,” 274.

<sup>886</sup> Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, 91.

<sup>887</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality: Montreal Graffiti in Photography,” 271–292. The term “visual archaeology” is applied to Chmielewska’s argument in: Annie Gérin, “Introduction,” in *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Annie Gérin and James S. McLean, 3–21 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 2009): 18.

the anthology of (urban) images and elevates it to the status of “worth looking at.”<sup>888</sup> In this regard, the online images play an honorific role, which acknowledges the efforts and the stories of the subjects, thereby contributing to the original goals of the *Inside Out* project.

Another issue that has been raised about street art photography is that it transports the work to a “sort of void where site and time are obsolete,” which reduces complex, performative works into visual records.<sup>889</sup> However, uploading *Inside Out* images to various online platforms expands the discursive terrain within which the group action portraits operate and has the potential to offer a more comprehensive view of what the portraits are intended to signify.<sup>890</sup> The online photographs are accompanied by statements, press releases, captions, and comments. Viewers are given enough information to understand the underlying goals of the group action, even if the provided information is not comprehensive. As a result, the online portraits immediately represent specific issues, causes, or communities, and we do not have to piece together visual clues to try to sort out their intended message. Arguably, this use of street art photography helps to clarify, rather than obscure, the context surrounding the work, which helps to better convey the intended messages behind the group actions.

Documentary photographs of group meetings or of people wheatpasting posters help to illustrate that these projects are *process*-driven and that community collaboration is a critical component to each action [Fig. 4.6]. As such, the documentary photographs not only confirm the participatory nature of the project, but they also help to situate the project within the cultures of participation that have emerged since the 1990s. More importantly, the photographs of the groups in action hint at how participants might perform neoliberal citizenship and community through *Inside Out*. For example, the documentation shows that *Inside Out* emerges from a variety of cultural fields, including schools, neighbourhoods, arts institutions, social organizations, and community

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<sup>888</sup> Chmielewska, “Framing Temporality: Montreal Graffiti in Photography,” 272.

<sup>889</sup> Waclawek, *Street Art and Graffiti*, 178.

<sup>890</sup> For example, see Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” *Art Journal* 42, 4 (Winter 1982): 311–19.

groups.<sup>891</sup> These fields are not only integral sites for identity formation, but, as I discuss in the following sections, they are also sites of struggle within the neoliberal context. Documentary photographs also offer a glimpse of the otherwise “invisible forms of labour”<sup>892</sup> that are invested into the group actions at a grassroots level. In some cases, this is the kind of labour that is taken up by communities in the wake of destructive neoliberal policies.



Figure 4.6: Photo documentation of the *Toronto Inside Out* group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan.

### 4.3 The Global Rise of *Inside Out* in a Neoliberal Era

The goals and parameters of *Inside Out* provide a carefully constructed framework that helps to guide the process while allowing for flexibility. Part of the global success of this project is certainly due, in part, to the malleability of JR’s model. However, as scholar Stephen Wright has noted, collaboration “emerges and flourishes under a certain set of

<sup>891</sup> For a discussion of “fields of identity,” see: Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 21–23.

<sup>892</sup> Campt, *Image Matters*, 41.

circumstances.”<sup>893</sup> The “Explore” page of the *Inside Out* website helps to visualize that this model thrives in some regions more than others—to date, the majority of group actions have emerged in democratic and developed areas. Ferdman suggests that this pattern is the result of the lack of web technology in some developing areas and the issues of censorship in non-democratic regions.<sup>894</sup> Thus, Ferdman helps to identify some of the conditions in which the participatory art project may *not* thrive. Keeping in mind that the global proliferation of this project is not evenly distributed, how might we explain the otherwise exponential rise of *Inside Out*? We can approach this question from several positions, by considering its association with the ever-growing popularity of street art, its indebtedness to the TED conference media attention,<sup>895</sup> its significant online presence, or its visual impact and important social messages. However, to better understand the conditions that have supported the emergence of *Inside Out*, it is important to note that the success of this project is due in large part to the rise of cultures of participation that have emerged out of a context of global neoliberalism.<sup>896</sup>

As a global participatory art project, *Inside Out* is certainly part of what we have come to know as the “social turn” in the arts, as described in art historian Claire Bishop’s 2006 *Artforum* essay, which she has since readdressed as a “*return* to the social” in her 2012 publication entitled *Artificial Hells*.<sup>897</sup> Bishop, along with several other scholars, including, Grant Kester, Gregory Sholette and Blake Stimson, and Okwui Enwezor, have established that while participatory, collaborative, or collective art practices have had longstanding and varied roles in the history of art, new forms of “participatory art” emerged in the 1990s.<sup>898</sup> There have been several scholarly approaches to defining this

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<sup>893</sup> Stephen Wright, “The Delicate Essence of Artistic Collaboration,” *Third Text* 18, 6 (2004): 533.

<sup>894</sup> Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy,” 22.

<sup>895</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>896</sup> Jennifer Orpana, “Turning the World Inside Out: Situating JR’s Global Art Project within Cultures of Participation,” *RACAR Canadian Art Review* XXXIX, 1 (Summer 2014): 57–66.

<sup>897</sup> Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy,” 15. See also Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” *Artforum* 44, 6 (2006): 178–183, and *Artificial Hells*, 3.

<sup>898</sup> See, for example: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012) and “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” *Artforum* 44, 6 (2006); Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in*

surge of participation-based art forms, including Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of "relational art," Suzanne Lacy's writing about "new genre public art," and Grant Kester's conception of "dialogical art."<sup>899</sup> In addition, scholars have referred to the work of a myriad of theorists to describe these participatory art practices, including Walter Benjamin, the Situationist International, Paulo Freire, Deleuze and Guattari, and Hakim Bey,<sup>900</sup> as well as Foucault, Derrida, Agamben, Badiou, and Rancière.<sup>901</sup> Post-1990s participatory art has been hotly debated in art and humanities scholarship in efforts to understand the divergent goals, values, and outcomes of various participatory art practices and to try to determine the most effective critical approach to these projects. Specifically, scholars have been concerned with how participatory projects challenge traditional (modernist) conceptions of both artists and art objects and raise important questions about ethics and aesthetics in socially engaged art.<sup>902</sup> Simply put, *Inside Out* offers just one of many new "ways of being together in contemporary art."<sup>903</sup> Generally speaking, "participatory art" emerges as a broad term that refers to a range of practices that work within the "social field" and often aspire to generate social change.<sup>904</sup> By refusing corporate sponsorship, creating ephemeral works, emphasizing the importance of process, and aspiring to engage with community issues, *Inside Out* uses similar strategies to those of other participatory art practices, in which, as described by Bishop, "artists [devise] social situations as a dematerialised, anti-market, politically engaged project to carry on the avant-garde call to make a more vital part of life."<sup>905</sup>

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*Modern Art* (Los Angeles, 2004) and *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (San Diego: Duke University Press, 2011); Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, eds. *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Okwui Enwezor, "The Production of Space as Artwork: Protocols of Community in the Work of *Le Group Amos* and *Huit Facettes*," in *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, edited by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, 223–251 (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>899</sup> Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 10. See also: Lacy (1994); Bourriaud (2002); Bishop (2006; 2012) and Stimson and Sholette (2007).

<sup>900</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 11.

<sup>901</sup> Kester, *The One and the Many*, 12.

<sup>902</sup> Okwui Enwezor, "The Production of Space as Artwork," 223; Bishop (2006; 2012).

<sup>903</sup> Kester, *The One and the Many*, 2.

<sup>904</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 1; 12–13.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

*Inside Out* is also fueled by a growing enthusiasm for participatory *photography* in a vast range of fields, including social work, health and education studies, and urban planning. These diverse fields follow impulses similar to those of participatory art forms, including the desire to create an active and empowered subject, the interest in decentering the role of the “author” by working collectively, thereby democratizing authorship, and the need to respond to a perceived crisis in “community” through socially engaged collaborative work.<sup>906</sup> As a result, in the past decade there has been a greater presence of participatory projects that aim to put a “human face” on important social issues by using photographs to make authoritative statements about communities worldwide. Through visual research strategies such as Photovoice, community members are recruited to inspire cross-cultural dialogues, to promote social equality in the production of knowledge, and to compose compelling portraits of “community” for local and global audiences.<sup>907</sup> JR’s *Inside Out Project*, which is rooted in community research and social action, and which he has described as “local faces for a local message,”<sup>908</sup> is also part of this burgeoning trend that links visual research and photographic practice.

Furthermore, in the last couple of decades we have seen the emergence of a new visual trope that uses collections of portrait photographs in both art and social media to convey messages about identity and community. For example, there has recently been a dramatic increase in the number of participatory art projects that utilize photographic portraiture. In addition to *Inside Out*, we have seen the use of portrait photographs to make communities visible in Wendy Ewald’s collaborative work with students in Richmond, Virginia (*The Carver Portraits*, 2005), Tim Van Horn’s *Canadian Mosaic Project* (2007–present), and Pierre Maraval’s *Portraits x 1000* series (c.1993–2010), to name a few. This is particularly interesting since portrait photography was considered an

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<sup>906</sup> Bishop, “Introduction: Viewers as Producers,” *Participation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006): 12.

<sup>907</sup> For a seminal text on Photovoice, see: Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, “Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment,” *Health Education & Behavior* 24, 3 (June 1997): 369–387.

<sup>908</sup> JR, quoted in Debra Black, “Changing the World One Giant Portrait at a Time,” *The Toronto Star*, 27 October 2011.



arguably unpopular artistic genre until the 1970s or 1980s.<sup>909</sup> In the art world, the portrait photograph experienced a kind of renaissance through conceptual portrait work by such artists as Braco Dimitrijević and Cindy Sherman, as well as through what has been called the “big-face photography movement” exemplified by work such as Thomas Ruff’s oversized photographic portraits.<sup>910</sup> However, these trends do not entirely explain the rise of community-engaged portrait projects through *Inside Out*, some of which are not facilitated by artists.

JR’s concept capitalizes on the new roles of portraiture that have emerged in light of social media and social networking technologies. Today photographic portraits have a significant online presence through a variety of social media sites, especially in the form of the “profile photograph” (which is not to be confused with a photograph of one’s profile). The “profile photograph” is not always a representation of one’s likeness. People use a range of images including photographs of beloved childhood television characters, snapshots of delicious meals, and even sonogram images of babies *in utero* as their profile photographs to represent different aspects of their lives. However, most often the profile photograph is a thumbnail image of a closely cropped photographic self-portrait. The most conspicuous of this type of image is the “selfie,” a self-portrait taken at arm’s-length that represents the photographer either alone or closely flanked by other people. These photographs represent our “public face” in the virtual world and are associated with an increasing number of our online interactions. Similar to the various groups of *Inside Out* portraits, profile photographs also help to visualize the otherwise “imagined communities” with which we identify.<sup>911</sup> As *Frieze* editor Jennifer Allen argues, the photographic portrait plays a pivotal role in asserting ideas about personal identity

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<sup>909</sup> Phoebe Hoban, “The Cindy Sherman Effect,” *ARTnews*, 14 February 2012, <http://www.artnews.com/2012/02/14/the-cindy-sherman-effect/> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>910</sup> Cornelia Lauf, “Braco Dimitrijević and New York in the 1980s: Influences and Coincidences,” *Braco Dimitrijević*, n.d., <http://bracodimitrijevic.com/index.php?p=pages&title=Braco-Dimitrijevic-and-New-York-in-the-1980s-Influences-and-Coincidences> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>911</sup> See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 2006), 6; and Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

through its use in the “daily, if not minute-by-minute, staging of the self” that occurs online.<sup>912</sup> In the age of online applications such as the Facebook Friend Wheel, Social Graphs, and the Touchbook Facebook Browser,<sup>913</sup> which strikingly chart the interpersonal relationships within one’s “circle of friends,” innovative ways to represent social networks in which we participate are becoming increasingly appealing. The use of photographic portraits to make ourselves visible or to define ourselves to an expanding online community may help to explain the growing demand for, if not the rising level of comfort with, platforms such as *Inside Out*.<sup>914</sup> Furthermore, we begin to see how JR’s photographic guidelines for the project overlap with suggested guidelines for those seeking advice on how to best represent themselves on social media. A simple online search for “profile photograph” generates countless articles offering similar photographic tips, including, “You should be the only subject in the photo”<sup>915</sup> and “think of a head-and-shoulders shot.”<sup>916</sup>

Numerous scholars have noted how new cultures of participation respond to recent social and political circumstances, and in particular, to those that have arisen out of global neoliberalism.<sup>917</sup> What interests me here is how this broader political and economic context of global neoliberalism in its various forms has created both a desire and a perceived need for participatory projects such as *Inside Out*. While I am not able to sum up the breadth of scholarship that traces the developments of neoliberalism in this

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<sup>912</sup> Jennifer Allen, “Who, Me? Narcissism is Back in Fashion,” *Frieze* 143 (November–December 2011): <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/who-me/> (accessed 2 September 2013).

