Surveillance and Performance in *Norman Eberstein*

by

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BA Honours (Art and Art History) University of Windsor, 2007

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF APPLIED ARTS

in

VISUAL ARTS

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

2011

Abstract

The central investigation of my practice lies in reconsidering surveillance through performance art by subverting its role in the everyday and questioning its reliance on technology. This paper introduces my visual art process and describes how the project *Norman Eberstein* is manifested in a gallery.

This body of work suggests that the concept of surveillance is open for interrogation:

Can altruism be reconciled with surveillance?

Does technology create safe spaces?

Is surveillance necessary?

These queries reflect critiques on surveillance written by Matt Hern, John E. McGrath, Michel Foucault, Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong. Referring to their texts, I trace the proliferation of surveillance and the excessive production of technological devices in public and private spaces.

My practice is multi-faceted, simultaneously manifesting elements of performance, drag, craft, drawing, writing and video. Within these medias I have developed an experimental methodology, in which the performance of surveillance is core.

Norman Eberstein is an ongoing series of performances and body of work in which I use a persona to re-identify myself in the guise of surveillant. The performance is the process that creates the work itself. This is enacted through the role of a security guard in training, the persona Norman Eberstein, who finds himself subsumed in certain settings that he is compelled to guard and document.

In discussing works by Marcel Duchamp, Jill Magid, Bernadette Corporation, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, K8 Hardy and Wynne Greenwood, I will demonstrate how key concepts and methods in these works speak to my practice.

Though my work is informed by the history of performance art, it is rooted in an experimental process in which performance is a method, and its fruits are valid not only as documentation, but as art. I'm interested in performativity as a process that feeds a range of experiences in galleries and public spaces. To frame this idea, I will specifically refer to the catalogue and essays from the exhibition *Not to Play with Dead Things*. Like many of the artists in the exhibition, my work is as invested in the attendant objects and relics as it is in the performance itself.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to graciously thank my supervisor Justin Novak, for his dedicated engagement in my project. Also, I would like to acknowledge my teachers, Joy James, Glen Lowry, Randy Lee Cutler, Ben Reeves, Henry Tsang, Karolle Wall and Grace Partridge. This paper also acknowledges the support of Lois Klassen, Broken City Lab Collective, University of Windsor, Lee Rodney, Iain Baxter, Tim Swaddling, and Norma Simpson. In addition, I'd like to ultimately thank my parents, Patricia Connon and Douglas French as well as my brothers, Nils, Leon, and Nathan French.

Reena stands there with a gold disc on each lapel like all the other guards. They look like toy soldiers, porters, bell-boys, 19th century things, something snazzy but depressed, controlling yet puppet-like, serving. Serving the world, the museum, the art works. Serving it up. Their own nothingness, wrapped in a funny costume. A bit scratchy too. All polyester. I love these guards! Waiting, waiting, observing. Being magnificently bored. Bearing boredom. What a job! She is not happy, not sad, not nothing. Un-useful servant. You don't need to demonstrate business in that job, but deliver cool static. (Bernadette Corporation 4)

Introduction

Norman Eberstein is a security guard in training. He is unpaid, illegally licensed, noninsured, and self-taught. His ambitions are to protect people with utmost altruism and benevolence. While on guard, Norman Eberstein chronicles his observations, thoughts, feelings, and queries. In the pages that follow, I describe how I came to adopt the persona of Norman Eberstein and how the evolution of my performance practice has grown.

In this paper, I distinguish between Norman Eberstein, the persona, and *Norman Eberstein*, italicized, an ongoing series of performances and the body of work that it generates.

Norman Eberstein, the installation is manifested by various means. I craft materials to be employed in performance, I assume the persona, and I utilize a collection of objects, photographs or video that serve to archive or document the work. *Norman Eberstein* can be experienced as an installation in the gallery, but Norman Eberstein is the work's purest form.

To contrast the excessive use of technological devices, systems, and constructs in our public and private spaces, I cultivate an intuitive process to interrogate the concept of surveillance. The work applies Do It Yourself and craft techniques to de-construct the established aesthetics of security. As an absurd and naïve gesture it prompts a re-evaluation of surveillance as it continues to play a significant role in our daily lives.

Figure 1. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein.* 2010. Performance at Art Bank. 3HRS, December 17, 2010. Photo courtesy of Heidi Naatagaal.

Chapter 1, The Moniker

The title of the work, *Norman Eberstein*, was created from the conflation of names of people who have influenced my practice. 'Norman' is the middle name of my eldest brother, Nils Norman French, a major in the Canadian military. On his last tour of duty he planned the engineering operations in support of Canada's effort to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. The 'Eber' is taken from the androgynous anarchist writer, Isabelle Eberhardt, who fought as a vigilante against the colonialist powers in North Africa between the 20th and 21st centuries, while living as a transient explorer and writing stories of her travels. Finally, the 'Stein' is derived from St. Edith Stein, born 1891, a feminist philosopher and atheist who became a nun and was canonized for saving the life

of a young girl. It is particularly significant that these three individuals, French, Eberhardt, and Stein, dedicated their lives to saving people and have all practiced as published writers. This body of work, including performance, objects, and video, has been greatly informed by their journeys and texts.

The process of naming Norman Eberstein is indebted to the artists K8 Hardy and Wynne Greenwood. I adopted this specific tactic from their collaborative video work, *New Report*, 2005, in which the artists are cast as anchormen reporting the live news on *WKRH* ("Pregnant with Information") as Henry Stein-Acker Hill (Greenwood) and Henry Irigaray (Hardy). The names are derivative of key feminist writers, Luce Irigaray, Patricia Hill Collins, Joan Aker, as well as St. Edith Stein.

This seemingly patchwork of references might be read as a playful conflation of disparate influences that are humorous, contradictory, biographical and nostalgic. The moniker, Norman Eberstein, is however, also a construct that reflects important allegiances that I hold as an artist. The composition of the name mirrors Norman Eberstein's own altruistic ideas, serving to foreground his heroic deeds. Though audiences would not be aware of the more personal references appropriated into the moniker, they are an important part of my intuitive process.

Chapter 2, Becoming the Persona

Norman Eberstein was initially conceived because of a need for a guise and a release from my own identity. I dress up because it allows me to adopt the role of surveillant. If I remained myself, I would not be able to construct his narrative. It is this performance of surveillance that allows me to delve into its constructs and systems, and

to better understand how they are used and what they do.

Norman Eberstein's facial props, uniform, and ID cards gave birth to his existence. These crafted elements shape the persona that I channel through a series of steps. In sequential order, I don a handmade uniform, bind my breasts with packing tape, insert shoulder pads, apply a mustache made from my own hair, enhance my eyebrows with face paint and gel my hair back. I also wear costume spectacles and carry his hand-painted identification cards.
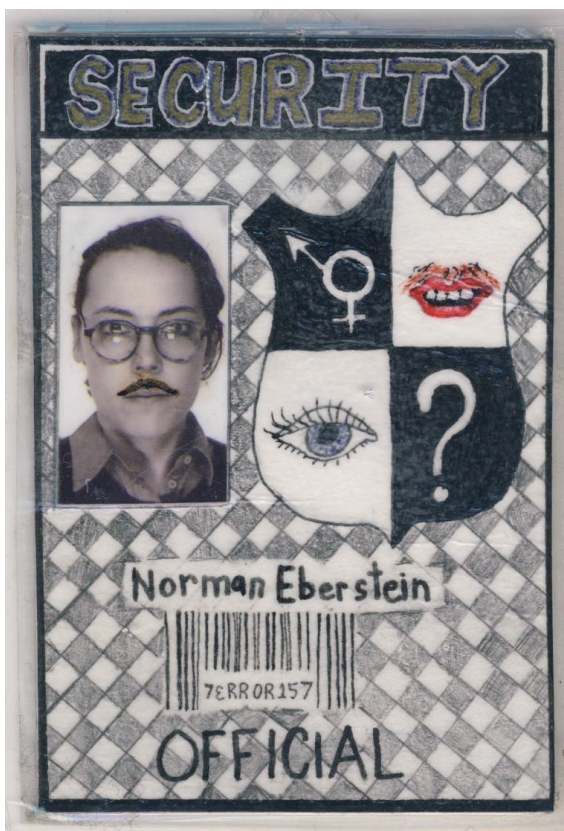

Figure 2. Sara French, ***Norman Eberstein's ID Card***. **2010. Drawing. 3 ½" x 2 ¼" (actual size).**
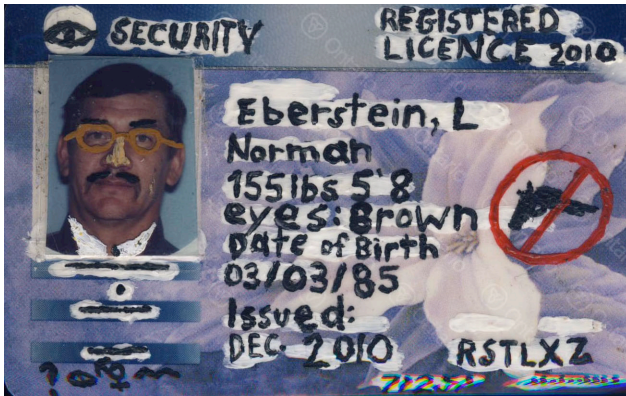
Figure 3. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein's Fake Security License*. 2010. Painting.
3 ½" x 2" (actual size).

