

CEREV

CENTRE FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC
RESEARCH AND EXHIBITION
IN THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE



Communicating Otherwise: arts-based approaches to communicating academic research

On Friday, May 11th, CEREV will host the [Trudeau Scholars](#) workshop “Communicating/Informing Otherwise: Creative, Affective, and Alternative Forms of Research Expression and Public Engagement.” The workshop intends to explore the ways that the Trudeau community experiences, understands and navigates alternative forms of expression in their own research engagements, including photography, video and film, creative writing, poetry, sound, dance and other performance-based art/research forms.

Such modes of “informing otherwise” have often emerged from researchers’ engagements with communities, ideas and/or knowledges that are underrepresented in mainstream academic work, and which demand the expression of new kinds of feelings or the taking of different sorts of actions than academic researchers have traditionally done. 20 Trudeau Scholars from across Canada, the US, and England, and representing disciplines including geography, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and sociology, will present artistic and creative works in the CEREV exhibition lab, and discuss their methodological, theoretical, ethical, creative, and/or practical implications.

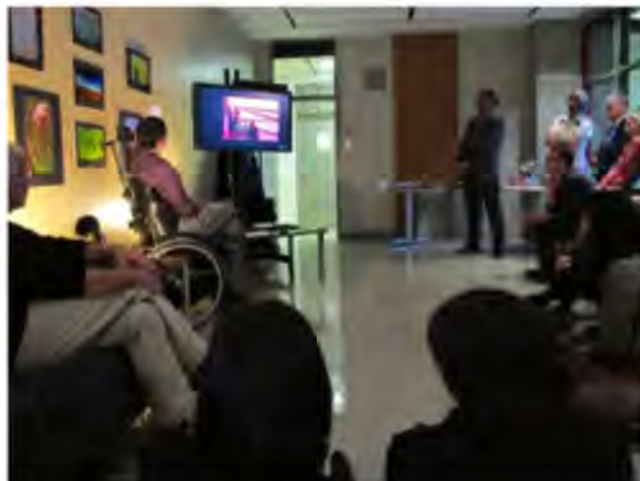


Creative Thinkers, Crucial Issues
Sharing Ideas That Matter



(Left) Photo by Scott Naysmith on the background and by Leila Qashu shown in the video cart. (Right) Rita Deverell's theatrical performance, with communication material by Laure Waridel featured on the table. Photos by K. Benessaiah. Click to enlarge.

How do arts-based approaches differ from, overlap with, and contribute to academic research- from conceptualization, to realization and dissemination? What new ways of creating emerge? Who is addressed by each form? Who helps create? Who has access to our academic and policy ideas? How do the methods of creating and communicating these ideas shape us as researchers, the communities in which we work, and the communities – whether they be the same or different – we hope our research will reach? These are just some of the many questions that circulated through the CEREV gallery during the May 11th [Communicating Otherwise exhibit](#), and the related workshop at Concordia on May 12th. In this exhibit and workshop, members of the Trudeau Foundation community and other participants shared their experiences, their strategies, their cautionary tales, and their artistic, creative or alternative works and experiences.