<sup>913</sup> Lee Odden, “Six Facebook Search Engine & Data Visualization Tools,” *TopRank*, 6 August 2010, <http://www.toprankblog.com/2010/08/6-facebook-search-engine-data-visualization-tools/> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>914</sup> For an interesting article on how Facebook is used as an identity project, see Randall Anderson, “Building the Self on Facebook,” *Border Crossings* 28, 2 (May 2009): 73–75. See also, Ferdman, “Urban Dramaturgy,” 19, for a discussion about *Inside Out* as the “Facebook of art-making” due to its user-generated nature.

<sup>915</sup> Vivian Giang, “8 Profile Picture Rules Every Professional Should Follow,” 12 November 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/rules-for-your-profile-picture-2013-11> (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>916</sup> “Take a Great Profile Pic,” *How-To Wiki*, 13 October 2013, [http://howto.wired.com/wiki/Take\\_a\\_Great\\_Profile\\_Pic](http://howto.wired.com/wiki/Take_a_Great_Profile_Pic) (accessed 1 April 2014).

<sup>917</sup> For examples, see: Stimson and Sholette (2007); Kester (2011); and Bishop (2012).

chapter, a brief review of this complex concept helps to draw some connections between neoliberalism and the success of JR's global art project.

Neoliberalism is a complex concept that has been defined as a post-Keynesian economic theory, a pedagogy and cultural politics, a set of ideologies, a governmentality, and a system of evolving and adaptive technologies of power.<sup>918</sup> In the 1970s, Keynesian economics—a 1930s economic theory founded on the belief that increased social spending and decreased taxes would have the potential to stimulate economic growth—was challenged by neoliberal economic theory, which is often associated with the Thatcher and Reagan administrations.<sup>919</sup> This form of neoliberalism was loosely based on classical liberal views, such as those expressed in Adam Smith's book, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), including the importance of “free” markets and the need to minimize the role of government.<sup>920</sup> Some writers have described contemporary neoliberalism as “Adam Smith on steroids” due to the way that the earlier liberal views have been altered to suit the current global economic context.<sup>921</sup> Some key characteristics of neoliberal economic strategies include reduced social spending, increased privatization and commodification of goods and services, and market deregulation.<sup>922</sup> Neoliberal economic and social policy redistributes resources and capital to the rich—resources that could otherwise greatly serve marginalized communities.<sup>923</sup> For example, in order to lower the

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<sup>918</sup> See, for example: Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, 37–64 (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996); Engin Isin, “Governing Toronto Without Government: Liberalism and Neoliberalism,” *Studies in Political Economy* 56 (Summer 1998): 169–191; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Wendy Larner, “Neo-Liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,” *Studies in Political Economy* 63 (2000): 5–25; Henry A. Giroux, “The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics,” *College Literature* 32, 1 (Winter 2005): 1–19; and Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil, and Douglas Young, *Changing Toronto: Governing Urban Neoliberalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 28–29.

<sup>919</sup> C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, *Local Government in Canada* (Toronto: Nelson College Indigenous, 2009), 15.

<sup>920</sup> Tindal and Tindal, *Local Government*, x.

<sup>921</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>923</sup> For discussions of this form of upward redistribution, see: Duggan (2004); Giroux (2005); and Tindal and Tindal (2009).

taxes on corporations, thereby increasing their profits, public services are drastically reduced if not cut completely.<sup>924</sup> Thus, neoliberal political and economic policies widen the gap between “the rich” and “the poor,” and many scholars have noted how these inequities are intrinsically linked to race, class, and gender.<sup>925</sup> These developments further marginalize communities and create a need for innovative and accessible ways to replace vital community programs. Furthermore, as these developments have impacted communities worldwide, albeit in different ways, there has been a growing sense of political engagement that has manifested as various forms of resistance and social organization.<sup>926</sup> It is precisely out of this situation of “peril and opportunity”<sup>927</sup> that cultures of participation, and projects such as *Inside Out*, emerge.

Furthermore, many scholars and theorists have investigated how these developments have variously restructured our cities, catalyzed new forms of resistance, and altered our understandings of everyday life, community, culture, and even ourselves.<sup>928</sup> Neoliberalism promotes a discourse of creativity, flexibility, individualism, entrepreneurialism, and competitiveness, which places the burden of economic success on individual citizens and away from the government.<sup>929</sup> In this context, culture and civil

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<sup>924</sup> Giroux, “The Terror of Neoliberalism,” 2.

<sup>925</sup> Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, eds., *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).

<sup>926</sup> Kester, *The One and the Many*, 6.

<sup>927</sup> Ibid.

<sup>928</sup> See, for example: Doreen Massey, *World City* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S. Sheppard, eds., *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2007); David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012); Braedley and Luxton (2010); Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London & New York: Verso, 2013); Rose (1999); George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund, “The Responsibilities of the Poor: Performing Neoliberal Citizenship within the Bureaucratic Field,” *Social Service Review* 87, 2 (June 2013): 292–318.

<sup>929</sup> Leitner, et al., *Contesting Neoliberalism*, 2. See also: Nikolas Rose, “Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Abingdon: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1996): 45.

society adopt new roles, being employed for everything from reducing crime to spurring on economic growth by helping to brand globally competitive cities.<sup>930</sup> In this regard, neoliberalism exists as a range of technologies of government, which include not only political policies and reforms that govern us, but also individual and community actions through which we govern ourselves.<sup>931</sup>

#### 4.4 *Toronto Inside Out* (2011)

Importantly, Manifesto was not the only Toronto-based group to participate in JR's global art project. For example, the Mabin School produced a project by Grade 5 and 6 students, entitled, "Mabin Smiles," to express ideas of peace and happiness through 170 photographs of the students' smiles (May 2011).<sup>932</sup> Later, the students of Victoria College at the University of Toronto created an untitled group action that involved posting 44 portraits on construction hoarding to celebrate the students' diverse stories (August 2012).<sup>933</sup> While each group action is important in its own right, speaking to the interests and motivations of different Toronto communities, Manifesto's *Toronto Inside Out* offers a most compelling case study as it is the largest, and arguably Toronto's most politically engaged, group action to date.

Manifesto is a non-profit organization that seeks to "find innovative ways of working together" through a wide range of community arts opportunities, including

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<sup>930</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 13–18. See also George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003): 1–8.

<sup>931</sup> See, for example: Rose (1996; 1999); Engin Isin, "Governing Toronto without Government: Liberalism and Neoliberalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 56 (Summer 1998): 169–191; and Wendy Lerner, "Neo-Liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality," *Studies in Political Economy* 63 (2000): 5–25.

<sup>932</sup> See: "Mabin Smiles," in *Inside Out: The People's Art Project*, 2011, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/fr/group-actions/canada-toronto-1> (accessed 25 September 2013).

<sup>933</sup> See: "Victoria College Students," in *Inside Out: The People's Art Project*, 2012, <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/canada-toronto-0> (accessed 25 September 2013).

festivals, free concerts, dance competitions, town hall meetings, and art exhibitions.<sup>934</sup> Manifesto is rooted in hip hop culture but remains open to diverse forms of creative expression and aspires to achieve five core objectives, which are: “connect, cultivate, communicate, create, and showcase.”<sup>935</sup> The festival’s programming is geared toward sharing “experience and expertise inter-generationally,” encouraging “civic and national pride in urban art forms,” transforming “conflict into creativity,” and celebrating Toronto’s “diverse cultural histories.”<sup>936</sup>

Prior to Manifesto’s 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Kothari pitched JR’s *Inside Out Project* to the festival’s visual arts council. Kothari explains his interest in JR’s work by stating:

I’ve always been a huge advocate for art in the public sphere, especially about community voices in the public sphere and finding a way to democratize public space. So a project that has an element of working with community directly, photographing those individuals and then telling those stories on their walls with their permission is a really good vehicle for that.<sup>937</sup>

As the concept is perfectly in line with Manifesto’s mandate, the council embraced the idea and agreed to allocate a portion of the visual arts budget to support Manifesto’s participation in *Inside Out*.<sup>938</sup> However, in adherence to *Inside Out*’s policy against serving as publicity for any organization, Manifesto needed to develop a social message for *Toronto Inside Out*. Inspired by both their mandate and the political climate at the time, Manifesto selected two objectives for their group action: to celebrate Toronto’s

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<sup>934</sup> Greg Drakes, “Toronto Inside Out Project,” in *Manifesto*, 18 September 2011, <http://themanifesto.ca/toronto-inside-out-project/> (accessed 25 September 2013); and Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, “About Manifesto,” in *Manifesto*, 2014, <http://themanifesto.ca/about/> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>935</sup> Ibid. See also: Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, “Manifesto Festival,” in *Facebook*, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/ManifestoFestival/info> (accessed 28 May 2014).

<sup>936</sup> Ibid.

<sup>937</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>938</sup> Kothari mentioned that Manifesto made a donation of \$2000 to \$4000 toward *Inside Out* to participate in this project. Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

diversity, including intergenerational, ethnic, and sexual diversity, and to contest the proposed cut-backs at City Hall.

To create the huge collection of digital portrait photographs that would be used for the posters, Kothari reached out to the Manifesto community, which includes hundreds of youth arts and social change organizations, as well as his own photography network.<sup>939</sup> The themes of the project were shared with the prospective photographers, with the hopes that the goals and intentions of the project would reach all participants. Twenty-four Toronto photographers responded, including not only professional photographers but also less experienced or emerging photographers.<sup>940</sup> Kothari admits that the picture taking process was very quick and that they did not have the chance to engage with each participant about all of the issues, but that the process did create many opportunities for discussion.<sup>941</sup>

After collecting all the portrait photographs, Manifesto sent their digital files to the *Inside Out* team and shortly afterward they received their posters in the mail. To “activate” different areas of the city, Manifesto pasted posters in a number of Toronto neighbourhoods including Regent Park, Eglinton West, Kensington Market, Queen West, Parkdale, Liberty Village, Jane and Finch, and Rexdale, among others [Figs. 4.7 & 4.8].<sup>942</sup> Notably, many of these neighbourhoods are considered high-priority neighbourhoods and have been deeply impacted by urban neoliberalism, specifically redevelopment strategies. These posters—mounted both legally and illegally—were pasted in what Manifesto reporter Olivia Arezes described as the “once empty spaces” of

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<sup>939</sup> The *Toronto Inside Out* project was directed by Che Kothari, Ashley McKenzie Barnes and Shaka Licorish.