The uniform, purchased from a thrift store, is a navy blue, wool, two-piece formal suit including a dress coat and pleated pants. Underneath, Norman Eberstein wears a white dress shirt and according to the weather, wool under garments and a navy blue sweater. The jacket is double-breasted with ornate gold buttons. Fastened onto the suit is my own creation of a hand-embroidered badge in the shape of a crest. Divided into four, the crest symbolizes the icons that represent Norman Eberstein and each component of his persona: disguise (a mustache), drag (the male and female symbols combined), surveillance (an eye), and experimentation (question mark). On the back of his jacket is the word 'SECURITY' sewn on with mustard yellow felt. On his feet he wears black sneakers.

The use of gender in *Norman Eberstein* came about, in part, as homage to Marcel Duchamp. His lengthy career as an artist was fundamental in raising conceptual concerns around artistic production, institutions, and the role of the artist. His use of alias', such as R. Mutt, Georges Carpentier, Bull, and Pickens, as well as *Monte Carlo Bond* collectively expanded upon contemporary ideas of authorship and identity. *Rrose Selevay*, his female pseudonym, was very subversive at the time and said to be influenced by Havelock Ellis

and his 1894 book *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters,* one of the first writings on gender (Cox and Hopkins 134-136). Duchamp's passionate ruminations in the erotic led him to explore gender through epic artistic endeavors that continue to expand the inquisitive notion of sex. He consistently challenged prevailing patterns of thinking and his explorations of eroticism, gender, sex, and identity all reflected a subversive interrogation that remains influential today.

The written word, in Duchamp's work, is often utilized in his titles, and as an element in his assemblages, to play with themes of humour, sarcasm, and philosophy. Duchamp regularly adopted puns, aphorisms, and spoonerisms to title works. *Rrose Selevay* is the title and pseudonym of a persona for a project he began in 1921, in collaboration with Man Ray. If you deconstruct this moniker you may sound out the pun referencing Eros, the Greek concept of love, that is 'Se-le-vay", "it's the life" or another interpretation, "to make a toast to life": "arroser la vie." The work came to fruition as a pastiche of readymades. One is a perfume bottle, a real Rigaud flask from early 1900 that was collaged onto with a portrait of Duchamp's androgynous alter ego, *Rrose Selevay*. The scent was named *Beautiful Breath* or *Veil Water* and could be seen as Duchamp playing on the late 19th century opera, *La belle Hélène*, whilst being interpreted as a parody on 'Eau de Toilette'. Man Ray's photographs of Duchamp, as *Rrose Selevay*, suggest a performative process. He also carried out his persona in his personal life, often signing off letters as *Rrose Selevay.*[1] This was the creation of a new identity for Duchamp that he used as a tool to question authorship and gender. A critical biography quotes the thoughts of his decision making process,

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[1] 15 March 1923, a letter to Carrie, Ettie and Florine Stettheimer (Duchamp 132-133).

… I wanted to change my identity, and the first idea that came to me was to take a

Jewish name. I was Catholic, and it was a change to go from one religion to

another! I didn't find a Jewish name that I especially liked, or that tempted me,

and suddenly I had an idea: why not change sex? (Duchamp qtd. in Cros 151)

It is clear his artistic intentions were fundamentally experimental and intuitive, "…as

Duchamp would tell Calvin Tomkins in the 1960s, his decision to invent *Rrose Selevay*

'was not to change my identity, but to have two identities'" (qtd. in Goodyear 91).

Duchamp, unknowingly fathered performance art in the midst of Dadaism and Surrealism

using absurdity, humour, and conceptual art methodologies that at the time did more than

entertain; they revolutionized.

My process is reminiscent of the intuition Duchamp employed in the construction

of *Rrose Selavay*. I didn't exactly ask myself "why not change sexes?" However, my

instinct to adopt a different gender definitely played a role in my process. Duchamp

seemingly utilized his persona as a strategy or tool, and in the same vein I use a

pseudonym, a character, and an identity to pursue my own investigation. Like Duchamp,

in order to initiate an intuitive process, it is crucial to situate myself in the liminal space

of societal constructs, reaching beyond the conventions of normativity. The contradictory

and oppositional binaries he was interested in, "inventor and entrepreneur", "industrial

products and fine arts, invention, production and creation, patron and punter, mass

production and uniqueness" were situated in a liminal space that he found exploratory

thus growing his creative desire to ponder and contemplate life's pre-existing beliefs

(Cox and Hopkins 166-167). Speaking on *Rrose Selevay,* Cox and Hopkins claim that,

"Rather than expressing the union of fixed opposites of androgyny, Duchamp's female alter ego tests the unstable nature of gender difference and stereotypes" (134).

Eberstein is neither woman Nor-man, and presents a satirical and spurious persona to the viewer striving for absurdity in the same vein as Duchamp. Comic release was of great value to Duchamp's praxis, as he reflected, "Humour is the strict sense of the relativity of things; it is the ongoing critique of what we believe to be definitive; it is the door open to new possibilities without which mental progress would be impossible" (qtd. in Cros 147). It is through humor that *Norman Eberstein* focuses attention on the relativity of identity, and represents an ongoing critique of societal perceptions of safety. Enacting Norman Eberstein allows for a sense of estrangement through which to explore the unfamiliar terrain that Duchamp challenges. Identity, humour, performance, and language are all deployed in this process.

The performance of Norman Eberstein's rituals serve a key function. Enacted before each performance, they represent the root of the work. It is crucial that Norman Eberstein is always prepared when arriving to and departing from a performance. That is to say, when I am him, I adopt the persona completely and there is no in between. The process of becoming Norman Eberstein takes ten to fifteen minutes. Often there is a feeling of anticipation, nervousness and giddiness. This act of becoming has occurred in various settings, most often in a public washroom. *Norman Eberstein's* performances have arisen by invitation or through his own motivation. Regardless of his situation, Norman Eberstein acts according to his own code of ethics. He would refuse to guard for something that could potentially corrupt him, including sites that retain a high monetary value, and he refuses to carry weapons or to physically harm someone. His benevolence

and naïve altruism are key elements of the persona. Norman Eberstein's romanticized view of public service contrasts the financial motives of the surveillance industry by subverting it with servility, nobility and human kindness.

Chapter 3, Butler and Queer Theory

It is important to recognize that there are many artists who have specifically adopted drag in their visual art practice, including, but not limited to: Eleanor Antin, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Martha Wilson, Catherine Opie, Claude Cahun, Adrian Piper, Cindy Sherman, Urs Luthi, and the aforementioned K8 Hardy and Wynne Greenwood, all of whom have greatly influenced my work. For the purpose of this essay I have chosen to concentrate on those that have had the most significant impact on the project.