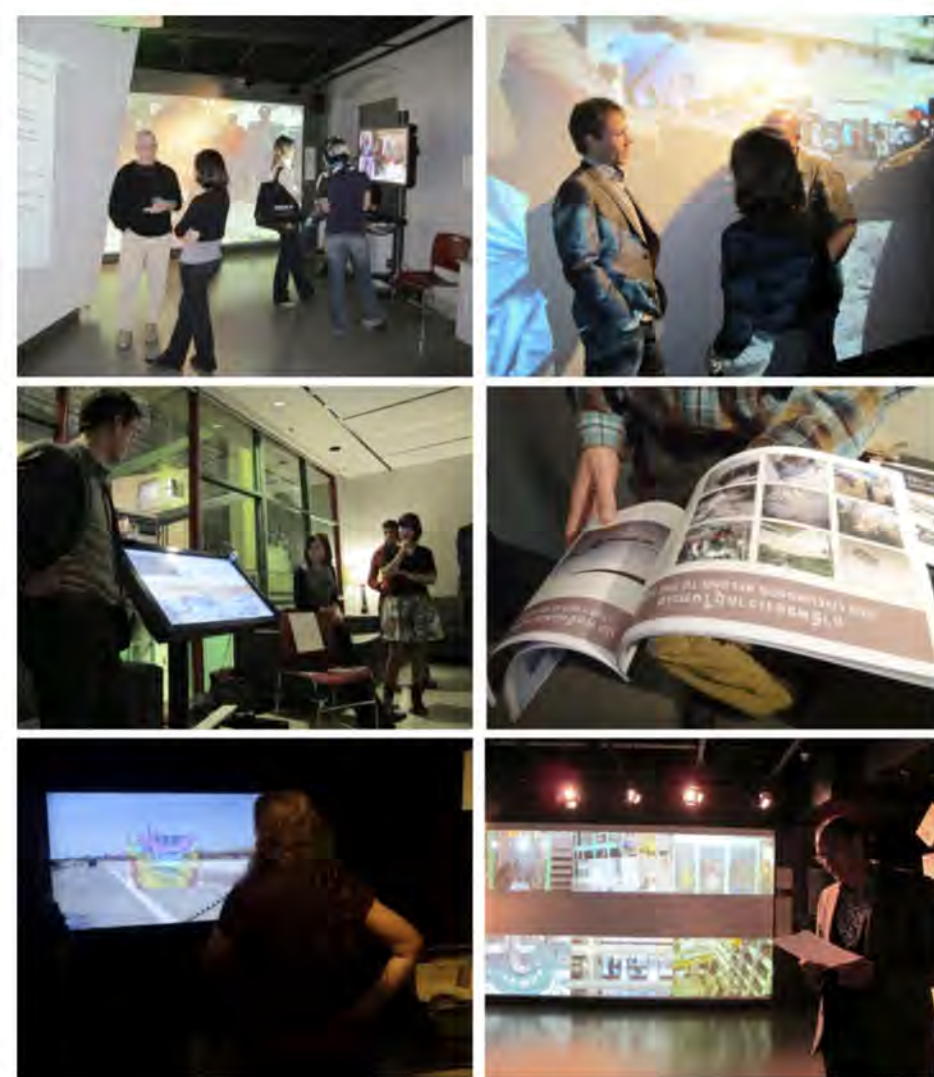


Collective visioning of narrative video and video art in the lounge, photo by Leila Qashu. Click to enlarge.

The exhibition included both narrative video and video art presented by: iDANCE Edmonton (Lindsay

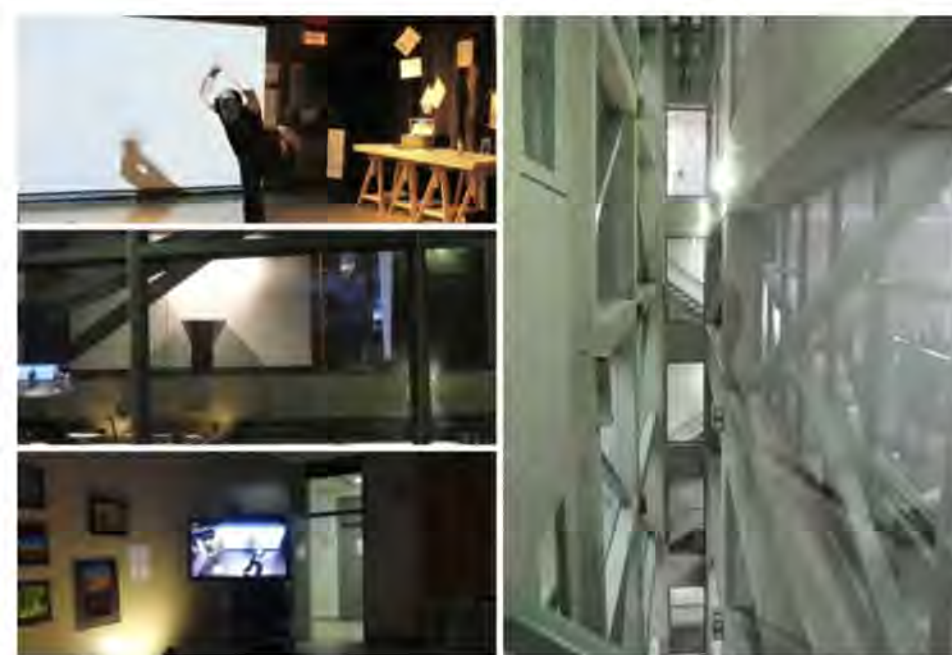
Eales); Karina Benessaiah & Sean Deckert; Rita Deverell; Danielle Peers; Steve Loft; Leila Qashu; Lara Rosenoff Gauvin and members of the Behind Open Doors Arts Collective with Ethical Bacon Motion Pictures (presented by Alana Gerecke).