<sup>940</sup> The participating photographers were: Ahmed Sagarwala, Aden Abebe, Ajani Charles, Alejandra Higuera, Alexis Finch, Alyssa Katherine Faoro, Angie Choi, Anna Keenan, Anora Graham, Buruk Early, Che Kothari, Gaby Cueto, Gillian Mapp, Jalani Morgan, Jon Blak, Julian Campbell, May Truong, Nabil Shash, Natalie Caine, Nathaniel Anderson, Noah Ocran-Caesar, Nzeghwa Anderson, Steve Carty, and Yannick Anton.

<sup>941</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>942</sup> Ibid. Also, see: Greg Drakes, “Toronto Inside Out Project.”

the city, including construction hoarding and underpasses.<sup>943</sup> The wheatpasting was done by volunteers, many of whom attended workshops on how to wheatpaste, which were offered by the Manifesto Festival. In many of these contexts, the participants and their posters reclaimed public space in sites of contestation.



Figure 4.7: Photo documentation of *Toronto Inside Out* (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Ahmed Sagarwala.



Figure 4.8: Photo documentation of the *Toronto Inside Out* group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan.

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<sup>943</sup> Olivia Arezes, “The Walls Have Eyes,” in *Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture, Festival Magazine*, September 2011, [http://issuu.com/manifestomagazine/docs/manifesto\\_festivalmagazine\\_vol5/1?e=1339367/3397308](http://issuu.com/manifestomagazine/docs/manifesto_festivalmagazine_vol5/1?e=1339367/3397308) (accessed 27 May 2014).



*Toronto Inside Out* portraits were also displayed at Toronto cultural institutions. For example, Kothari posted his portraits on the construction hoarding that surrounded the new Daniels Spectrum building in the Regent Park neighbourhood. Daniels Spectrum would later serve as a “cultural hub” in Regent Park, and as home to a variety of non-profit arts organizations, including: ArtHeart Community Art Centre, Regent Park Film Festival, Pathways to Education, Regent Park School of Music, Native Earth Performing Arts, and COBA Collective of Black Artists.<sup>944</sup> Furthermore, the digital files of the *Toronto Inside Out* portraits were incorporated into Manifesto’s *All Art Everything* art exhibit, which was hosted by the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) as part of the grand opening of the Weston Family Centre.<sup>945</sup> This newly renovated space at the AGO was reopened with a mandate to better serve as a “hub for community creativity and learning.”<sup>946</sup> Manifesto’s *All Art Everything* exhibit showcased a number of local street artists and included a slideshow of *Inside Out* portraits that was projected high on the walls. In these contexts, the posters highlighted the kinds of positive community work that can be done through the continued support of Toronto’s diverse communities and the arts in Toronto.

## 4.5 Facing Ford: A Time of “Peril and Opportunity” in Toronto

*Toronto Inside Out* succeeded due to the dedication of the people and institutions in Manifesto’s community network, reflecting an impressive culture of participation in Toronto communities. As discussed earlier in this chapter, recent cultures of participation have developed in a range of fields out of a neoliberal context of “peril and

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<sup>944</sup> *Daniels Spectrum: A Cultural Hub in Regent Park*, 2014, <http://regentparkarts.ca/tenants/> (accessed 1 June 2014).

<sup>945</sup> The many uses of *Toronto Inside Out* represent a typical case of a “many birds, one stone” strategy that occurs in community arts project. *Toronto Inside Out* was used to support many arts and cultural events: an anniversary, grand openings, a global art project, etc.

<sup>946</sup> Art Gallery of Ontario, “About the Weston Family Learning Centre,” in *Art Gallery of Ontario*, 2014, <http://www.ago.net/weston-family-learning-centre> (accessed 1 June 2014).

opportunity.”<sup>947</sup> In response to governmental strategies that have taken up aspects of Thatcher or Reagan’s neoliberal rationalities—including job cuts, gentrification and slashed social welfare programs—people have sought new opportunities to speak out, turning to diverse participatory practices such as political activism and community-engaged artistic practices.

Manifesto’s group action certainly arose from a climate of “peril and opportunity” in Toronto. *Toronto Inside Out* occurred during Mayor Rob Ford’s first year in office, which marked the end of Mayor David Miller’s clean and creative city agendas, and the return of municipal austerity measures. In the fall of 2010, the newly appointed mayor enlisted KPMG, a consulting firm, to conduct a Core Services Review of the city that would help inform decisions about the 2012 city budget. Specifically, the goal of this review was to address an estimated, albeit contested, 2012 “operating pressure” of \$774 million.<sup>948</sup> Essentially this review created an inventory of city services, identified services as “legislated, core, [or] discretionary,” and suggested spending reductions.<sup>949</sup> This approach was not surprising for a mayor whose election platform centered on putting an end to excessive spending at City Hall, and in his words, stopping “the gravy train.”<sup>950</sup> Described by City Manager Joe Pennachetti as, “one of the most exhaustive reviews of services any recent government has undertaken,” KPMG released the comprehensive review in July 2011.<sup>951</sup> Quickly, it became apparent that Mayor Ford’s concern was to dramatically cut costs, even if it meant downsizing the police force, eliminating fluoride

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<sup>947</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many*, 6.

<sup>948</sup> City of Toronto, “Service Review Program, 2012 Budget Process and Multi-Year Financial Planning Process,” in *Toronto*, 8 March 2011, <http://www.toronto.ca/budget2011/pdf/servicerevreport.pdf> (accessed 27 May 2014). Note: Importantly, this estimate was mired with controversy, since the previous Mayor David Miller reported a surplus of \$367.5 million. Journalist Royson James helps to explain this shift by noting that Miller’s surplus was rolled into the 2011 budget, which led to a \$774 million deficit projected for 2012. See: Royson James, “City Economics: Budget + Surplus = Deficit,” *The Toronto Star*, 26 September 2011.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>950</sup> Marcus Gee, “Turns out it’s Not All Gravy,” *The Globe and Mail*, 11 July 2011; and Edward Keenan, “This Report is a Waste of Taxpayer Dollars,” *The Grid: Street Level in Toronto*, 12 July 2011, <http://www.thegridto.com/city/politics/this-report-is-a-waste-of-taxpayer-dollars/> (accessed 21 May 2014).

<sup>951</sup> Gee, “Turns out it’s Not All Gravy.”

from city water, closing down libraries, or liquidating the city's cultural assets.<sup>952</sup> KPMG's suggestions involved numerous strategies, especially those centered on minimizing government, cutting back on community programs, and downsizing. For many Torontonians, these suggestions brought back unsettling memories of Mike Harris' Common Sense Revolution in Ontario (1995–2003) and former Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman's reign (1998–2003), both of which embodied forms of neoliberal restructuring and downsizing.<sup>953</sup>

The \$3 million process of conducting a core service review was rife with controversy because it threatened to significantly alter the lives of Torontonians across the city.<sup>954</sup> As it is the duty of municipal governments to give citizens a forum to speak about city issues, the core service review process included a "public engagement strategy," which took place in the spring and summer of 2011.<sup>955</sup> Part of this strategy included a highly publicized process of public deputations, through which hundreds of Toronto citizens spoke out against the report at City Hall. For two weeks at the end of July, deputations were presented in front of a variety of committees, including the Community Development and Recreation Committee and the Parks and Environment Committee. These meetings culminated with an epic 22-hour council meeting on July 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> at which the Executive Committee listened to over 160 deputations presented by

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<sup>952</sup> See: KPMG, "City of Toronto Core Services Review," in *Toronto*, 2011, <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-39626.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2014).

<sup>953</sup> Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil, and Douglas Young, *Changing Toronto: Governing Urban Neoliberalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 59; and Roger Keil and Julie-Anne Boudreau, "Metropolis and Metabolics: Rolling Out Environmentalism in Toronto," in *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, eds. Nik Heynan, Mari Kaika, and Erik Swyngedouw, 40–62 (New York: Routledge, 2006): 41. See also: Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," 389.

<sup>954</sup> See, for example: Robyn Doolittle, "Critics See KPMG as 'Smoke and Mirrors,'" *The Toronto Star*, 22 July 2011; Gee, "Turns out it's Not All Gravy"; James, "City Economics: Budget + Surplus = Deficit"; and Colin McConnell, "This Report is a Waste of Taxpayer Dollars," *The Grid TO*, 12 July 2011, <http://www.thegridto.com/city/politics/this-report-is-a-waste-of-taxpayer-dollars/> (accessed 28 May 2014).

<sup>955</sup> City of Toronto, "Service Review Program, 2012 Budget Process and Multi-Year Financial Planning Process," 4.

concerned citizens representing all wards.<sup>956</sup> Throughout this process, City Hall was a hive of activity as people arrived in droves to present deputations and to support fellow Torontonians who had the courage to speak at City Council. At home, many Toronto citizens tuned in to watch the live feed of the deputations, which was available on the *Rogers TV* website.

To many people, this was a landmark moment for political engagement in the city. Journalists wrote articles about a political “awakening in Torontonians”<sup>957</sup> and about a “new kind of energy that has united” Toronto citizens.<sup>958</sup> To help give a sense of the lack of political engagement by Toronto citizens prior to this time, it is important to note the low voter turnout for the mayoral elections in the preceding elections. In 2003, voter turnout was 38% and in 2006 it was 39%. In 2010, the mayoral election brought out more voters, but it was still only 53.2% of the population.<sup>959</sup> To help explain this increased civic participation, newspapers interviewed many of the Torontonians that showed up at City Hall, including activists, deputants, and observers. For example, the *National Post* interviewed attendee Robert Sherrin, who commented, “We’re just concerned that the city will deteriorate in many important ways, whether it be socially, [or] culturally.”<sup>960</sup> Some of the people that were interviewed noted that they were green when it came to activism and community engagement, including Barry A. Sanders, who commented, “Getting engaged is a very new thing for me.”<sup>961</sup> During this time, newspapers reports also focused on the more emotional and contentious moments during the public consultation process. For example, *The Toronto Star* wrote about an expectant father who

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<sup>956</sup> The deputation schedule is available under “Schedule of Meetings: July 2011” at: City of Toronto, “Toronto City Council and Committees: Meetings, Agendas, and Minutes,” in *Toronto*, 2014, <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/index.do> (accessed 20 May 2014).

<sup>957</sup> Paul Terefenko, “How Rob Ford is Politically Energizing Toronto,” *National Post*, 2 August 2011.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>959</sup> “Toronto Voter Turnout Hits 53.2%,” *CBC News*, 26 October 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-voter-turnout-hits-53-2-1.884395> (accessed 28 May 2014). This recent trend for low voter turn-out is not only a Toronto issue. See, for example: John Ibbitson, “The Alarming Decline in Voter Turnout,” *The Globe and Mail*, 14 October 2011.

<sup>960</sup> Terefenko, “How Rob Ford is Politically Energizing Toronto.”