Eleanor Antin exhibited generously in the 70s and up until the present. She completed a body of work, from 1972-1975, titled *The King of Solana Beach* that plays with narration and identity. Posing interchangeably between four characters, the king, the ballerina, the black movie star and the nurse, Antin re-invented herself through autobiography. She explains,

> For some time I have been considering my art as an exploration of the self, which means that I have been attempting to define myself by moving out to its frontiers, where knowledge of what I cannot and will not be gradually helps shape what I am. (Antin 354)

This work is a personal exploration of age, gender, class, and race and was realized through performance, photography, and writing. At this time Antin was recognized by critics Lucy Lippard and Jayne Wark, in numerous anthologies and essays, as a leading

conceptualist artist in feminism's second wave. In Lippard's essay *Making Up: Role-Playing and Transformation in Woman's Art* she quotes Antin poetically speaking about her work as, "moving out to, into, up to, and down to the frontiers of myself" (Antin qtd. Lippard 105). Speaking to her process, Wark critiques,

> The autobiographical origins of Antin's characters…bound them to herself, but no matter how complete the transformation, [a] gap always remained between herself and her personae that signified her subjectivity not as being but as the agency of being." (Wark 47)

Antin connected privately and personally with feminist self-exploration and reflected a critique of social and political issues. Through her careful considerations of the human condition, Antin was able to bring to art something that it had been missing, a woman's perspective. In Wark's essay on *Conceptual Art and Feminism*, she writes, "Concluding that biology was neither identity nor destiny Antin began to investigate identity as a confluence or fragile link between self-definition and the forces of social interaction" (47). What Wark was adamant about informing the art world, was that Antin represented a connection between conceptual art and emerging feminist efforts in the 70s, challenging existing values and authorities (48). At a time when men dominated the art world, Antin, and many other female artists struggled to be recognized. Critics like Lippard and Wark took on the challenge to bring attention to woman artists who were otherwise unknown. This situation opened up a new territory for feminism, influencing the emergence of queer theory.

Queer theory was adopted in the 90s as a term used to categorize discourses and communication involving topics of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and

feminist studies. More directly, 'queer' refers to "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant," and demarcates "an identity without an essence" (Halperin 62). Gender politics encompasses feminist perspectives and LGBT issues, serving as a framework through which to engage in diverse societal questions.

Queer theory was popularized by Judith Butler and her ideas of performativity. My interpretation of Butler's concept of performativity promotes a liberated understanding of gender as something that grows and changes. To clarify, in a documentary, Butler informs us to, "Describe gender as *doing*; what are the ways we do gender?" ("Judith Butler). She describes gender as a performance that we often accept without questioning. To reiterate, she explains, "one is born but becomes one that it is neither man or a woman" ("Judith Butler*"*). She states, "if we knew always what we'd become we would be dead, we would be over," suggesting that gender is a continuing experience with no end, or as Sharon Marcus translates in her 'review essay', *Queer Theory For Everyone*, Butler's implying that "gender is performance in the sense of a copy for which there is no original" ("Judith Butler", Marcus 197). All considered; it is crucial to acknowledge the development of gender theory, which continues to emancipate social values within gender binaries. Butler also provides insight into how to combat heternormativity, as one scholar notes, "[Queer] performances often seek to disrupt the repetition of normativity" by using "drag and other repetitions that might mimic the structure of gender" (Brady and Shirato 67). The *Norman Eberstein* project attempts to perform this disruption of gender Butler speaks of, and to escape gender's concrete binaries. The use of drag functions as a critique of oppressive surveillance strategies and, just as importantly, opens up the liminal space for personal growth. Norman Eberstein

doesn't ask the viewer to determine his gender, nor does he attempt to shock the viewer with his gender, but rather allows the viewer to have their own reaction to his presence. Creating this subtle disruption of gender allows myself to discover how people interact with others, especially within the controls of surveillance. Everyone reacts differently to gender, proving Butler's theory, that gender is never complete and never original.

Chapter 4, Methodologies

Christian Falsnaes, a contemporary artist who executes live performances in collaboration with his audiences, writes, "Performance is just a form and a language in which I am able to communicate and experiment" (Falsnaes)[2]. In this spirit, the persona of Norman Eberstein propels an intuitive and improvisational practice. John E. McGrath, a theatre director who has held positions in New York, Manchester, and Wales,[3] wrote, *Loving Big Brother: Performance, Privacy and Surveillance Space*, a text about the relationship between surveillance and performance. In this text he discusses the dynamic between the two, "For an understanding of surveillance as something other than simple representation of an event and place, the concept of performativity is crucial" (McGrath 14). Likewise, Norman Eberstein's physical enactment strives for deeper insight into constructs of security. The concept of surveillance is complex, ubiquitous, and powerful, and as McGrath indicates, performativity may be used to begin an initial exploration of its tactics and effect. Norman Eberstein's adoption of the identity of the security guard is

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[2] Christian Falsnaes is a Danish artist known for his live performances, *Existing Things* and *There and Back*, 2010.
[3] John E. McGrath is currently Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Wales and Chair of Theatre Performing Arts Network and Developing Agency (PANDA) previously Artistic Director at Contact Theatre in Manchester

a subversion of the official aesthetic of surveillance.

> June 14, 2010 9:30 am
>
> My first day on the job and I'm feeling confident and alert. When I put on my uniform this morning I felt a rush of importance. My strength doubled and I knew no sadness or insecurity because my body did not feel weak. My body felt like a brick wall that stands still always ready to do nothing but look straight ahead at the world and the people. The complacency I once felt naked was gone. A reliance on my existence took over my body: my posture, my facial expressions, and my mindset. Even if no one needed me I felt I could make a difference.
>
> Starting a little late. I was never actually given any guidelines. I make them up as I go. I really want this experience. I'm not completely sure what the expectations are other than observe and report, wear the uniform, and be here Monday to Friday 9:00 am till 4:00 pm. However the job must be fulfilled with a degree of confidence that is rarely assigned. I've worked three times prior. This is my longest freelanced job as of yet; an entire month, and I really want to try my hardest to prove that I, Norman Eberstein, can be a security guard. There isn't anything I want to do more. Hopefully all goes well now that I've got my eye on them. (Eberstein 1-2)

As evoked in the above excerpt from one of the logbook entries that he dutifully keeps, Norman Eberstein perceives himself as a public servant: well-groomed, physically fit, observant, mentally aware, disciplined and reliable. His guarding strategies are basic, to "observe and report." The logbook reads, in succession, for an entire page, "…Observe and report. Observe and report. Observe and report. Observe and report. Observe and report. Observe and report…" (Eberstein 12). The observing is done while standing in the

vicinity of the location he is watching. The reporting includes the drawing of observations, the chronicling of incidents, as well as ideas and thoughts that occur to Norman Eberstein as he patrols.

The writing in the logbooks reveals a handwritten record of Norman Eberstein's feelings, thoughts, deeds, interactions, and observations. Whatever Norman Eberstein sees, that is suspicious, cautionary, or intriguing, he reports. For example, he might assist someone, "I just told a lady her fly was undone. She thanked me." (Eberstein 12), talk to someone, "The construction workers were talking to me about broken windows in the area." (Eberstein 41), or take note of someone, "There is a boy who has been seen wandering around this area and I finally saw him today. He has an orange vest on with a fluorescent stripe. Looks official in a safety kind of way. I sort of see it as he's helping me out, which is nice" (Eberstein 5). He also logs his feelings: uncomfortable, "What if rioting went on here? I would feel responsible and do my best to keep people safe. Boy o' boy it makes me nervous." (Eberstein 31-32), sad, "I feel really depressed today. I really hope someone asks for my help." (Eberstein 12), or elated, "Happy Canada Day! I stand on guard for thee." (Eberstein 35). The logbook also includes drawings of maps, diagrams, and ideas.
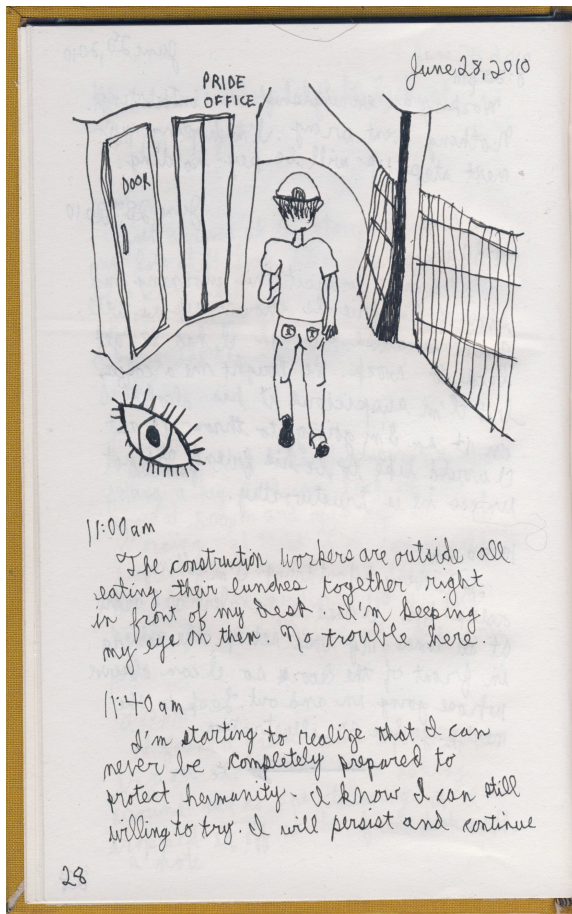
PRIDE OFFICE

June 28, 2010

DOOR

11:00 am
The construction workers are outside all eating their lunches together right in front of my desk. I'm keeping my eye on them. No trouble here.

