

Burnt Toast Studio

“A culture is not a collection of individual artists. A culture is an organic growth.”
-- Herbert Read quoted by Luis Jacobs in an interview with Allan Antliff, originally published in C Magazine #95, Toronto, Fall 2007.

Experimental Art and Culture was conceived of as a series of exhibitions that would discuss the importance of experimentation and collectivity in contemporary art making. To instigate this discussion, we developed three exhibitions that focused on artists who had started their art making in an environment of collectivity and uninhibited experimentation. This exhibit represents different manifestations of these principles but is bound by the fundamental belief that artists, as individuals, operate within a dynamic social network that invariably influences them.

Burnt Toast Studio was founded in 2001 by six printmakers who met in 1993 while studying together at the Alberta College of Art and Design. The title of the collective comes from a “performance” that founding members would do every morning – hook a loaded toaster to a pulley and lift it 10 to 12 feet up against the wall in the hallway of the basement level of ACAD. The toaster would go off and hot toast would jump out onto awaiting plates below. This exhibition features the work of ten members of the collective.

The spirit of collaboration is of the utmost importance to Burnt Toast Studio. Together, they work in shared studio space and together they pursue exhibitions. The spirit of mutual assistance and development fosters camaraderie between members that creates a cross-influence and collaborative environment. The members conceive of themselves as at the centre of a micro-movement, in which together they explore the concepts screenprinting, etching, woodcut and mixed media beyond traditional applications.

Alden Alfon

Alden received his BFA in Printmaking from The Alberta College of Art & Design in 1996 and is one of the founding members of Burnt Toast Studio. His work explores the concept of a book – binding, cover, and content – as a means of examining space. For Alden, the same language that we use to define the parts of a book can be used to define the boundaries and ‘filling’ of any construction, such as a simple room and its contents, or the contents of a bag. For Alden, this narrative is a progressive way in which to view the totality of material and objects as opposed to singular parts.

Camille Betts

Camille joined Burnt Toast Studio in early 2008. Camille’s sculptures of handmade recycled paper and other repurposed objects treat environmental concerns by addressing the changing realities of economies. Her work emphasizes the process of repurposing; she uses old flyers and other paper waste and transforms it into recycled

paper, then again transforms two dimensional paper into three dimensional constructs. *Realization of Space #117* also incorporates sound and projected images, adding to the atmospheric nature of her work.

Jenny Conway Fisher

Jenny received her BFA in Printmaking from the University of Calgary in 1999. Her work explores theme such as privacy, personal responsibility and domestic versus public space. *Creatures I have eaten: Octopus, Kangaroo, Pigeon*, her work on display in this exhibition, treats the act of eating: a seemingly simple act of nourishment that has become complicated as a political and social action. For Conway Fisher, eating can be celebratory act or a guilty experience; one that evokes issues of health and safety, anxieties about animal rights and worries about global food shortages. *Creatures I have eaten...* are heroic scaled monuments of the delicious animals that Jenny has consumed.

Edwin Herrenschmidt

Edwin is one of the founding members of Burnt Toast Studio. He states that his artistic endeavors “began around the age of two when he picked up a blue crayon (Yves Klein blue no doubt)”. The works on exhibition are part of Edwin’s “dreamstate” series of silkscreens. The term dreamstate is inspired by time and memory, and how details of visited spaces and encountered people may be remembered differently then they actually occurred. As memories have the tendency to become personal havens, we occasionally wander back into them in search of emotional comfort. A dreamstate is that safe place to wander, but one that slowly fades as times moves on.

Joel Houston

Joel joined Burnt Toast Studio in July of 2007. His work aims to visually critique evangelical theology, but instead of merely pointing out the blunders and shortcomings of proselytization, Houston seeks to construct avenues towards a greater intimacy between God and humanity. His work also explores the everyday reality of anxiety, stress, and depression.

James Jensen

James is a founding member of the Burnt Toast Studio. James uses vintage encyclopedias, record covers and other paper ephemera to create collages upon which he screenprints iconic fantasy characters recalled from childhood and other personal experience.

Dani Schlamp

Dani joined Burnt Toast in September 2008. Her mixed media compositions incorporate printing techniques and collage. She often uses found images and text, layering multiple images to reinvent or alter meanings.

Brad Snyder

Brad explores the fundamental principles of graffiti, deconstructing traditional throw-ups to their two most base elements: movement and form. For Brad, graffiti represents a fundamental shift in the abstract paradigm, one that not only moves from realistic representation but also away from the traditional media associated with art making.

Sherwin Tsang

Sherwin Tsang's work seeks to invert the white-cube of the gallery by injecting the space with everyday aesthetic realities. Sherwin's work examines the valorization of objects once they enter the gallery space – banality becoming beauty – drawing attention to the intricacies and beauty of the mundane.

Adam Warner

Adam's work examines the complex realities created by suburbanization and the manner in which increasing urban sprawl affects our conception of the relationship between time and space. His work explores impermanence and the paradox of subjective feelings of loneliness in a world where we are all invariably interconnected.