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*

“held back tears” as he spoke about applying for daycare subsidy waiting list and discovering that he was number 20,096.<sup>962</sup> *The Toronto Star* also described how deputant Jason Adam Robins warned city council, “You have galvanized a giant machine,” referring to the people of Toronto who were coming together in opposition to the report.<sup>963</sup>

Contributing to the city’s renewed political energy was the fact that many Torontonians felt that the deputations against proposed city budget cuts fell on deaf ears. Accusations of Mayor Ford sleeping on the job or excusing himself from the deputations circulated through social media.<sup>964</sup> News reports emerged with such headlines as, “Ford Unswayed by 22 Hours of Talk, Teen’s Tears.”<sup>965</sup> Beyond the City of Toronto’s rigid deputation framework—a mere three minutes of speaking time per deputant—citizens of Toronto also turned to a range of alternative forums to express their concerns about the proposed cuts, including social media, graffiti art practices, petitions, and demonstrations.<sup>966</sup> For example, online photographs show pictures of people holding protest signs that say, “KPMG we don’t want your austerity!” and “Childcare is not gravy.”<sup>967</sup> Another website shows a subversive protest poster that appropriated the design of Sheppard Fairey’s Barack Obama “Hope” poster, depicting Mayor Ford as a dictator

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<sup>962</sup> Josh Mallow, “City Hall Diary: Please, Don’t Try to Scare Us into Submission,” *The Toronto Star*, 25 July 2011. Full disclosure: This deputant was my husband, Christian Morgan. Mallow’s article omits that Christian was referring to the childcare subsidy list, confusing this issue with another vexing issue for Toronto parents, which is the extremely competitive process of getting your children into daycares. Christian spoke passionately; however, to emphasize the sense of emotion in the room, the reporter took some creative license when adding that he “held back tears.” Both of these inconsistencies speak to the challenge of keeping track of the numerous issues that were on the table during these deputations and of the highly charged emotional atmosphere in City Hall at this time.

<sup>963</sup> Daniel Dale and David Rider, “Ford Unswayed by 22 Hours of Talk, Teen’s Tears.”

<sup>964</sup> Jonathan Goldsbie, “Snoozgate: Was Rob Ford Really Sleeping on the Job?” *Now Magazine*, 18 October 2013, <http://www.nowtoronto.com/daily/story.cfm?content=194883> (accessed 1 June 2014).

<sup>965</sup> Daniel Dale and David Rider, “Ford Unswayed by 22 Hours of Talk, Teen’s Tears.”

<sup>966</sup> Terefenko, “How Rob Ford is Politically Energizing Toronto.”

<sup>967</sup> Andrew Moran, “Dozens Rally to Protest KPMG Report, Toronto Mayor Proposed Cuts,” in *Digital Journal*, 21 July 2011, <http://www.examiner.com/article/dozens-rally-to-protest-kpmg-report-toronto-mayor-s-proposed-cuts> (accessed 27 May 2014).

wearing Benito Mussolini's hat above the word, "Nope."<sup>968</sup> Online blogs extolled the need for more grassroots movements and public pressure.<sup>969</sup> When asked about the biggest success of *Toronto Inside Out*, with a beaming smile Kothari responded, "It was very easy to galvanize people."<sup>970</sup>

Through Ford's Core Service Review process, we can see very clearly how forms of urban neoliberalism, in attempts to increase capital, served also to catalyze forms of urban resistance.<sup>971</sup> Manifesto's portrait posters of hundreds of Torontonians helped to visualize an otherwise imagined community composed of diverse individuals connected by their vested interest in the wellbeing of Toronto communities.<sup>972</sup> In its ability to engage over 400 participants, it is clear that *Toronto Inside Out* thrived in this environment of new found political energy in the wake of the Core Service Review process.

Some documentary photographs of Manifesto's group action show the portraits sharing space with other contestations of Mayor Ford's plans. For example, in one image, there is a long strip of construction hoarding with two sets of six portrait posters representing people of various ages and ethnicities [Fig. 4.9]. On the hoarding between the posters, the wall is hastily tagged with white spray-paint. Its message is clear—in huge capital letters, it reads: "Stop Ford!" Beside these words, the portraits help to emphasize the people who would be directly impacted by Ford's budgetary cuts. Thus, this image shows how *Toronto Inside Out* posters were placed in a politically charged terrain where there were widespread visual contestations of Ford's neoliberally inflected austerity proposals. However, upon further consideration, this documentary image

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<sup>968</sup> Eric Parker, "Spotted: Rob Ford as Mussolini," in *Torontoist*, 23 March 2011, [http://torontoist.com/2011/03/spotted\\_rob\\_ford\\_as\\_mussolini/](http://torontoist.com/2011/03/spotted_rob_ford_as_mussolini/) (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>969</sup> Hamultal Dotan, "Ten Things about Rob Ford: Thoughts on a Vexed Mayoralty, and What Can Be Done to Combat It," in *Torontoist*, 27 July 2011, [http://torontoist.com/2011/07/ford\\_thing/](http://torontoist.com/2011/07/ford_thing/) (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>970</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>971</sup> See, for example: Roger Keil, "'Common Sense' Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto," 231.

<sup>972</sup> See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6; and Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures*, xviii.

becomes more complex, if not somewhat contradictory. Between the images there is another call to action. In bold white letters, the following words are stenciled: “Help yourself! Eat well!”<sup>973</sup> In this respect, the photo-documentation captures a street-level message of self-reliance, which is an important theme in neoliberal discourse. This inspires me to wonder about how, in its own performance of self-reliance and social responsibility, *Toronto Inside Out* might have been, in part, a performance of neoliberal citizenship and community.



Figure 4.9: Photo documentation of the *Toronto Inside Out* group action by Manifesto Festival of Community and Culture (Toronto, Ontario, 2011). Photograph and permission courtesy of Anna Keenan.

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<sup>973</sup> At this time, I am not able to identify where the “Help Yourself!” graffiti or the display of hanging clothing originated.

## 4.6 Performing Neoliberal Citizenship and Community through *Toronto Inside Out*

In Manifesto's marketing materials, blogs, brief news reports, and on the *Inside Out Website*, the intended messages of the group action were made clear through a variety of discursive strategies. However, further consideration of the project enables us to see how like many neoliberal contestations, *Toronto Inside Out* was just as embedded in ideologies and strategies of urban neoliberalism, as it was against them. Importantly, Manifesto's group action visualized the newly invigorated sense of self and community that emerged in Toronto at this time. However, it is also possible to see how Torontonians performed aspects of neoliberal citizenship by facilitating, and by participating in, *Toronto Inside Out*. By identifying this contradiction, my hope is to address the rich complexity of this visual practice as it captured everyday people grappling with the developments of urban neoliberalism, rather than to identify it as a limitation of the project. Also, rather than suggesting that *Toronto Inside Out* reflects how citizens have been "brainwashed" into performing acts of neoliberal subjectivity, this discussion establishes how in some ways this group action, either strategically or subconsciously, turned aspects of neoliberal citizenship "inside out" through this act of contestation.<sup>974</sup>

Summarizing the work of many of the leading scholars on the topic of neoliberal subjectivity, sociology scholars Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund identified the five characteristics of neoliberal citizenship, many of which are pertinent to the discussion of *Toronto Inside Out*.<sup>975</sup> The neoliberal citizen has been described as active, prudent, responsible, autonomous, and entrepreneurial. These qualities became increasingly important in the face of neoliberal restructuring which seeks to cut back on

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<sup>974</sup> I am able to address this with thanks to the work in this article: Andrew Woolford and Amanda Nelund, "The Responsibilities of the Poor: Performing Neoliberal Citizenship within the Bureaucratic Field," *Social Service Review* 87, 2 (June 2013): 313.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 303–305. Scholars that have addressed aspects of neoliberal subjectivity, as noted by Woolford and Nelund, include: Suzan Ilcan, Marcia Oliver, and Daniel O'Connor; John Clarke, Martin Whiteford, Jacqueline Kennelly and Kristina Llewellyn, Nikolas Rose, Aihwa Ong, Verónica Schild, Graham Burchell, and Alexandra Dobrowolsky.



social welfare programs and to minimize the role of government. To elaborate, neoliberal subjects are expected to participate in work, be it waged or voluntary labour. They are capable of identifying risks or issues that may impact their well-being, and they take the steps required to address them, be it through self-management, self-governance, or making good decisions. Neoliberal subjects assert that they are self-reliant and empowered. To accomplish this, neoliberal citizens must think and act entrepreneurially to develop strategies that will improve their situations. Often these strategies include self-promotion or competition. However, it is important to note that often neoliberal subjects assert all of these qualities to prove that they are worthy of care in the urban neoliberal context.<sup>976</sup>

Many of these qualities ring true to the description of *Toronto Inside Out*. Through this project, participants used the post-Keynesian political strategy that places the responsibility of wellbeing onto individual subjects and made it a strategy for contestation. Responding to a potential threat to the arts and to communities in Toronto, Manifesto recruited community members to take action. Manifesto took on the responsibility of offering accessible community arts workshops to Torontonians, the very types of community arts programs that are threatened by “roll-back” neoliberalism. The countless documentary images of people congenially working together toward a common goal reflect neoliberal aspects of self-governance, self-management, and entrepreneurialism. The hundreds of portrait posters of Torontonians with confident expressions and the images of people pasting up their own images in public space reflect the theme of empowerment, which is a key theme in discourse about neoliberal citizenship. While the project was largely intended to represent communities through collections of portraits, the posting of large individual portrait posters could arguably be interpreted as a necessary act of self-promotion in response to a competitive funding context. On the one hand, *Toronto Inside Out* reflected the community’s potential to artistically thrive *despite* a lack of funding from the City of Toronto, by generating art exhibits, community workshops, and public art, and by fostering both local and global

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<sup>976</sup> Ibid., 303–309.

arts partnerships. However, on the other hand, this strategy was used to assert that Toronto's arts community was deserving of funding from the City of Toronto.

New ways of defining "community" have also emerged out of neoliberalism, which are similarly relevant to *Toronto Inside Out*. In the 1990s, political discourse about the term "community" stressed ideas of "voluntarism," "self-organized care," and "charitable works."<sup>977</sup> As Nikolas Rose explains, this new conception of "community" was identified as the "third sector."<sup>978</sup> Various technologies of government developed within this sector, which served to harness the energy of individuals and groups to contribute toward the public good.<sup>979</sup> This interpretation relies on a Foucauldian view of neoliberalism as governmentality, which looks at how power is produced and how conduct is regulated via vast assemblages composed of a range of governmental and non-governmental institutions rather than merely considering state-down expression of power.<sup>980</sup> This new conception of community, described also as a "third way of governing," that has emerged in the past couple of decades is less tied to ideas of shared spaces, than it is to shared emotions. As Rose explains,

The community of the third sector [...] is a moral field binding persons into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationship through which individual identities are constructed through their bonds to micro-cultures of values and meanings.<sup>981</sup>

By drawing people together by appealing to their beliefs in important causes and by organizing portraits in neat grids and patterns across the city, *Toronto Inside Out* served to bind individuals into micro-communities both literally and figuratively. But how did

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<sup>977</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 171.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid.

<sup>979</sup> Ibid.

<sup>980</sup> See, for example: Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 168; Nikolas Rose, "Governing 'Advanced Liberal Democracies,'" 37–64; Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 87–104 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991); and Wendy Larner, "Neo-Liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality," *Studies in Political Economy* 63 (2000): 5–25.

<sup>981</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 172.

*Toronto Inside Out* serve as a form of neoliberal governmentality, or rather, “government through community”?<sup>982</sup>

Rather than engaging in violent public protest or using the media to spread vitriol about City Hall, *Toronto Inside Out* spread their message in a way that improved community relations, empowered citizens, increased volunteerism, beautified public space, and created a stunning visual statement about Toronto’s diversity. This is not to say that Manifesto was duped into doing what was in the best interest of the government, but rather to illustrate how the needs and interests of two seemingly opposed groups were, in some ways, aligned. By offering a safe, peaceful, congenial, and educational approach to political engagement through *Toronto Inside Out*, Manifesto served both Torontonians and the city leaders. Through this we can see how neoliberal conceptions of community—specifically community as a “moral field” and a space of governance—were enacted through *Toronto Inside Out*.