11:40 am
I'm starting to realize that I can never be completely prepared to protect humanity. I know I can still willing to try. I will persist and continue

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Figure 4. Sara French, *Logbook*. 2010. PG 28 of 53. 4" x 5 ½".

I've always been interested in DIY methods, including sewing, playing instruments, crafting projects, and other self-taught ways to be creative. In 2009 I learned how to make books and this became a valuable skill to my performance-based practice. Norman Eberstein's logbooks employ my bookmaking skills and my own self-taught embroidery techniques to create a series of traditional hardcover hand-bound books. Each cover is hand-embroidered with the title, *Norman Eberstein: Logbook*. The four symbols representing his persona are sewn on the spine, as well as the year and location for which it was made. The hand-stitching is black and the book cloth is a mustard colour. This yellowish hue is a dull echo of the emblematic gold historically used by hegemonic powers. This is a subtle metaphor for the authority surveillance possesses and withholds

from those it employs. Hand-bound and sewn, the logbook is a non-technological tactic used by Norman Eberstein to surveil. This process is intentionally critiquing the reliance security systems have on cameras, computers and other surveillance technologies.

"Helping out humanity. Doin' it myself (DIM). DIWhy? Because it's honest. Because no one else will do it for you. Because I have full control. What's going to happen today? Hopefully something" (Eberstein 22).

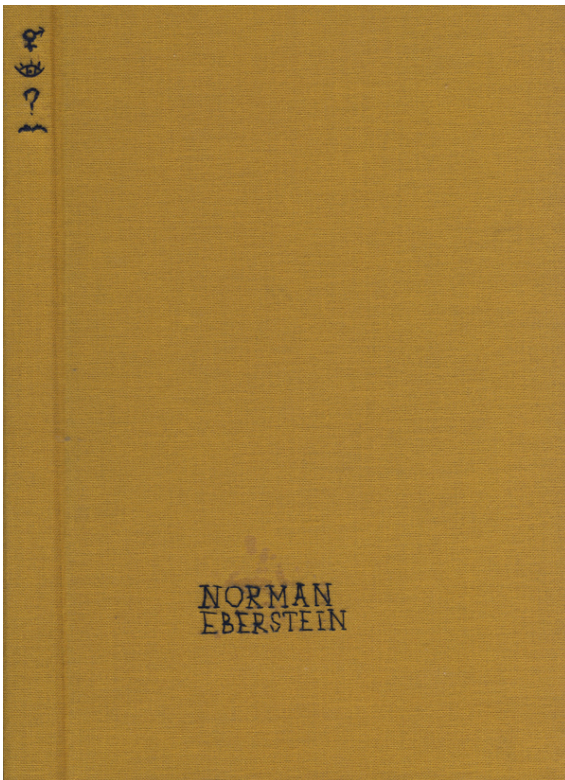**Figure 5. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein.* 2010. PGS 53. 4" x 5 ½".**

The work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, an artist who dedicated more than two decades in residence at the Department of Sanitation in New York City, offers a connection to occupational social class that has aided in understanding my own project. In 1969, Ukeles wrote *Maintenance Art* manifesto as a preliminary study. Her work

recognizes and commemorates maintenance workers, the culture of 'blue-collar' that is often ignored in the art world.

Ukeles' methodology links repetition, discipline, and diligence, voluntarily, as a way of respect to those in the working force. In an interview, she says,

> The same way that the sanitation department sends out 1,600 trucks every day, it is like this repetitive thing that as much as you chafe at the boredom of the repetition it is as important as the other parts. And I know that that has to be a part of culture. Because if isn't, then you don't have a culture that welcomes in everybody. And, I mean *everybody*. (Ukeles)

In addition to the appropriation of my brother's name in *Norman Eberstein,* the work draws on my personal roots. I come from an upbringing of "blue collar" hardworking parents, a nurse and an engineer, who have raised four children. My work is deeply rooted in this personal history. My father, who was raised on a farm, has always kept to an intense work ethic while my Mennonite mother was equally dedicated to her job and to domestic labor. My parents have never enjoyed luxurious lifestyles, even now in their late fifties they continue to work.

Marked by this influence, my art utilizes a repetitive process that adheres to an obsessive methodology. In this project I have logged a great deal of time surveilling, training, crafting, and performing. Because of my family background, I feel obliged to be laborious and diligent in my process in order to validate my work as an artist. The repetitive and disciplined acts that I have adopted also serve as a means to a fully engaged experimental investigation.

During the residency at New York's Department of Sanitation, Ukeles carried out numerous performance works. *Touch*, a work she made between 1978-1980, involved her shaking the hand of every employee in the DOS, roughly 8,500 people. In this gesture Ukeles flirts with the stereotype of an occupation construed as dirty or repulsive. Shaking hands of sanitation employees may be viewed as daring but in actuality it is about her honouring their existence as she earnestly thanks them. Ukekes' piece draws on the public's prejudice and stereotype of sanitation workers, and by doing so she confronts her viewers with their own biases in regard to the profession.

Though *Norman Eberstein* uses different means to explore the role of security guard, it similarly plays with public biases, as the innocence of the persona could be construed as a stereotype of an uneducated worker. Norman Eberstein's naiveté, however, has a more complex function. His thorough absence of cynicism requires viewers to consider doubts that they might hold themselves, and to reflect on their own passivity, discomfort, or anxiety in the face of surveillance. His choice to work without pay, his embrace of a never-ending training process, and his dedication to promoting safety for people rather than property or valuables, proclaims a credulous intent that critiques the capitalist function of the security industry.

For the show, *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* in 2006, Ukeles displayed a work from 1973 called, "The Keeping of the Keys," in which she performed as a key holder in the museum. The exhibition catalogue reflects,

> Altruism, in these practices, also serves as a Trojan horse through which the
> artists intervene in relations between groups of people and the institutions that are
> supposedly responsible for their interests… 'Work', as in 'work of art' and work in

the general sense, acquires special meaning as each artist takes as their medium a form of 'real world' labor… considered alien to the creative act. (Farquharson)

As a way of valuing labour creatively, Ukeles worked as an artist alongside other laborers and made work that was for the workers and about the workers. Her altruism acknowledges the workers existence, commonly unrequited yet crucial to civilization.

The solicitous and altruistic spirit of Norman Eberstein's surveillance efforts are central to the performance. He must look beyond the hegemonic nature of the security industry, seemingly ignorant of its oppressiveness, in order for his virtuous deeds to imply an ironic critique. The role of security guard itself manifests a conundrum; guards are powerless in economic status but yet they serve and exert authority on behalf of the established hegemony. By adopting an overarching sense of innate beneficence, *Norman Eberstein* highlights these underlying contradictions of surveillance. As the project evolves, questions of class continue to inform the growth of the persona and performances.

Chapter 5, Trials

In the summer of 2010 I was awarded a space at a residency with the Windsor/Detroit artist collective, Broken City Lab. While I was there I experimented with my project, *Norman Eberstein,* in a month-long performance. The locations, various abandoned storefronts, were donated by the city for artists to work and exhibit from June 14th – July 10th. The initiative was called *Storefront Residences for Social Innovation* and involved over thirty artists working in three spaces downtown Windsor, Ontario.

