EDITORIAL

FUSE magazine has embraced the motto “Do Less with Less.” Along with our peer networks and within our artist-run culture, FUSE has endured challenges for many years. Of the long-term effects of underfunding, the media and presidency have our enemies and sometimes our friends. Rather than attempt to keep up appearances under these conditions, we offer you a panel from the Varley Art Gallery of Markham.

The context of this issue present our inside perspectives on austerity from inside the artist-run sector in Canada. Our feature essay was collaboratively written and edited by an anonymous, temporary collective of directors and writers from some of the most active artist-run centres in Toronto. They begin by outlining the relationship between worker rights and the arts, and of course, aesthetic, economic and social values, and end with a prescription for positive, grassroots change on a structural level within the sector.

Accompanying the essay is a new version of the Ladies’ Invitational Deadbeat Society poster: DO LESS WITH LESS / DO MORE WITH MORE (2012), a dualism that expresses a no-nonsense refusal of a pre-determined austerity policy. To help combat the spread of unpaid internships, we present a list adapted from the Precarious Workers Brigade’s toolkit, specifically for the Canadian (and Quebecois) context.

These materials frame our occasion to inform you, dear readers, that FUSE is coming to a close. After much careful planning and consultation with our elders, we have come to the conclusion that this is no longer a viable project under current conditions.

Within a week, we are pairing a special year with some dramatic shifts in what we do. Most significantly, we will not be publishing a quarterly magazine inside focusing our time and energy on four exciting projects: a comprehensive issue of the magazine to be published by the end of the year, a commemorative issue of FUSE content going back to our first issue in 1976, the commemorative issue of FUSE content going back to our first issue in 1976, and a fully indexed resource on some of those most significant moments in the history of contemporary Canadian art. We are currently planning launches for the archive and the commemorative issue to take place across the country in the fall of 2014 and we would love to work with you. If you are interested in being involved in this celebratory process, or if you have anything you want to share with us about the changes at FUSE, get in touch!

We are always happy to hear from you.

—Gina Badger, Editorial Director and Publisher

on behalf of the Board of Directors and Editorial Committee
We notice that you have recently advertised an unpaid internship. We understand the pressures that publicly funded non-profit arts organizations such as yours are under. We salute you for taking the time and effort to mentor and train people wanting to work in the arts sector.

However, we are concerned that by not paying people, only those who can afford to work for free will be able to benefit from your internship scheme. As internships are becoming more prevalent than entry-level jobs, those who are unable to take up those unpaid opportunities are less likely to enter the sector. These positions negatively impact the value of all labour in the arts, and make it harder to fight for adequate working conditions in the cultural sector.

This is far from an equitable labour practice. Demonstrating such unfair employment practices also seems to contradict your gallery/centre/organization’s role in the arts milieu. Artist-run centres in Quebec/Canada have a long-standing history of fighting for artists’ rights, including the payment of artist fees and advocacy around the value of cultural work. It is only logical that the recognition of artistic labour and support for fair working conditions should apply to all cultural workers, including the staff of arts organizations.

In Quebec/Canada we have been avoiding important conversations around artistic labour and precariousness. Perhaps the situation feels less urgent in light of our particular funding structures, or we are censoring ourselves because the community is small and we are worried about upsetting people or endangering our own jobs and future opportunities. Nonetheless, we encourage you to think about how an organization like yours might act as a model for equitable labour practices, rather than contributing to economic conditions that encourage exploitation.

We wanted to flag this and ask you to consider the ethics of offering unpaid internships in your organization. There is a lot of information out there that might help you develop a new and more equitable approach to working with interns. FUSE Magazine has a number of links on their website (fusemagazine.org/2013/12/interns) with information and guidelines on this topic, and we encourage you to consult those.

We thank you for your attention to this matter, and hope that we can count on your collaboration.

Sincerely,

Nicole Burisch

Wealth Standard Time Performance Art Festival from 2007 to 2009, and is currently based in Monkland, where she works as one-half of The Brick Factory. Staff and curatorial work as curator and collaborating performance works as co-curator of The Latin Institute Depleted Society and one-fourth of The Brick Factory.