## 4.7 The Cultural Impact of *Toronto Inside Out*

While few, if any, of the *Inside Out* projects explicitly indicate a stance that contests or supports neoliberalism, each project produces representations of communities and identities that are deeply entrenched in, or at the very least influenced by, aspects of the ever-shifting neoliberal policies, practices, technologies, and discourse. When communities gather in meetings and workshops, they take on the functions of vital social programs that may have been cut due to neoliberal austerity politics. When individuals agree to take action, they use a post-Keynesian political strategy that places the responsibility of wellbeing onto individual subjects and they make it a strategy for contestation. On one hand, when posters are mounted in urban spaces, they present us with celebrations of diversity, which is a visual and discursive strategy that has been vital to the neoliberally inflected creative city agendas. On the other hand, *Inside Out* portraits

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<sup>982</sup> Ibid., 176.

can inspire alternative readings of urban space,<sup>983</sup> which serve to contest urban neoliberal policies such as cuts to social welfare programs or community displacement due to urban revitalization programs. Thus, *Inside Out* group actions have the potential to capture the entanglement of neoliberalism and its contestations, as well as the new individual and collective subjectivities that have developed in this context. Furthermore, in the posters' different stages of deterioration, perhaps we can see an unintended visual effect that alludes to the challenges faced by communities in a neoliberal era. As Bishop states, "the neoliberal idea of community doesn't seek to build social relations, but rather to erode them."<sup>984</sup>

Arguably, JR's *Inside Out Project* even mimics the global spread of neoliberalism, as it too is a flexible strategy that is used worldwide, which takes different forms in different political contexts. Furthermore, when portraits are posted online, *Inside Out* engages with Internet technologies and user-generated modes of representing the self that have emerged out of neoliberalism.<sup>985</sup> *Inside Out* therefore not only taps into global cultures of participation, but it also harnesses the existing need and desire of diverse communities to engage with the rationalities, policies, and technologies that have emerged out of neoliberalism. By examining *Toronto Inside Out* we are able to consider the impact of a global participatory art project on *one* community. Still, there is a glut of opportunities to examine how JR's wish has enabled communities worldwide to address the impact of global neoliberalism and to capture new perceptions of self and community that have emerged in the wake of neoliberal developments.

Admittedly, for a viewer or an outsider to the various group actions, it is challenging to determine the cultural impact of *Inside Out* on its participants. To refer back to Denzel's video clip, we get a sense of the personal value of this project on a young boy as he reacts to his own portrait with awe and excitement. We can also ascertain the personal impact of *Toronto Inside Out* in online photographic

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<sup>983</sup> Ferdman, *Urban Dramaturgy*, 13.

<sup>984</sup> Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 14.

<sup>985</sup> Leitner et al., "Contesting Urban Futures," 9.

documentation that shows people proudly posing beside their own portraits. Aside from the sheer novelty of seeing oneself projected in space that is usually plastered with high-gloss advertising images, *Toronto Inside Out* gave people the opportunity to humbly “see themselves” in the city at a time when Toronto politics did not seem to reflect the interests and needs of many Torontonians. *Toronto Inside Out* asserted that all citizens are deserving of space and recognition in the urban environment.<sup>986</sup>

At such a politically divisive time, *Toronto Inside Out* played an important role in encouraging inclusivity and community building. The Core Service Review process and the rhetoric of the Ford administration had the potential to turn citizens against each other as they competed to demonstrate the value of their personal causes over those of their fellow citizens. This threat inspired journalist Hamutal Dotan to urge *Torontoist* readers to stick together, stating:

[...] What we need is to start talking to each other, often and in new ways, about our daily experiences of the city and the ways we would like it to develop and mature [...]. We need to start bridging the divides that our current discourse is widening.<sup>987</sup>

Whether through photo shoots, workshops, or on the streets, *Toronto Inside Out* provided opportunities to have discussions about important issues. In this regard, the documentary photographs of the process—images of people laughing and chatting as they sort images, wheatpaste, or discuss strategies—speak to how Manifesto’s group action fostered community-building and brought people together. The materials used even suggested inclusivity in that wheatpaste is a relatively inexpensive and accessible art practice. As Kothari explained, “This [art] is for everyone.”<sup>988</sup>

*Inside Out* enabled participants to harness the renewed political energy in Toronto and it served as a powerful visual strategy to articulate messages of community pride and concern in response to City Hall’s political agendas. In terms of the history of art and

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<sup>986</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

<sup>987</sup> Hamutal Dotan, “Ten Things about Rob Ford.”

<sup>988</sup> Kothari, in conversation, 2014.

visual culture, *Toronto Inside Out* leaves us with a rich collection of images which help to reveal the complex way that urban neoliberalism has impacted not only the everyday lives of Torontonians, but also the ways of representing the self and community through photography and street art in Toronto. As this chapter has illustrated, by taking action and presenting themselves on posters throughout the City of Toronto, the participants of *Toronto Inside Out* drew on, and in some ways subverted, neoliberal ideas of citizenship and community. To borrow an interpretive approach from scholar Tina Campt, regardless of whether viewers were able to receive the meaning that was invested into *Toronto Inside Out* at the time, the online legacy of this project offers us “expressive cultural texts that are of abiding historical significance.”<sup>989</sup> The twofold message of the project, which aspired to both celebrate the unique qualities of Torontonians and to identify their threat of oppression, signals that through these photographs we can glean important insight into new subjectivities that emerged out of the peril imposed through developments in urban neoliberalism.<sup>990</sup> Through the street art, portrait, and documentary photographs that remain, we are presented with images of “subjects in becoming”—photographs that “enunciate forms of identification and subjectivity” that were in the process of being discovered and articulated in Toronto at this time.<sup>991</sup>

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<sup>989</sup> Campt, *Image Matters*, 17.

<sup>990</sup> Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 24.

<sup>991</sup> Campt, *Image Matters*, 17.

## CONCLUSION

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### FACING FORWARD & LOOKING AHEAD

What drives the recent surge of community-engaged photographic portrait projects? How has Toronto participated in this global phenomenon? How has urban neoliberalism impacted contemporary photographic practices? In this dissertation, I investigated these questions by considering the political, social, and economic contexts of a selection of Toronto case studies. In chapter 1, I explored the representations of Toronto's creative women in Pierre Maraval's *Mille Femmes*, as well as the monumental images of Regent Park public housing residents in Dan Bergeron's *Regent Park Portraits*. I discussed how these two portrait projects harnessed the power of the spectacle to support and subvert urban neoliberalism in Toronto. In the second chapter, I focused on Bergeron's wheatpaste portrait posters of people experiencing homelessness in *The Unaddressed* (2009). This chapter considered how these portraits contested neoliberal austerity measures and how their reception revealed the impact of a harsh neoliberal worldview on the politics of viewing images of people in need. In chapter 3, I examined a civic art project composed of hundreds of photographic tiles entitled, *Jameson Avenue "Impressions"* (2009). I argued that this project once supported Toronto's creativity-led, global city strategy as a form of civic placemaking. However, through its neglect, *Impressions* has become a kind of counter-discourse that contradicts the vibrant image of Parkdale it once sought to capture. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I discussed Manifesto Festival's participation in JR's *Inside Out Project* (2011) to show that while this project used photographic portraiture to contest austerity politics, JR's participatory methodology encourages citizens to perform neoliberal ideas of citizenship and community. Through these case studies, I explored how community-engaged, photographic portraiture has been used in marketing, contemporary art, street art, public art, civic placemaking, urban beautification, activism, and global art movements. I examined how these projects, or responses to their visual outcomes, have reflected, engaged with, or contested urban neoliberal developments in Toronto. More specifically, I considered the relationship between these projects and the city's embrace of urban entrepreneurialism, its use of civic

placemaking strategies that market Toronto as a “city of difference,” and its revanchist policies that have increasingly criminalized, excluded, and marginalized the urban poor.<sup>992</sup> Furthermore, I discussed the complexities of these case studies by recognizing their potential to elicit multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations. In particular, I acknowledged some of the powerful messages that were initially conveyed through these projects, as well as how some of these messages shifted, albeit unintentionally, over time. Finally, I addressed the significant roles played by various Toronto communities through these projects, which include contributing to the city’s visual landscape, generating capital, raising awareness of important social issues, and participating in civic affairs.

While each chapter provides its own discrete exploration, the chapters holistically generate a more comprehensive understanding of community-engaged photographic portrait projects and offer a nuanced picture of how this visual strategy has been used in Toronto. The chapters raise broader questions such as: are displays of visibly diverse communities essential for cities aspiring to be relevant in an increasingly globalized world? Is the visual trope of photographic portraits the most powerful, or at least the most accessible, way to put a “human face” on a particular issue? Do these strategies effectively convey a clear message about community? Do they help people to achieve social change? Finally, how do we even define these types of photographic projects? At best, they are visual celebrations of community and/or bold activist statements, and at worst, they are marketing promotions masquerading as community-engaged art projects. As casual observers, we are not privy to the frameworks of participation of these projects, nor are we always presented a comprehensive picture of their intentions and consequences. I argue that, while each project is different, they are united through their use of a trope that is central to the workings of urban neoliberalism.

My hope is that this study marks the beginning of an ongoing investigation that explores the expanding roles of participatory photography and photographic portraiture in contemporary society, with a special focus on Canada’s involvement in these global

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<sup>992</sup> Boudreau, et al., discuss Toronto as an entrepreneurial city, a “city of difference,” and a revanchist city. See: Boudreau et al., *Changing Toronto*, 20.



developments. There are several ways to further develop this research in the field of art and visual culture and here I will offer just a few suggestions. Due to the surfeit of participatory photography practices today, these projects can be examined along a vast range of geographic, demographic, or thematic lines. Furthermore, more work can be done to critique the archival or exhibition practices of participatory photography projects. For example, in recent years, curators and archivists have faced significant issues with regard to collections of *unnamed* portraits, which raise questions about the importance of identification in community-engaged portrait projects. Many photography scholars have discussed how unidentified portrait photographs have been used in ways that transform subjects into “anonymous types” to produce knowledge about race, class, and gender, particularly in the context of imperialism and colonization.<sup>993</sup> As demonstrated by the fraught history of Seydou Keïta’s untitled studio portraits (Mali, 1950s–1960s), unidentified portrait photographs can introduce a host of issues concerning authorship, ownership, and identity, or with regard to the appropriation of such images for hegemonic narratives.<sup>994</sup>

Identification is an important mandate for the Library and Archives Canada as it has embarked on a long-term, multi-platform initiative to put names to the faces in the Government of Canada’s photographic collections of Inuit and Aboriginal communities. *Project Naming* (2001–present) is a collaborative initiative between the Library and Archives Canada, the Nunavut Ministry of Culture, as well as Inuit, First Nations, and Métis people. This endeavor is an important visual repatriation project that has succeeded in identifying almost 2000 individuals who are represented in the images.<sup>995</sup> As scholar

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<sup>993</sup> For example, see: Michelle Lamunière, *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2001): 17. Lamunière references Christaud Geary’s discussion about how earlier postcard portraits and captions served to depersonalize the subjects and transform them into “anonymous ‘types.’” See: Christaud M. Geary, *In and Out of Focus: Images from Central Africa, 1885–1960* (Washington: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2002): 8.

<sup>994</sup> Alessandro Jedlowski, “Constructing Artworks: Issues of Authorship and Articulation around Seydou Keïta’s Photographs,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 17, 1 (2008): 38–46; 43.

<sup>995</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “Project Naming,” in *Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada, 2001–2015*, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/project-naming/Pages/introduction.aspx> (accessed 25 May 2015).

Carol Payne notes, *Project Naming* produces a powerful counter-narrative to the paternalistic discourse that was originally produced by the government through these images.<sup>996</sup> My research would certainly be enriched by further scrutiny of how the case studies that I selected either included or excluded the names of the photographic subjects and how these choices impacted the final outcomes of the projects.<sup>997</sup> For instance, there is more that can be said about how the subjects of these Toronto case studies may or may not have functioned as “anonymous types” serving neoliberal discourses.