At the residency, Norman Eberstein performed Monday to Friday from 9:00 am till 4:00 pm for the entire month. Manifested from the performance was a 53-page logbook that is cited throughout this paper. Media coverage of *Norman Eberstein* was televised and published including a newspaper article by Dalsen Chen ("Rethinking Vacant Space" Windsor Star, 17 June 2010), and a short clip of *Norman Eberstein* aired on the local 6 o'clock and 11 o'clock news (*/A\ Channel* Windsor, 6 July 2010).

Figure 6. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein*. 2010. Photo courtesy Windsor Star.

Figure 7. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein*. 2010. Photo courtesy /A\ Channel.

Before arriving in Windsor I was committed to time-based performance and testing my physical and mental response to the constraints I was putting on my body and my own identity. Though my interest grew considerably and significantly propelled the residency, I felt unsure of its significance at the time.

The centrality of gender in relation to the work *Norman Eberstein* was from the onset a challenging question. As detailed in the chapter above, drag is an important device that sparks the intuitive and improvisational process. Through research and fieldwork I addressed the transformation I was experiencing, physically and mentally, in regard to the constrictions I was placing on my body. The performative act of a woman adopting a male security guard's role undeniably carries with it an implicit critique of phallocentric power structures. In addition, the DIY aesthetics that I use have feminist overtones in relation to the systems of authority that I challenge.

Judith Butler, in her text *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,* discusses phenomenological theories of " acts"[4] which aim to understand why and how gender is instituted. She suggests,

> If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style. (Butler 519)

As of way of "contesting its reified status," Butler gives insight into the possibility to intervene in these "social constraints" (520). She writes, that to overcome gender identity, as "compelled by social sanction and taboo" her task is, "to examine in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts, and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts," claiming that gender is in itself performative (520). Butler never describes these acts of cultural transformation, leaving them open to interpretation.

As Norman Eberstein, I am breaking and subverting my own repetitive gender. As a woman using drag as a corporeal act, I attempt to blur performative characteristics and expressions of gender. Though my choice to dress as a man is an element of an artistic process rather than a part of a lifestyle, the public setting of the performance invokes Butler's critique. By disturbing my own gendered repetition of acts I am able to explore the liminality of gender. As Butler states, "Genders, then, can be neither true nor false,

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[4] Specifically the writings of Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and George Herbert Mead.

neither real nor apparent" (527). If one deconstructs the social signifiers of gender we may begin to escape the binary reification that is latent with a heterosexual framework.

The drag aspect of my work helps to investigate gender as a societal construct and through the work it has become clear that ambiguities within the act of surveillance are inherently gendered. The principal motivation of this ludic experiment rests in questioning our investment in surveillance and how it internalizes the instinct to exercise control—over ourselves and those around us.

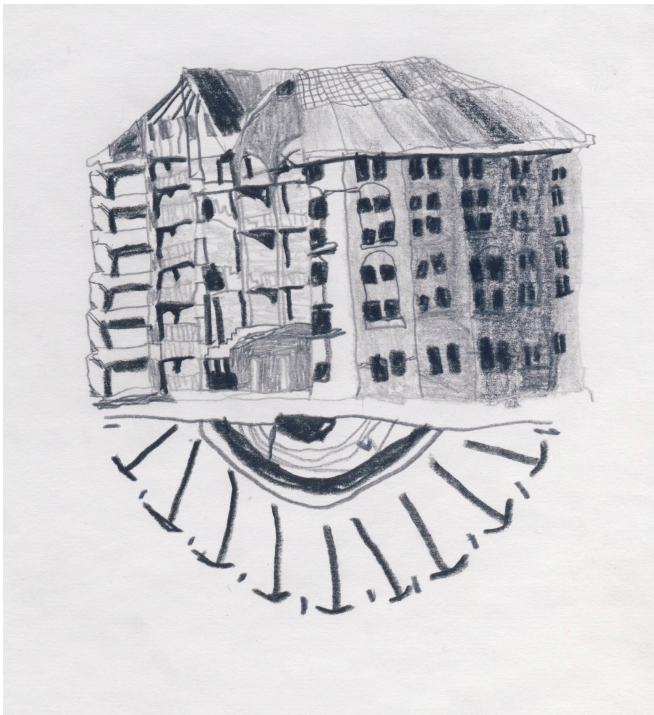**Chapter 6, Surveillance: A Cultural Framework**

Figure 8. Sara French, *Panopticon*. 2010. Drawing. 4" x 5 ½".

In this chapter on surveillance I look to its historical constructs, attempt to frame it as a concept, and outline how surveillance is reinforced in public and private space today, how it is misused and how it has failed. In reconsideration, I will formulate better-

suited approaches to surveillance. For the purposes of the *Norman Eberstein* project, I understand a conventional definition of surveillance to be the concept of watching over someone, something, or somewhere, with the use of technological devices and/or personnel.

Michel Foucault, in his text, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, traces the history of surveillance in relation to power, order and control up to the development of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. The chapter, "Panopticism", begins with an outline of procedures and tactics orchestrated during the plague in the late 17th century. Foucault relates these tactics to later developments and gives them significance for constructing the mechanisms that gave rise to the Panopticon. He calls this establishment the 'disciplinary programme',

> There is an exceptional situation: against an extraordinary evil,[5] power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions; it constructs for a time what is both a counter-city and the perfect society; it imposes an ideal functioning… The Panopticon, on the other hand, must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning: a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men. (Foucault 205)

The organizational governance adopted by the city to combat the plague was extremely meticulous. Every maneuver was overseen, recorded, and controlled. This "disciplinary programme" or "ideal functioning" Foucault concluded, was adapted to prisons, schools, and hospitals. He writes, "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on

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[5] The plague.

whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (205). Bentham's Panopticon was a blueprint for an architectural prison model that was never built, but its conception imposed schema that was widely instituted. As an invention, one might say the Panopticon succeeded in its construction. Foucault writes, "it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form… it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use" (205). That being said, the Panopticon could be considered the first important invention of surveillance that advanced the technological and political agenda within which we are now completely immersed. What was once governance (by the king, church and citizens)[6] is now an omnipresent technological system of control, surveillance.

It must be noted that Foucault went on to claim that the Panopticon not only gave rise to a plethora of technologically driven inventions within a political agenda, it also established a new sense of consciousness. To clarify, Foucault argued that the Panopticon was used, "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). Today the Panopticon 'schema' has to some degree been instituted in the majority of public and private spaces, thereby subjecting us to this condition of constant visibility.

Foucault's analysis of panopticism has informed our current understanding of surveillance. In the aftermath of 9/11, the surveillance agenda has increasingly grown to cater to the contingent nature of terrorist catastrophes. This was something that happened abruptly in the wake of this tragedy. David Lyon, in his text *Surveillance After September*

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[6] Foucault states that in France, 17th century, social discipline was in part the role of parish guilds and/or charity associations, until it was soon taken over by police apparatus' (213).

11, critiques this reality, making references to technological developments in globalized security post-2001. From the onset, Lyon considers that surveillance has existed for centuries, however after the calamity of 9/11 surveillance developed an increasingly more sophisticated and ubiquitous stratagem. He writes, "The apparent crisis was immediately seen as an opportunity for already existing systems and capacities to be more fully exploited" and notes that "…already existing surveillance systems are being reinforced and intensified" (Lyon 15, 18). To be clear, the problem is not that surveillance is unwelcome, but rather that it was never made a democratic feat.

One of the most significant technologies that became utilized post 9/11 was CCTV (closed circuit television). First invented in the 1940s, CCTV is now installed throughout casinos, factories, and cites including Chicago, New York, and one of the first countries to truly embrace CCTV technology was the United Kingdom. In this case study, I focus on CCTV in the United Kingdom.

The 2005 National Geographic documentary "Science of Surveillance" offers some general ideas about the phenomenon. "Science of Surveillance" indicates that a person in the UK will be captured on camera over 300 times in one day. Recently the advancements of surveillance have become even more intrusive: iris scans at airports, face recognition systems on the streets, surveillance satellites in space, cell phones with GPS, cameras on highways, implanted computer chips in people's bodies; the inventions are seemingly endless. Police now have the ability to find you anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes. Using technology, the documentary, "Science of Surveillance" also puts forward that those who are in control of surveillance can misuse or even abuse its applications, and the system often fails to identify a crime before it happens. A prime

example was the London bombings that took place on July 7th 2005, an atrocity that killed 52 people and injured over 700. The incident involved four suicide bombers carrying backpacks filled with explosives. From within the stark CCTV control room the men could be seen but there was no way of knowing that they were equipped with explosives. It is poignant that the majority of the North American population ignores the fact that these machines and technologies have been installed due to terrorist threats even though they have failed to be proven as deterrents.