Thanks to Annick Bernard and Delphine Orliac for their encouragement and support.

Copyediting by Edith Brunette

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ART, AUSTEREY AND THE PRODUCTION OF FEAR

In early November, FUSE put out a call to our close collaborators for a short feature essay on the impacts of austerity within our sector. Faced with an overwhelming response, we decided to engage an additional, collective, writing format. On the evening of 2 November 2013, a group of Toronto-based executive directors, curators and directors of prominent artist-run organizations meet in the FUSE office to engage in frank discussion about the conditions affecting our organizations. The task that follws was built out of a collective will of that conversation. As compensation for their participation, each contributor has been paid the minimum wage (currently $10.25 in Ontario) for each hour spent in conversation and writing. This ad hoc collective has elected to remain anonymous.

On 30 October 2013, the Toronto Sun published an article critiquing a project organized by Allison Mitchell and presented in Sydney, Australia, the Art Gallery of York University. This project’s title was A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House (2012) was a large-scale installation in Toronto’s west-end that used Halloween trappings to lay out a haunted history of feminism. Situated as a response to “multi-issues” created by radical, sexual and environmental activism, the project was given the healthy honours of some environmental, socially conservative vocalists, ROY Joly’s Aside provided a playful representation of homophobia and misogyny (while also situating it within a larger discussion of inter-disciplinary and community activity). The Sun’s attack on Mitchell’s work, penned by veteran columnist Joe Wargentim (1), relied on that most faithful of right-wing utterances — the public funding that the project received. In this case, dedicated funding amounted to a $500 Exhibition Assistance Grant from the Ontario Arts Council, a modest sum that the Sun exaggerated by publishing it alongside the five-digit number corresponding to the annual funding received by the Art Gallery of York University. To further criticize this supposedly misuse of public funds, the Sun’s reporter drew a comparison to a haunted house set up by Toronto mayor Rob Ford at his office, which was paid for privately. While an obvious red hag might light with reminiscing Wargentim and his ilk that artists and other residents will always create projects from their own funds, banking on this type of argument misses the point of public arts funding altogether: art adds value to society through the expression of diverse viewpoints and critiques and it does not not have an aesthetic object, a form of spectacular entertainment or an economic generator.

This type of alarmist shaming is certainly not limited to the Sun in 2013. In 2012, CTV News published a similar story critiquing funding for Toronto production centre Trinity Square Video’s workshop ‘Grow Yer Own Porn… Kill Joy’s Kastle’ (2). This type of shaming is not limited to those with a background in media arts, visual art, performing art and publishing? All sectors face difficult question is where and how the decisions will be made. The response, and people fear losing jobs and programs. The text that has built a haunted history of feminism. Situated as a response to “multi-issues” created by radical, sexual and environmental activism, the project was given the healthy honours of some environmental, socially conservative vocalists, ROY Joly’s Aside provided a playful representation of homophobia and misogyny (while also situating it within a larger discussion of inter-disciplinary and community activity). The Sun’s attack on Mitchell’s work, penned by veteran columnist Joe Wargentim (1), relied on that most faithful of right-wing utterances — the public funding that the project received. In this case, dedicated funding amounted to a $500 Exhibition Assistance Grant from the Ontario Arts Council, a modest sum that the Sun exaggerated by publishing it alongside the five-digit number corresponding to the annual funding received by the Art Gallery of York University. To further criticize this supposedly misuse of public funds, the Sun’s reporter drew a comparison to a haunted house set up by Toronto mayor Rob Ford at his office, which was paid for privately. While an obvious red hag might light with reminiscing Wargentim and his ilk that artists and other residents will always create projects from their own funds, banking on this type of argument misses the point of public arts funding altogether: art adds value to society through the expression of diverse viewpoints and critiques and it does not not have an aesthetic object, a form of spectacular entertainment or an economic generator.

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