This research can also be expanded by analyzing how individuals and communities are represented through portrait projects that draw on different media and to what effect. For example, we might consider other community-engaged portrait projects such as John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres’ community sculptures in the Bronx (1980s) or the Art Gallery of Ontario’s initiative, *In Your Face: the People’s Portrait Project* (2008). The former produced sculptural representations of people in their neighbourhood and the latter invited people to produce self-portraits on postcards and to mail them to the institution for a multi-media exhibition.<sup>998</sup> By comparing these projects to those that use photographic portraiture for placemaking within cities and cultural institutions, we can better investigate the unique expressive qualities of each approach. We might also look at more recent examples of portrait-making projects that have made interventions into the rising “selfie culture.” For example, interactive artist Ivan Cash and social media specialist Jeff Greenspan’s project, *Selfless Portraits* (2013–2015), invited “strangers

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<sup>996</sup> Carol Payne, “Lessons with Leah: Re-Reading the Photographic Archive of a Nation in the National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division,” *Visual Studies* 21, 1 (April 2006): 4–22; 14–19. See also: Carol Payne, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941–1971* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013): 13, 15, 168, 181–187 & 193.

<sup>997</sup> Here I will note that both Dan Bergeron and Pierre Maraval include the names of their photographic subjects on their websites. Dan Bergeron’s street art works did not include the names. The names of Maraval’s subjects were discretely written at the bottom of their portraits in the exhibition. The other case studies did not include the names of the subjects either on site, or online (where applicable).

<sup>998</sup> Gillian McIntyre, “*In Your Face: the People’s Portrait Project*,” *Exhibitionist* (Fall 2009): 46–50.

across the world” to draw each other’s Facebook profile photographs.<sup>999</sup> This concept was taken up with great interest in the online community resulting in a virtual gallery of over 52,000 portraits made by participants in over 149 countries.<sup>1000</sup> The gallery juxtaposes each profile photograph with its respective “Selfless Portrait,” and it inspires us to think about how we represent ourselves online via photography and how these images are interpreted by others, through a collection of thoughtfully rendered visual responses. Another example is US graduate student Nancy Coopers’ research project, *The Charleston Self-Portrait Project* (Charleston, South Carolina, January–April 2015), which involved hosting a number of self-portrait drawing events around the city of Charleston.<sup>1001</sup> Armed with paper and pencils, Cooper tackled what she perceived as an ironic reticence to draw self-portraits in a selfie-obsessed era.<sup>1002</sup> Cooper argues that sketched self-portraits may reveal things that “can’t be easily captured in a photograph,” and that “regardless of our skill, our self-portraits can be incredibly powerful and revealing.”<sup>1003</sup> These more recent projects suggest that, due to the popularity of the selfie, portraiture is an effective hook for new community-engaged art strategies. These projects also indicate that the current ubiquity of photographic portraits in our everyday life has increased our desire to explore, or to return to, other forms of portraiture.

Alternatively we could compare community-engaged photographic portrait projects to participatory photography projects using different visual strategies to convey powerful messages about individuals and communities. For example, a critical comparison of Photovoice strategies and community portrait projects entices further exploration. Here, I am compelled to acknowledge that there are systemic issues and barriers facing art historians attempting to research and secure copyright for the

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<sup>999</sup> Ivan Cash and Jeff Greenspan, *Selfless Portraits*, 2013–2015, <http://selflessportraits.com/about/> (accessed 22 June 2015).

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1001</sup> Nancy Cooper, *Charleston Self-Portrait Project*, 2015, <http://www.charlestonselfportraitproject.com/media.html> (accessed 22 June 2015). Cooper is in the MA Public Administration and Arts Management program at Charleston College.

<sup>1002</sup> Nancy Cooper, “Point of View: Self-Made,” *College of Charleston Magazine* XIX, 2 (Spring 2015): 22.

<sup>1003</sup> Ibid.

Photovoice work of marginalized communities. These efforts are sometimes stunted by research ethics guidelines or institutional confidentiality agreements that are put in place to protect the individuals from these communities, or by a general lack of institutional memory or media reception surrounding these projects. However, the reality is that in most cases, the visual outcomes of such projects are widely circulated via social media platforms, publications, or public exhibitions, which have a significant impact on our perceptions of marginalized communities. Balancing the ethical and practical challenges of studying Photovoice against the need for a more rigorous art historical discourse surrounding this methodology as a representational practice is something that urgently needs to be reconciled. Hopefully, moving forward we can resolve these limitations, which are ultimately preventing us from engaging with a prolific visual practice that has become a significant part of our cultural and visual history. Perhaps this will require a re-examination of the great gulf between stringent institutional ethics guidelines set in place to protect the participants, and the more lenient frameworks for participation used by many photography projects, which tend to prioritize the legal needs of the artist or the funding institution. This may require that there is greater consistency in building project reporting into the budgets and timelines of community-engaged projects. Alternatively, this might inspire us to conduct more collaborative research studies that involve visual researchers, funders, artists, participants, outreach workers, *and* scholars of art and visual culture for a more fruitful cross-pollination between these various fields of expertise. This is not to say that there are no scholars considering Photovoice as a representational practice at this time, but rather, that there is much more work to be done in this vein and that there are ample opportunities for comparative analysis between Photovoice and community-engaged portrait projects.<sup>1004</sup>

The histories of photography have taught us that there are multiple narratives about the images in our visual culture, and thus, finding more ways to broaden the discourse surrounding participatory photography is critical at this juncture. For example, through the interview process, I heard countless stories from the perspectives of various

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<sup>1004</sup> See: Thallon (2004); Kristof (2008); Joanou (2009); Maccarone (2010); and Olin (2012).

stakeholders. As my first chapter illustrated, there can be disparity between subjective experiences and art historical critiques of participatory photography projects. In this dissertation, I presented a critical art historical account that aspires to engage these practices and their visual outcomes with broader developments in the history of art and visual culture. However, inspired by my interviews, I am interested in exploring the possibility of a future publication where my observations as an art historian are interjected with a range of anecdotal narratives and critical essays from artists, facilitators, funders, and participants, to convey an even more comprehensive view of these practices.

There are several Toronto-based photography projects that came to my attention as I conducted my research, which present exciting opportunities to draw connections between these projects and those that I have already written about in this dissertation. For example, just as Maraval set out to capture the creative community of women in *Toronto's Mille Femmes*, curator James Fowler has been working on a ten-year initiative that focuses the lens on people of the LGBT community who have made significant contributions to the arts. Fowler's project, *10 x 10: 100 Portraits Celebrating Queer Canadians in the Arts*, is hosted by the Gladstone Hotel every summer and features a collection of captivating portraits by LGBT photographers.<sup>1005</sup> Just as *Mille Femmes* represented a creative community within the context of the spectacular Luminato Festival, Fowler's project is also connected to a global event, Toronto Pride. However, *10 x 10* is a *long-term* engagement with a community that uses photographic portraiture to openly address important social issues—specifically the stigmas that challenge the LGBT community—while also celebrating the creative accomplishments of the photographic subjects. Thus, there are a number of opportunities for comparisons and contrast between Fowler's and Maraval's work.

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<sup>1005</sup> Here I am using the abbreviation selected by Fowler, which is LGBT, as opposed to other forms of this abbreviation such as LGBTQA, which stands for Lesbian Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Asexual or Ally. See: James Fowler, *10 x 10: 100 Portraits Celebrating Queer Canadians in the Arts*, by *10 Queer Photographers*, 2015, <http://10x10photographyproject.com/> (accessed 1 May 2015).

Similar to the case studies that I have addressed in this dissertation, a number of new visual projects have emerged in Toronto that capture the city's ethnically diverse communities through forms of photographic portraiture. For example, Dan Bergeron recently mounted a series of photographic tile compositions that portray Chinese senior citizens practicing Tai Chi (*Tai Chi Tiles*, 2014).<sup>1006</sup> These full-colour compositions were affixed to walls in the area surrounding the Kensington-Chinatown area's Grange Park and they offer an interesting parallel to the black-and-white portrait tiles created for Bravo and Young's project in Parkdale. Another example is photographer Colin Shafer's ongoing portrait project, *Cosmopolis Toronto* (2013–present), for which Shafer captures Toronto's diversity by "photographing the world, one Torontonians at a time."<sup>1007</sup> Shafer's vivid portraits have been exhibited at a range of venues and events, including the 2015 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. The success of these projects speaks to the willingness of the city's residents to represent the motto, "Diversity Our Strength." Furthermore, these projects present opportunities to study different approaches to capturing the experiences of immigrants and newcomers as they make Toronto their home.

Several projects have used photographic strategies to expose issues related to housing and quality of life, which connect to some of the themes emerging from Bergeron's *Regent Park Portraits* and Bravo and Young's *Jameson Avenue "Impressions."* For example, the National Film Board's (NFB) *Highrise* project recently produced participatory photography projects that address critical housing issues in Toronto. In 2009, the NFB embarked on an interdisciplinary documentary project entitled *Highrise*, which is a "multi-year, many media collaborative documentary experiment [...] that explores vertical living around the world."<sup>1008</sup> *Highrise* is at the leading edge of what seems to be the current fascination with representing life in urban high-rise apartments

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<sup>1006</sup> Dan Bergeron, "Tai Chi Tiles," *Dan Bergeron*, 2015, <http://fauxreel.ca/tai-chi-tiles/> (accessed 22 May 2015).

<sup>1007</sup> Colin Shafer, *Cosmopolis Toronto*, 2014, <http://cosmopolistoronto.com/> (accessed 5 May 2015).

<sup>1008</sup> Katerina Cizek with the NFB, *Highrise: The Towers in the World, the World in the Towers*, c. 2009, <http://highrise.nfb.ca/> (accessed 21 May 2015).

through open-submission, online photo- and documentary projects.<sup>1009</sup> *The Thousandth Tower* was one component of *Highrise* and it was a Photovoice project that was produced by the NFB and six residents living in a Toronto suburban high-rise located in the Greater Toronto Area. The participants were asked to use photography to show the world what “the view looks like from the inside.”<sup>1010</sup> *Highrise* aspires to show how people “create community, art and meaning” in “drab towers,”<sup>1011</sup> which presents very interesting parallels to the case studies that I explored in this dissertation. Furthermore, the NFB’s *The Thousandth Tower* project was developed alongside the City of Toronto’s unconventional Tower Renewal Project, a civic initiative that sought to change municipal laws, to incorporate a branch of city government, and to raise capital for private landlords as a way of ensuring the beautification of the GTA’s urban sprawl.<sup>1012</sup> As such, the discourse generated by the photographs from *The Thousandth Tower* parrots the language and ideas in the Tower Renewal Project proposals by stressing the detrimental impact of urban isolation and the need for: more green space surrounding high-rise towers, safer communities, and more energy efficient and clean buildings.<sup>1013</sup> Thus, *Highrise* and *The Thousandth Tower* offer more compelling inroads to explore how participatory photography has been expedient to civic agendas in Toronto.

Just as Bergeron’s project, *The Unaddressed*, sought to use portraiture to present us with more empowering imagery of people experiencing homelessness, a number of arts projects have emerged worldwide, which aspire to create more empathetic, representative, or respectful images of unhoused individuals or people experiencing poverty in a neoliberal era. For example, scholar Andrew Stefan Weiner’s article on the role of contemporary photography in the face of the US financial crisis discusses the

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<sup>1009</sup> For another example, see: Gillian Wearing, *Your Views*, 2013, <http://yourviewsfilm.com/> (accessed 20 August 2013).

<sup>1010</sup> Katerina Cizek with the NFB, “The Story So Far,” in *Highrise: The Towers in the World, the World in the Towers*, c. 2009, <http://highrise.nfb.ca/the-story-so-far/> (accessed 2 April 2013).