The question remains, how are these cameras are making us safer? In a two-year study, 1995-1996, of CCTV control room operations, scientists Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong documented and analyzed the actions and strategies orchestrated by camera operators. Their observations were compiled in *CCTV and the Social Structuring of Surveillance,* which was published in a *Crime Prevention Studies* journal in 1999. The initiative was to study the process of CCTV and how it is used, rather than focusing on the outcomes. Their methodology required them to situate themselves inside three control rooms throughout the UK, including the Inner City, a rural Country Town, and a bustling Metro City location (Norris and Armstrong 160). They concluded that, "In total, 593 hours of monitoring –the equivalent of 74 eight hour shifts – were observed" (161). Here is an example of their fieldwork,

> 13.45: The operator sees and zooms in on four boys walking through a pedestrian precinct. Aged between 10 and 12 and casually, but fashionably, dressed, the four, - combining age, appearance, location and numbers – are suspects for a variety of possibilities. The four gather around in a form of "conference," and 30 seconds later walk a few yards to their left and enter a shop well known for selling toys.

What the operator sees is not kids entering a shop meant for kids, but something else: they are all up to no good running out any minute with stolen merchandise. In anticipation, he fixes a camera onto the shop door and tells the other operator to put the cameras onto the street he presumes they will run into.

Using two cameras and two operators, the surveillance lasts six minutes before the boys leave the shop – slowly and orderly and without any apparent stolen goods. Now, the operator informs me, he will zoom in on the four as they walk through town in a search for bulges under their clothing, particularly around the waistline – this according to him, is where stolen toys would be concealed. But the boys have jeans and T-shirts on and no bulges are apparent. Still, however, the four are followed by both operators to see if they will pull items out of their pockets; they don't. The four then disappear from view as they enter another department store. The operator looks elsewhere, but comments to his colleague, 'They're definitely up to no good.' (165)

From this example, Norris and Armstrong purport that the operators used a combination of seemingly contradictory clichés and assumptions encouraged by their own personal biases and common sense to justify their targeted victims (167). What was confirmed from this research was, "The most neglected area of training consists of how to identify suspicious behavior, when to track individuals or groups and when to take close-up views of incidents or people" (158). The surveillance industry is compromised by this subjectivity. It is close to impossible to identify a murderer or a criminal from a pre-existing vocabulary of incidents.

Norman Eberstein identifies as a security guard that is in a never-ending training session. He writes,

> I'm starting to realize that I can never be completely prepared to protect humanity. I
> know I can still train myself but I feel like I'll never completely know how people
> need to be treated or protected. However, I'm still willing to try. I will persist and
> continue to experiment with the protecting of people. (28-29)

As a security guard in training, Norman Eberstein makes cautionary observations regarding the environment, as opposed to reporting on behavior, which he deems to be suspicious. Rather than concentrating on predicting crimes, he often tidies up while patrolling, fixes potentially hazardous situations, and tries to devise safer plans and procedures to follow. In the hopes of creating a safer atmosphere, Norman Eberstein makes his presence seen and his assistance available to anyone.

The work of Matt Hern has aided my consideration of surveillance in regard to security and safety. Hern, a writer who is co-founder and owner of Purple Thistle Centre for Teens in Vancouver, BC, as well as a father, husband, volunteer and community leader wrote about the uses of surveillance in his book, *Watch Yourself: Why Safer Isn't Always Better*, 2007. Along with David Lyon, Hern considered the effects of post 9/11 heightened surveillance measures. To quote,

> More prisons constant surveillance and pervasive authority do not make us any
> safer. Dominant contemporary notions that reify the perfectibility of safeness and
> the end of nature serve only to constrict the public displacing non-official activity
> with private autonomous consumer zones, and in the end reduces us
> fundamentally. (Hern 10)

Hern is disconcerted that the over-use of surveillance hasn't caused us concern. We are ambivalent to the repercussions on our consciousness, our lives and the lives of future generations. Hern suggests that we are technologizing, comidifying, and materializing safety to satisfy our "obsession with safeness" (19, 142). His critique is, "To speak of safety is to speak of control and rarely in our culture does that mean self-control" (Hern 22). If we have no self-control, he suggests, we risk losing our moral judgment, our humanity and our sense of respect for one another. In dealing with this daunting prediction, Hern considers that,

> There are many useful suggestions for dematerializing police forces and making them accountable to the communities they ostensibly serve—for example, getting cops out of their cars and having them walk their patrols getting rid of their guns, making them report to the local citizens boards, replacing local police beats with citizen patrols, etc. (142)

The possibilities seem endless, yet the investment in technological systems remains dominant.

Norman Eberstein is an advocate for these ideas. He walks his patrols, does not carry weapons and communicates with citizens. He is an exaggeratedly benevolent volunteer surveillant. *Norman Eberstein* re-imagines the systems of surveillance, questions our blind investments, and rejects the oppressing and expensive security industry. At its heart, the experiment seeks to displace the institutions of surveillance with pure altruistic intentions. Norman Eberstein is convinced that his job exists for the good of humankind. As a project, *Norman Eberstein* highlights the incongruity between the realities of cold technological surveillance and the purpose that it claims to serve.

Norman Eberstein writes, "I believe I can change the ways of security. The volunteers of safety, protection, and humankind" (Eberstein 9).

In *Gendering Bodies*, a critical text about the effects of surveillance, is stated,

In our everyday lives, practices of surveillance (by self and others) and everyday accountabilities to a system of dichotomous gendered expectations encourage us to curb our behaviors and become the realization of the gender box structure…" (Crawley, Foley, Shehan 144).

Within surveillance, control and power naturally confine us to act and live in authoritative systems that are often unidentified and omnipresent. Therefore, my tactic is to use art to probe gender within the confines of surveillance hoping that my viewer will question their natural instincts, question conformity, and be aware of their surroundings. A reading on new surveillance technologies applies Butler's words, "different constructions of gender can interact with surveillance, and surveillance can incite "new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms" (Butler qtd. in Corones and Hardy 394). That is to say if we can use gender, do gender, and explore gender to it's maximum potential we can escape the restrictions we have in place, and create new opportunities that will expand our existing ideas.

Figure 9. Sara French, ***Image taken on a construction site in Vancouver, BC.* 2011.**

Cell phone photo.

Chapter 7, The Bookworks of Jill Magid and Bernadette Corporation

The New Normal is an exhibition that was on display in the summer of 2010 at the

Art Gallery of Windsor (AGW). This traveling group show was co-organized by

Independent Curators International (iCI) and consisted of thirteen works each concerning

ideas of surveillance, social networking, and technology in the 21st century. The press

release reads, "Each of the works shown was completed after October 2001, when Vice

President Cheney described new government surveillance measures after 9/11 as 'the

new normalcy' " (AGW). This 'new normal' is our 'new' life, saturated with information,

immersed in communication, and constantly surveilled.

While in residency for Broken City Lab collective, I visited the exhibition and witnessed firsthand the work of Jill Magid, who I had been enthusiastic about for some time. Magid works within themes of surveillance, performance, and voyeurism, is represented by Yvon-Lambert Gallery, and has exhibited at the Gagosian in New York, and the Tate.

The work of Jill Magid, *Lincoln Ocean Victor Eddy* (*L.O.V.E.*), on display at the AGW, is a durational project from 2007 that chronicles a relationship with an MTA officer (Metropolitan Transit Authority, State of New York). After living abroad for five years, she moved back to Brooklyn and one day on the subway decided to engage with authority. She approached the officer, rather abrasively,

> Will you search me? *What?* I want you to search me. *What? Why do you want me to search you?* Because you said you would. *I can't search you you're a woman.* Oh, I didn't know that. I paused and looked down at my book, then back up at him. Will you train me? *What?* I want you to train me**.** *Look, I have to get off here.* I repeated my request. He mumbled something, scribbled a number on the last page of my book, and slipped out between the closing doors. (Magid 1)

Magid's unsuccessful search request began a five-month long dialogue between herself and the officer. From the first encounter they began meeting nearly everyday. He introduced her to the underground subways systems allowing her to follow him on his late night shifts and through restricted areas. She re-paid him by taking him to art museums and teaching him art history, which he previously knew nothing about. Simultaneously documenting each and every encounter, Magid composed the dialogue

into an installation piece that included photographs, objects, a print, and a novella, titled,

Lincoln Ocean Victory Eddy: 117HRS 23MIN LOGGED.