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1012</sup> City of Toronto, “Tower Renewal,” in *Toronto*, 2013, [http://www.toronto.ca/tower\\_renewal/](http://www.toronto.ca/tower_renewal/) (accessed 17 May 2013).

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid.

photo-blog, *We Are the 99 Percent* (2011 to present).<sup>1014</sup> This user-generated archive of photos and stories is fueled by the passion of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, as people share how they have been personally impacted by austerity measures and a weak economy. Other efforts to expose the humanity of people in need have emerged in a number of other media, including US artist Willie Baronet's *We Are All Homeless* project for which he traveled across the US buying panhandling signs that were later used in an art installation in 2014.<sup>1015</sup> Viral videos such as *Cardboard Stories* (2014) also circulate online to inspire us to "Rethink Poverty" as we are put face-to-face with people experiencing homelessness and the revelatory messages on their panhandling signs.<sup>1016</sup> Additionally, two recent "redemptive" portrait projects include Bob Sadler's 2013 photographic portraits of men living in church shelters and Jason Leith's *Sacred Streets* series (c. 2015).<sup>1017</sup> Inspired by the formal qualities of Yousef Karsh's and Dorothea Lange's black-and-white photographs, Sadler creates photographic portraits in which the stereotypical codes for homelessness cannot be found.<sup>1018</sup> As he takes photographs with a digital camera, Sadler invites his subjects to tell their stories and to reflect on their portraits—an interactive process that Sadler credits for helping his subjects to soften their facial expressions and to appear more approachable in their portraits.<sup>1019</sup> Sadler explains that these portraits have inspired many of his subjects to see themselves in a more optimistic light and that in some cases, the experience has inspired the men to pursue

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<sup>1014</sup> Andrew Stefan Weiner, "Stimulus, Austerity, Economy: Photography and the US Financial Crisis," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 32 (Spring 2013): 94–106. For the photoblog, see: *We Are the 99 Percent*, c. 2011, <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/> (accessed 22 May 2015).

<sup>1015</sup> Willie Baronet, "We Are All Homeless," c. 2014, <http://weareallhomeless.blogspot.ca/> (accessed 22 May 2014).

<sup>1016</sup> Rethink Homelessness, *Cardboard Stories*, in *YouTube*, 26 June 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THxtcWNw3QA> (accessed 22 May 2015). See also: Starting Human, *Tiny House Build 5*, in *YouTube*, 23 April 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8nTcqwqdU4> (accessed 22 May 2015).

<sup>1017</sup> Jason Leith describes *Sacred Streets* as "redemptive portraits of the homeless," and so I am borrowing his language here. See: Jason Leith, *Sacred Streets*, c. 2015, <http://sacredstreets.org/> (accessed 22 May 2015).

<sup>1018</sup> Richard Whittaker, "A Common Humanity: A Conversation with Bob Sadler," *Works & Conversations* (2014): 24–37.

<sup>1019</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–30.



employment or housing opportunities.<sup>1020</sup> Similarly, Jason Leith's project, *Sacred Streets*, aspires to represent people experiencing homelessness with dignity. While Leith also encourages his subjects to share their stories, his practice differs from Sadler's in that he sketches the portraits on ephemeral materials. Leith's works include a variety of cardboard diptychs, which are displayed in a provisional portrait gallery that was built outside of the Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles. Thus, there are a growing number of opportunities to investigate the relationship between neoliberal austerity politics, the recent economic downturn, poverty, housing instability, and visual art practices through these potential case studies.

Finally, just as JR harnessed the energy of the online community, there are several other photographic portrait projects that similarly rely on social media for their success or that utilize photography and online platforms to inspire global art movements. For instance, many enterprising photographers have turned to crowdfunding websites such as Kickstarter (kickstarter.com) or Indiegogo (indiegogo.com) to fund portrait projects. Another example is the ever-inspiring global *Help-Portrait* movement, which was founded in 2008 by two socially conscious photographers, Jeremy Cowart and Kyle Chowning.<sup>1021</sup> *Help-Portrait* is a non-profit organization that relies on donations, as well as the generosity and expertise of a range of volunteers, including photographers, make-up artists, and hairstylists. Every December, community events are hosted in locations worldwide at which free family portraits are produced for people who could otherwise not afford them. Toronto photographer Joseph Amaral graciously granted me an interview to discuss *Help-Portrait Toronto* and I was thankful to see some of the digital images firsthand.<sup>1022</sup> Examining the visual outcomes of this event is a relatively unique experience because the portraits are not archived online, nor are they supposed to be used

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<sup>1020</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>1021</sup> Jeremy Cowart and Kyle Chowning, "About Help-Portrait," in *Help-Portrait, 2009–2015*, <http://help-portrait.com/about/> (accessed 22 May 2015).

<sup>1022</sup> Joseph Amaral met with me to discuss the project on 24 June 2014, in Toronto. He is a professional photographer and a volunteer photographer for *Help-Portrait: Toronto*. Amaral explained that he was showing me some of his photographs so that I could get a sense of the quality of the portraits that are produced at this event, but that he would never use the photographs in any other way.

for professional portfolios or sold for income. The images are given to the subjects and are intended for their own personal use; “it’s about GIVING the pictures, not taking them.”<sup>1023</sup> While *Help-Portrait* does not rely on the internet to circulate the photographs, it uses social media to galvanize creative communities worldwide to recognize that, “A picture is *worth*.”<sup>1024</sup> In other words, *Help-Portrait* thrives on the belief that photographic portraits can have a positive impact on the lives of those in need. These projects, along with the case studies that I explore, offer rich opportunities to think about: how community-engaged photographic projects are conceptualized and funded in a global neoliberal era; how neoliberal developments have changed the role of photographers; and how the internet and online trends influence the ways that we engage with and visualize community via photographic practices and portraiture.

As we continue to “put our best faces forward” in a myriad of ways, it is important to reflect upon the knowledge produced by these participatory portrait projects, their uses, their consequences, and their contributions to art and visual culture. This study exposes how, when we agree to be the “faces *of*” a particular community, we are often simultaneously fulfilling a vital role as “faces *for*” a particular cause or agenda. More than mere celebrations, presentations of real citizens through photographic portrait projects wield significant political, social, and economic power, and they have played a number of complex roles in the context of urban neoliberalism.

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<sup>1023</sup> Cowart and Chowning, “About Help-Portrait.”

<sup>1024</sup> My emphasis. See: “Help-Portrait,” in *Plywood*, 27 December 2010, <http://plywoodpeople.com/help-portrait/> (accessed 22 May 2015).

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE



Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Prof. Sarah Bassnett  
 File Number: 103847  
 Review Level: Full Board  
 Approved Local Adult Participants: 20  
 Approved Local Minor Participants: 0  
 Protocol Title: Visible Communities: Representations of Identity and Community in Toronto Participatory Photography Projects  
 Department & Institution: Arts and Humanities/Visual Arts, Western University  
 Sponsor:  
 Ethics Approval Date: June 24, 2013 Expiry Date: September 30, 2015

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	Sample Interview Questions	2013/05/05
Caregiver Letter of Information & Consent	Letter of Information and Parental Consent	2013/05/05
Letter of Information & Consent	Letter of Information and Consent	2013/05/05
Other	Sample Interview Preamble	2013/05/05
Western University Protocol		2013/05/06
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Revised LOI - survey	2013/06/17
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Revised LOI - interviews	2013/06/17
Other	Response to Board Recommendations	2013/06/19
Other	This is the script that I formerly called "recruitment text." This is not text for mass recruitment, rather it is included to give you a sense of what I will say on first contact telephone calls or emails with prospective interviewees.	2013/06/17
Other	Interview Preamble	2013/06/17
Other	Sample Survey - as requested	2013/06/17

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Signature /

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	Vikki Tran (vikki.tran@uwo.ca)	Shantel Walcott (swalcott@uwo.ca)
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This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Ste. 5150  
 London, ON, Canada N6A 3K7 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics

## APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INFORMATION &amp; CONSENT

[Printed on UWO Letterhead]

[Date]

**LETTER OF INFORMATION & CONSENT****Re:** Interview Request for a Research Study**Topic:** Visible Communities: Examining Representations of Identity and Community in Toronto Participatory Photography Projects (working title)

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Dear [Enter Name]:

My name is Jennifer Orpana and I am a graduate student at **The University of Western Ontario**, working under the supervision of Dr. Sarah Bassnett. I am writing to invite you to contribute to a research study that I am conducting at the Department of Visual Arts by participating in an **interview**. You are invited to participate in this study because of your knowledge about outreach, participatory photography projects, Photovoice, and/or collaborative art practices. Specifically, I am interested in talking to you about **[Enter Project Name]**. The information collected from this interview will contribute to scholarly research, conference presentations, and future publications. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you need to make an informed decision about participating in this research.

**“Visible Communities”** (working title) is a research project that examines representations of identity and community in Toronto participatory photography projects. Thus, one of my main objectives for this project is to interview curators, artists, scholars, outreach facilitators, arts administrators, photographers, and outreach participants who will provide anecdotal and scholarly insight about Toronto participatory photography projects. My hope is to interview several individuals to obtain primary research data that is otherwise inaccessible regarding **[Enter Project Name]** and other related topics.

Participation in this study is **voluntary**. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. Please note that while your input will deeply enrich my understanding of this subject, it will not inhibit the overall success of this project if you decide that you do not want to participate or if you decide to withdraw part way through the study. If you would like to participate but are uncomfortable with any aspect of this process, please understand that you can discuss your concerns with me without being judged or pressured. You should only agree to take part if you feel happy that you know enough about this project and how the information will be used.

If you choose to participate in this research project, you will be invited to take part in an interview that will take approximately one hour. You will be asked questions pertaining to the project noted above, or other questions that relate to your field of scholarship or expertise. The interview can take place in a quiet location of your choice. If an in-person interview cannot be arranged due to distance, a telephone, Skype, or email interview can also be arranged. On the attached “Letter of Consent” form, you may select the format of the interview, including various types of one-on-one interviews as well as group interviews. Ideally the interview will be digitally



recorded (with the exception of email interviews). On the “Letter of Consent” form you may indicate whether you consent to being recorded or not. Please keep in mind that group interviews must be recorded because it is too difficult to transcribe a group interview by hand. By agreeing to participate in a group interview, you agree to be recorded.

As noted above, the interview data (e.g. digital recordings, emails, images, etc.) will contribute to scholarly articles, public talks, or future publications. All data from this study will be saved on a password protected computer and a password protected memory stick for an indefinite period of time. Should I cease to require the data from this study after a five year period, I will ensure that the data is destroyed responsibly by properly deleting the files.

Participants will not be asked to provide personal information as a part of this research study; however, any data containing personal information (e.g. signed Letter of Consent forms, email addresses & correspondence) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Western University, stored in a secure email account, or encrypted using Microsoft encrypting software and stored in a password-protected computer. My supervisor and I will have access to the files. This data will be stored for an indefinite period of time and will be destroyed responsibly (i.e. deleted or shredded) if no longer needed after five years. Your confidentiality will be respected. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent to the disclosure. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. We will strive to ensure the confidentiality of your research-related records. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as we may have to disclose certain information under certain laws. In addition, The Research Ethics Board at Western University may contact you directly to ask about your participation in the study.

There are no known risks to you if you participate in this study. Furthermore, this study should not inconvenience you aside from taking up some of your time. Please note that while there is the possibility that I may not agree with your views, I will do my best to address your comments thoughtfully and respectfully. This is a challenge for researchers that aspire to engage with multiple points of view, but ultimately research that considers and respects diverse views on a particular subject offers a rich contribution to scholarship.