The novella chronicles the entire relationship. Including the title, which she appropriated from the MTA phonetic alphabet, Magid brings in various references throughout the text to reveal secrets, tactics, and unknown facts from within the police system. What is so interesting is that Magid intimately and at times flirtatiously engages with authority within an organization that protects itself from public and private exposure. In a review of her Gagosian solo exhibition, Lyra Liberty Kilston wrote, "Magid seeks a suppressed poetry in the grid of authority and finds it, even while the results closely mimic the systems she attempts to humanize" (Kilston). Operating within this grid, Magid entertains the idea of intimacy while deconstructing the authoritative relationship to the public they are seemingly protecting.

In the gallery, the work successfully illustrated her performative experience through documentation. Magid's use of text and surveillance is poetic and thought-provoking. Her innermost desires are transformed within the systems of power as she takes risks, exposing what could be considered confidential, private and/or classified information. The photos displayed in the installation reveal two of the officer's personal possessions—his uniform shirt and gun. Also included is a bullet given to her, from him, which she places on a pedestal in the gallery. Magid locates the weakness within the authoritative structure to find her way in. Using her collected material she dangerously reveals the vulnerability of a single entity within the system.

The books of Magid and the logbook of *Norman Eberstein* resonate in that both attempt to translate a performative experience that is of the everyday; surveillance. In

much the same way as her book, *Lincoln Victor Ocean Eddy: 117 HRS 23MIN LOGGED*, successful articulates, *Norman Eberstein: Logbook* attempts to illustrate a performative exploration of surveillance using a common record-keeping convention.

Another bookwork that has influenced my project is titled *Reena Spaulings*, a collaboration orchestrated by Bernadette Corporation. The preface declares that the book was composed by 150 writers addressing the city of New York. Introducing an unimaginable task, "to see a city", the book goes on to say,

> If you look at a city, there's no way to see it. One person can never see a city…
> you can't go somewhere and look at it and just see it empirically. It has to be
> informed, imagined, by many people at a time. It's an everyday group
> hallucination. This novel is modeled on that phenomenon. (Bernadette
> Corporation)

The book is a fictional narrative about a girl who works as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Thoughts during her shifts are laden with references to banal everyday thoughts that read as self-reflexive modernist boredom, "Reena, magnificently bored again, all day long. She knows the grainy surveillance monitors are registering all her moves… sometimes she thought of herself as just a monitor staring back at the other monitors" (Bernadette Corporation 5). This passage reflects the introspective nature of her role as surveillant, cyclical, and arguably voyeuristic. Reena by happenstance is "discovered" for a stint at a modeling agency. She inevitably quits her job to become a lackluster model. Using her DIY fashion connections she manages to land money, fame, and love, however she remains unsatisfied, within an existentialist mindset.

A collaborative process that is seemingly performative was adopted in writing *Reena Spaulings*. Its collective creation requires a re-consideration of authorship and our expectation of the novelist as a singular entity. The idea of abolishing singularities is a contemporary notion considered by numerous artists represented by Reena Spaulings Gallery. Their exhibitions are often shown at this space in New York, a cutting edge gallery that represents DIY aesthetics and praxis-based works.

Bernadette Corporation explores philosophical conundrums related to the idea of authorship in the 21st century. Though I am not engaged in a collaborative practice, my use of a persona in *Norman Eberstein* involves a slippery sense of authorship. Within the project the idea of "the artist" is lost in the persona of Norman Eberstein. Much of the substance of my work is created once I have transformed myself into the character. In my practice I look to re-identify myself through a ritualized and self-disciplined methodology that attempts to replace a sense of self with a process. The Bernadette Corporation remains a strong reference for me because of their success within contemporary art practices as they continue to investigate the re-identification of the artist.

Chapter 8, Exhibition

Villa Arson is a museum, school, and research center for contemporary art in Nice, France. In 2010, *Not to Play With Dead Things* (*N.T.P.W.D.T.*), a new exhibition of performance art was displayed there. The title, named after a text written by Mike Kelley was mistakenly appropriated by the curators to refer to what they thought was a metaphor for "objects linked to performances" (Mangion qtd. in Villa Arson 14). Discovered in translation, Kelley's text actually referred to a psychoanalysis of his childhood fetishes,

however the curators decided to keep it. In their use of it, the phrase refers to objects in the exhibit that are no longer in process (14). In an interview, the curator, Éric Mangion talks about this decision, "All the pieces featured have had their moment of being alive through a gesture or an action. But this moment is now over. We are no longer playing. The game is finished. They are only relics" (14). This "game" is characterized as the performative process that created the works installed in the show. Tackling the possibility of performance art being material-based, the curators, Mangion and Marie de Brugerolle, were interested in unpacking and understanding its relation to a set of "aesthetic forms". As we see performance art today, exhibited in the gallery, it is likely to be photography or video. *N.T.P.W.D.T.* broadens the genre, displaying sculptures, relics, remixed works, non-documentary videos, and post-performance props. One media they intentionally did not stage is live performance works. Mangion says, "The idea was to question again the notion of documenting a performance by featuring artists that had misappropriated the use of these traces" (qtd. in Villa Arson 16). This "misappropriated" use of documentation captures an essence of the artistic process that performance art had never addressed. Perhaps this is because of 1960s performances, which attempted to de-materialize art as a resistance to consumerist culture. The curators defend their curatorial vision by asserting that this is not a grotesque revision of priorities based on economic motivations to commodity performance (Mangion qtd. in Villa Arson 19). The use of performance art as object in *N.T.P.W.D.T.* is not linked to a refusal of the art market, therefore validating the process of performative practices as something more than a political gesture.

N.T.P.W.D.T was a strong influence on my thinking, as it revealed a new emergence of performance art, one that allowed the artist to explore public, bodily, and/or relational methods without necessarily being participatory, live, or didactic. In a sense, it revitalizes the artistic process as an action.

The curatorial intentions also affirm that performance art needs not be site-specific and performed in front of a live audience in order to be understood. For the *Norman Eberstein* project, I attempt to install in the gallery what was, in its initial form, a performance. Appropriating the vocabulary of *N.T.P.W.D.T.,* I use "dead objects", "leftovers", or "relics" from the performance to present the work that was brought to fruition using a performative process. To quote Mangion, I am "reaching beyond formulas and past trends, to truly express an action, a moment, or an idea" (qtd. In Villa Arson 19).

Over the course of the work's evolution, the principle challenge came down to the location of where the performance should take place. In the gallery spaces or institutional settings (University, Library) the site failed to provide an intriguing context. The performance was in need of a more expansive environment, and to be seen by a larger public. This requirement is considered in the most recent iteration of *Norman Eberstein*, a weeklong performance at the Peace Arch, Douglas Border Crossing, in Surrey, BC. Each day, Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, Norman Eberstein performs surveillance in the perimeter between Canada and the USA (without ever crossing the border). The night before the performance, Norman Eberstein writes,

Oh my. Am I ever nervous about tomorrow. My stomach really hurts, that is because my nerves are shot. I will be embarking on a weeklong training session at

the Peace Arch. I hope I'm going to be healthy tomorrow for my shift. They had a computer glitch at the border in October last year. Technology isn't perfect. Boy, I wish I were. Things should run smoothly for tomorrow, hopefully. I am planning to be really on top of things at this location. There will likely be a fair number of security guards there to begin with and we should all spread out. Wish me luck.

Figure 10. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein.* 2011. Performance at Peace Arch Border Crossing, Surrey, BC. Photo courtesy of Lois Klassen.

My final exhibition, realized in this performance, displayed a logbook, a video work, and the uniform worn by Norman Eberstein. The video component contained live footage captured by Brynna Childs on site of Norman Eberstein guarding the Peace Arch. The installation constitutes Norman Eberstein's character in representing the use of DIY aesthetics and craft techniques created and employed in the performance.