There are several benefits associated with this project. To date there is very little published literature on the subject of participatory photography projects or Photovoice projects in Canada, specifically with regard to critical analysis of methodologies, photographic production, or circulation of the images. Furthermore, as most of the projects that will be examined in this study were grassroots projects, there is little formal documentation of the work due to a lack of resources. By participating in the study, you are contributing to an under-researched area in the fields of photography, museum studies, and outreach. This project aspires to assist in the documentation of participatory projects and to a critical dialogue about these projects, thereby making a place for this important work in art and photography scholarship. Furthermore, by participating in the study, you open up the possibility of having your views considered in development of and/or represented in this research.

**Please note:**

- **You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.**
- You will not be compensated for your participation in this project.
- You do not waive any legal rights by signing the consent form(s). You may keep a copy of this letter of intent for your personal records if you wish. If you agree to participate, I will require one signed copy the consent form(s).
- Participants will receive a copy of the research findings (in a summarized or full

format) if requested on the “Letter of Consent” form.

*Any further Questions?*

Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED] if you have any questions. Alternatively, if you have any questions about this study you may also contact the study Principle Investigator, Sarah Bassnett at [REDACTED], extension [REDACTED].

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact:

Office of Research Ethics  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Orpana  
PhD Candidate  
The University of Western Ontario

## APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORMS

**“VISIBLE COMMUNITIES”**  
**LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE PARTICIPANT**

I have read the **Letter of Information**, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

**FORM OF PARTICIPATION**

**I would like to be interviewed in the following format:**

- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ In-person (*one-on-one*)
- ☐ In-person (*with a friend or other witness present*); Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ In-person (*in a group discussion format*)
- ☐ By email

**AUDIO RECORDINGS**

**Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:**

- ☐ I give my consent to have the interview audio recorded.
- ☐ I do not give my consent to have the interview audio recorded (*not available for group interviews, as it will be too challenging to transcribe a group interview by hand*)

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

**Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:**

- ☐ I give my consent to utilize my name and quotations in your research (e.g. publications and talks).
- ☐ I give my consent to utilize my quotations in your research (e.g. publications and talks), but I chose to remain anonymous.
- ☐ I do not give my consent to release my name or quotations in your research.

**FOLLOW UP**

**Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:**

- ☐ I would like to read a summary of your research findings.
- ☐ I would like to read a full copy of your research study.
- ☐ I do not wish to have any follow up about this research.

**SIGNATURES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Jennifer Orpana, PhD Candidate

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**“VISIBLE COMMUNITIES”**  
**LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE USE OF IMAGES**

I have read the **Letter of Information**, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

**PHOTOGRAPHS/REPRESENTATIONS OF ART WORK:**

☐ I give consent to have photographs of myself, my photographs, and/or representations of my artwork used in publications and talks.

**OR**

☐ I do not give consent to have photographs of myself, my photographs, and/or representations of my artwork used in publications or talks.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

**Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:**

☐ I give my consent to utilize my name. Please acknowledge me as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ (*please print name*)

**OR**

☐ I give my consent to utilize my photographs/art work in your research, but I chose to remain anonymous.

**OTHER STIPULATIONS**

**Please use this space to make any other specifications about the use of your images:**

**SIGNATURES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Jennifer Orpana, PhD Candidate

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

## APPENDIX 4: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEWEE	INTERVIEW DATE
Dan Bergeron, Toronto	14 January 2014
Jim Thierry Bravo, Toronto	20 January 2014
Kate Young, Toronto	20 January 2014
Che Kothari, Toronto	28 January 2014
Karen Eaton, Toronto	20 January 2014
Councillor Gord Perks, Toronto	21 February 2014
Joseph Amaral, Toronto	24 June 2014
Bridgette Estrela, Toronto	17 July 2014

## APPENDIX 5: PERMISSION TO USE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL—REQUEST LETTER

**[Printed on UWO Letterhead]****[Date]**

Re: Permission to Use Copyrighted Material in a Doctoral Thesis

Dear **[Enter Name]**:

I am a University of Western Ontario graduate student completing my Doctoral thesis entitled, “Visible Communities: Representations of Identity and Community in Toronto Participatory Photography Projects (working title).” My thesis will be available in full-text on the internet for reference, study and / or copy. Except in situations where a thesis is under embargo or restriction, the electronic version will be accessible through the Western Libraries web pages, the Library’s web catalogue, and also through web search engines. I will also be granting Library and Archives Canada and ProQuest/UMI a non-exclusive license to reproduce, loan, distribute, or sell single copies of my thesis by any means and in any form or format. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

I would like permission to allow inclusion of the following materials in my thesis:

**[List of Images]**

The material will be attributed through citations. I have listed citations above. If you grant permission, please be sure to advise if any of the citations need to be changed in any way. Also, I have accessed these images from your website. Pending approval, please advise if there are higher quality images that you would prefer that I use.

Please confirm in writing or by email that these arrangements meet with your approval.  
Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Orpana  
Ph.D. Candidate, Art and Visual Culture  
Department of Visual Art, Western University  
**[Contact Information]**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### JENNIFER ELIZABETH ORPANA

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION & DEGREES

Doctor of Philosophy, Art and Visual Culture • Expected August 2015  
The University of Western Ontario

Master of Arts, Art History • 2010  
The University of Western Ontario

Honours Bachelor of Arts, Art History & Theatre • 2004  
University of Toronto

#### INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

2011 Intern, Education Division, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON

#### SELECTED HONOURS & AWARDS

2015 Outstanding Research Contributions Scholarship, PSAC Local 610  
2014 Universities Art Association of Canada Graduate Essay Award  
2014 Lynne-Lionel Scott Fellowship in Canadian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, The University of Western Ontario (UWO)  
2014 Academic Achievement Scholarship, PSAC Local 610  
2011–2014 Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship—Doctoral Award, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
2010–2011 Ontario Graduate Scholarship—Doctoral Award  
2010 Graduate Thesis Research Award, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, UWO  
2010–2014 Western Graduate Research Scholarships, UWO  
2009–2010 Ontario Graduate Scholarship—Master's Award  
2009 Alumni Graduate Award, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, UWO  
2008–2010 Western Graduate Research Scholarships, UWO

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2008–2015 Teaching Assistant, Department of Visual Arts, UWO\*  
2009–2014 Research Assistant, Department of Visual Arts, UWO\*  
2012 \*Parental Leave  
2010–2011 Instructor of Record, VAH2282E—History of Photography, Department of Visual Arts, UWO  
2005–2008 Education Manager, Soulpepper Theatre Company, Toronto, ON  
2004–2005 Development Officer, National Ballet of Canada, Toronto, ON  
2004 Research Assistant, Department of Arts, University of Toronto, ON  
2003–2004 Education Officer, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON

## PUBLICATIONS

“Turning the World *Inside Out*: Situating JR’s Global Art Project within Cultures of Participation.” *RACAR Canadian Art Review* XXXIX, 1 (2014): 66–75.

“Sight Unseen: Traces of Pickles.” In *Sight Unseen*, 6–10. London: The University of Western Ontario, Graduate Art Catalogue, 2011.

“Somewhere In Between: *Trans—(across, over, beyond)* by Soheila Esfahani.” In *Intersections*. Edited by Jamie Quail, 7–10. London: The University of Western Ontario, MFA Catalogue, 2010.

“Signs of Life: Relational Aesthetics and the [murmur] project.” *Shift: Queen’s Graduate Journal of Visual and Material Culture* 2 (October 2009): <http://www.shiftjournal.org/>.

“Transformation AGO: It’s What’s Inside That Counts.” *Fuse Magazine* 32, 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 6–11.

## SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“First *Impressions*, Then and Now: Neoliberal Imaging of Community,” *Out of the Wilderness and Into the City: Perspectives on Urbanism in Canada* panel, Universities Art Association of Canada (UAAC-AAUC) Conference 2014, Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto, ON. October 23–26, 2014.

“‘Little Urban Stories’: Exploring the Visual Landscape Produced by Youth Participatory Photography Projects,” *Art in the Era of Civil Society* panel, *Reimagining Communities and Civil Societies International Conference*, University of Guelph, ON. October 25–27, 2013.

“Turning Canada *Inside Out*: Canadian Participation in JR’s Global Art Project and the Role of the Photographic Portrait,” *Forming New Identities: Canadian Photography Since 1945* panel, UAAC-AAUC Conference 2013, Banff Conference Centre, Banff, AB. October 17–20, 2013.

“Bringing Down the House: The Complex Politics of Dan Bergeron’s Art Posters,” *Perspectives on Public Portraiture* session, UAAC-AAUC Conference 2011, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON. October 27–29, 2011.

“Reconsidering the Big Picture: The Reproduction and Circulation of Seydou Keïta’s Photographs,” *Travelling Photographies*, Art History Graduate Students Association, Concordia University, Montreal, QC. March 12–13, 2010.

“‘Through the Eyes of Children’: Examining Youth Photovoice and ‘Authenticity,’” *Histories of Photography* session, UAAC-AAUC Conference 2010, University of Guelph, ON. October 14–16, 2010.



“‘Visual Griots’: Young Photographers as Agents of Political Discourse,” *History of Photography—Where is the Future? Cinema, Journalism, Fine Art*, Graduate Art History Club, The City College of New York (CCNY/CUNY), New York, NY. May 29, 2009.

#### SELECTED TALKS & WORKSHOPS

- 2015 Guest Speaker: “Controversies in Street Art and Community Engagement: *The Unaddressed*,” VAH3395G—The Art of Controversy, Department of Visual Arts, UWO
- 2014 Panelist: Panel discussion on the topic of photography and social change in response to *Exposing Energy East: People and Places at Risk by TransCanada’s Energy East Pipeline Proposal*. Environmental Defense, Toronto, ON
- 2013 Facilitator: “Photography & Identity: Visual Arts Workshop for Youth,” Youth Mentorship Program, Soulpepper Theatre Company
- 2012 Facilitator: “Engaging Babies with Art: Workshop for New Mothers,” with the Ontario Early Years Centre at the AGO
- 2011 Facilitator: “Storytelling in the Gallery: Workshops for AGO Daytime & Evening Guides,” AGO
- 2011 Facilitator: “Storytelling & Photography: Workshops for AGO Daytime & Evening Guides,” AGO
- 2011 Facilitator: “Vintage Lanterns: Visual Arts Workshops for Youth,” Youth Mentorship Program, Soulpepper Theatre Company
- 2010 Guest Speaker: “Appropriations of Seydou Keïta’s Photography,” VAH2275B—Art Now! II, Department of Visual Arts, UWO

#### EXHIBITIONS & THEATRE FESTIVALS (COLLABORATIVE CURATING/PRODUCING)

- 2013 *You Are This*—Young Centre for the Performing Arts
- 2011 *Sight Unseen*—Department of Visual Arts, UWO
- 2010 *Heart & Sold*—Department of Visual Arts, UWO
- 2009 *Art.wav*—Department of Visual Arts, UWO
- 2008 *My Wish, My Journey*—Young Centre for the Performing Arts with Luminato
- 2008 *IDENTIFY*—Young Centre for the Performing Arts with Luminato
- 2007 *From the Ground Up*—Young Centre for the Performing with Luminato

#### CERTIFICATIONS

- 2010 Western Certificate in Teaching and Learning, Teaching Support Centre, UWO
- 2007 Teaching English as a Second Language Certification, Oxford Seminars, Toronto

#### SELECTED CHARITABLE WORK

- 2013–2014 Fundraising Committee Member, Early Enrichment Day Care, Toronto
- 2001–2003 Gallery Guide, School Group Tours, AGO
- 2000 Docent, University of Toronto Art Centre, U of T