Rather than the gallery spaces, where several *Norman Eberstein* performances had previously been situated, the border creates a discourse within a socio-political context. The overabundance of surveillance cameras and other technological devices installed at the border generates a conversation in relation to Norman Eberstein's physical presence. Some questions that arose for me during the course of this experiment include: Who has the right, if anyone, to protect the un-chartered land between two countries? Can liminal space be made safe? Is it possible for cultures to meet in a protected space? How do Norman Eberstein's motivations, tactics, and ambitions deviate from the guards currently employed at this location? These questions will help to inform my future work.

Because this work represents more of a beginning than an end, my assessment of the Peace Arch performance is best represented by the anecdotes from Norman Eberstein's logbook. Each of the recorded interactions that I cite below are followed by a narration of my response at that moment, which highlights the value of my experience,

> I just sparked up a conversation with an American couple… The interesting part for me was that neither of us had to actually cross the border (they forgot their passports) but yet we met in the middle and were able to have a conversation. (Eberstein 5-6)

In this situation the woman was afraid to cross an invisible line between the borders. The husband joked while hopping across the boundary of USA and Canada, yet afraid to venture beyond the middle. This situation gave evidence to the control that we internalize in surveillance space. In addition, it was interesting that we were able to meet one another at the dividing line although neither of us where in either country.

The writing, used as a method for surveiling, also evolved into a mapping strategy and a way to interact with the space. Norman Eberstein puts forth historical and observational information on the crossing throughout the logbook,

> This time of the season the cabins are closed, by spring they will re-open for events and gatherings. Up here, I have located a significant vantage point. I can see down to the arch and all the little people walking across the distance of land. The arch is so tall. It disappears into the off-white sky abstracting the flags that wave over-head. (12-13)

Appreciating the open space, Norman Eberstein felt at ease and took full account of his presence in the space while acknowledging peak viewpoints. As he walked the perimeter he took note of fixtures and ornamental structures in place. Finding interest in the historical nature of the location, Norman Eberstein logs,

> Apparently when the arch was first built in the 1920s the artist had artistically lined its frame with many white lights. These were replaced with floodlights in the 1940s. Sam Hill, in 1914 began an international fundraising campaign to have the arch built. The design for the arch was donated by H.W. Corbett of London, England. He was an architect. Sam Hill was a lawyer from Washington State and after collecting gracious donations from automobile clubs in Canada and the USA he rounded up an international group of volunteers to help build the arch. Almost 70 feet tall, the arch symbolizes the end of a conflict between the USA and Great Britain. In 1814, a hundred years before the arch was erected, the Treaty of Ghent was signed. This arch commemorates the hundred-year anniversary.

The arch is said to be one of the first structures in North America constructed to

be earthquake proof. (22-23)

His interest in the history of the arch and its installation are due to his dedication to guard

the space. Fully aware of his surroundings, Norman Eberstein takes pleasure in answering

visitor's questions about the location. The logbook brings from the performance, literally,

a first hand account of a security guard patrolling a space. What he sees, thinks and does.

The residue from the performance inhabits the gallery space as a material

expression of the work itself, a collection of "dead objects" that are evocative of a

performative experience. *Norman Eberstein* is a fake biography, a glimpse into the life of

a hardworking, benevolent, altruistic volunteer of safety.

Through the use of video I am showcasing the performance of *Norman Eberstein*,

not the citizens or location he is protecting. The employment of the video is to document

the actions of the surveiller, instead of the public, as well to highlight the duties he

employs. This is contradictory to the official uses of technology that I am critiquing.

However, the video is an expression of a performative work.

The Peace Arch project was driven by research and processes collected and

practiced over the past two years. The performance and the exhibition have developed,

matured and enriched the practice-based research that underpins this thesis.

Figure 11. Sara French, *Norman Eberstein*. 2011. Film still from Peace Arch Border Crossing, Surrey, BC. Courtesy of Brynna Childs.

Conclusion

The *Norman Eberstein* project is ongoing and continues to manifest live performances, residual materials, objects and documentation. At the most fundamental and experimental level I hope that the spontaneity, intuition, and humour at play in my work will take viewers by surprise and lead them to reconsider surveillance in public and private spaces. The questions represented here do not seek answers, but rather search for paths that may guide me and my viewers through alternate narratives concerning the themes outlined in this essay.

As the performance of *Norman Eberstein* continues with new iterations, I also work in the studio to discover new ways to understand surveillance: sketching out

scenarios, manipulating representational material and staging estranged situations. All of these processes contribute to my artistic practice and fuel the research and fieldwork communicated in this essay. In an attempt to unpack theories of performance, surveillance, and gender, I am constantly questioning the materials I utilize and the processes I generate. As an artist I am insistently asking myself how I can challenge existing presumptions and perceptions regarding the constructs that dominate our lives.

My position as an artist is that surveillance and its technologies can be detrimental to the communal spirit of public space and causes us to disassociate ourselves from each other. The persona of Norman Eberstein embodies my critique, revealing the absurdity of societal presumptions regarding the effectiveness and value of surveillance.

My work offers no resolutions, but it recognizes that safety is a necessary component to our fundamental well being, and suggests that we should do better than the systems and industries exercised today. Until we are able to imagine new modes of social responsibility and stewardship of our communal spaces, we must be skeptical of the effect current systems impose on our moral judgment, our consciousness and our ethics.

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Appendix

List of *Norman Eberstein's* performances as of 7 March 2011, in chronological order:

North Vancouver Public Library and Laundromat on Lonsdale, Vancouver, BC. 6 December 2009.

The Re-Articulation Of The Appropriated Vancouver Artscape Deconstructed Through The Notions Within Its Reproduced Economics: The Accountant, All The Kings Riches And The Next 200 Years. By Brayden Dwight Wamboldt's installation, Concourse Gallery, Emily Carr University, Vancouver, BC. 16 December 2009.

Storefront. By Denver Lynxleg, Railspur Alley, Granville Island, Vancouver, BC. 11 April 2010.

Storefront Residences for Social Innovation. By Broken City Lab, Windsor, ON. 14 June – 10 July 2009.

Shudder Gallery. Vancouver, BC. 2 October 2010.

CARAPACE. By Patrick Cruz and Heidi Naatagaal for Hammock Residency, Art Bank, Vancouver, BC. 17 December 2010.

Chad and Larry. By Kristina Fiedrich and Vanessa Arnold, Concourse Gallery, Emily Carr University, Vancouver, BC. 26 January 2011.

The Weekly Drag Show. Cobalt, Vancouver, BC. 30 January 2011.

Peace Arch, Douglas Crossing, Surrey, BC. 21 February – 25 February 2011.

Note: This list excludes any performances that were carried out in class (Advanced Studio VSAR-500, Advanced Studio II VSAR-501 and Visual Arts Advanced Studio III GSMA-651 at Emily Carr University).

Glossary

DIY:

DIY or Do-It-Yourself is a term utilized to describe my artistic process. My concepts are constructed through my own understanding and self-taught approach to making. DIY is a term that was popularized in the 1990s to market home improvement kits, hobbies, and handi-crafts. Blowing up into a consumerist craze, DIY has recently been re-appropriated into contemporary art, particularly counter-cultures such as, punk, feminism, and craft. DIY encourages an anti-consumerist lifestyle and a consciousness keen on taking initiative to learn new techniques, skills, and practices that may otherwise be un-taught in academic institutions. DIY aesthetics appear campy and are often homemade; representative of craft and analog strategies of art making. It is important to note that although DIY happened outside the art world it was adopted by contemporary artists to refer to the handmade. It's ideologies came round to influencing prominent artists, such as Wynne Greenwood, K8 Hardy, Alex Hubbard, Allyson Mitchell.

Drag:

Drag, in this thesis, refers to the act of dressing up so as to enhance or contrast characteristics of gender as employed in my practice. Implied in the term is the powerful political nature of the act within a heternormative society. More specifically, I use drag in my practice, artistically, to re-identify my identity using gender.

Performance:

Performance is a term used to describe my artistic process, which is enacted by my character, in public or private space and specifically outside of the studio. Performance

began as a way to de-materialize art in the 1970s. Whether this was successful or not is

arguable. Many artists have utilized performance using dance, theatre, and conceptualism

to express their practice using their bodies.