The exhibition also included photography by: Scott Naysmith, Leila Qashu, and Lisa Szabo-Jones; a multi-media presentation by David Theodore; a consciousness raising kit on fair trade presented by Laure Waridel; books by Nathan Bennett and Philip Dearden, and by Lara Rosenoff Gauvin; an interactive ipod application tour by Ronald Rudin and Philip Lichti; dance performances by Roger Sinha, and by Lindsay Eales, Alana Gerecke and Danielle Peers; and a theatrical performance by Rita Deverell.



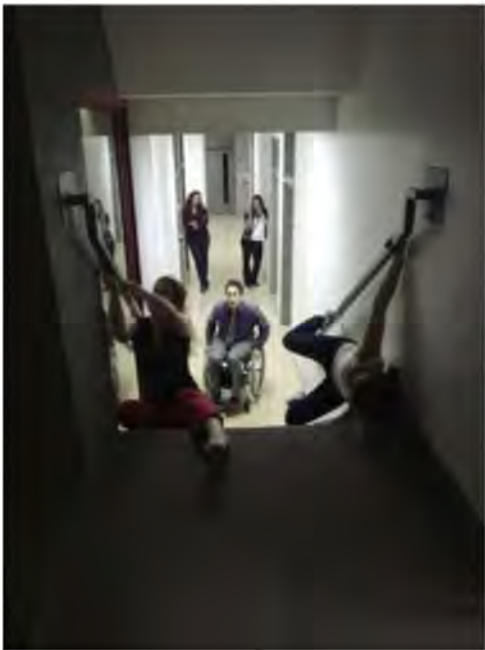
(Top) exploration and discussions during event; (mid-left) presentation of the interactive app ‘Returning the Voices to Kouchibouguac National Park’ by Philip Richti and Ronald Rudin; (mid-right) photovoice book on Thai communities coastal changes by Nathan Bennett and Philip Dearden; (bottom-left) Video cart featuring vide-art, in this case Heatscapes by Sean Deckert & Karina Benessaiah; (bottom- right) David Theodore presenting “Kids in the Atrium”. Photos by Leila Qashu and Karina Benessaiah. Click to enlarge.

What became clear from this diverse, fascinating, and often moving collection of art and other interactive submissions is that "communicating otherwise" serves to both help us as researchers think through, and about, our research and research relationships in critical ways, at the same time as it renders these critical ideas and questions accessible to wider publics. Performative, video-based, photo-based, and mixed and multiple media both create knowledge and communicate knowledge in very different ways than do standard academic methodology and address – ways that often resonate more profoundly and personally – that communicate otherwise – with those that engage with them.



Parallel spaces shared via windows & screens, showing here a performance by Montreal-based artist Roger Sinha, photos left by Karina Benessaiah and right by Leila Qashu. [Click to enlarge.](#)

Interestingly, the exhibit itself became a powerful installation piece about (the lack of) access to academic and artistic works and ideas. After the jarring realization on May 10th that the CEREV space was inaccessible to those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices, the curators (Karina Benessaiah, Alana Gerecke, Danielle Peers, Leila Qashu and Lara Rosenoff Gauvin) had to engage creatively, and at times frantically (with the amazing help of Lex Milton, CEREV's Director of Technology, and Bonnie-Jean Campbell of the Concordia English Department) with windows, video screens, cameras, Skype, curatorial practice, creative movement and a teacher's lounge to transform the exhibit – and CEREV itself – into an installation about space, access, forms of communication, and the artistic and political potential of creating alternative ways of engaging with all of the above.



Creative movement improvisation reflecting on shared and unshared spaces Dancers Alana Gerecke, Lindsay Eales and Danielle Peers, photos by K. Benessaiah. [Click to enlarge.](#)

During Saturday's workshop, participants were led through a variety of creative methodologies, including a search for authentic voice by Rita Deverell; a dance-based movement intervention in public space by Lindsay Eales, Danielle Peers, and Alana Gerecke; an exploration of "the aesthetics of resistance" in First Nations art by Steven Loft; an overview of Simon Harel's urban laboratory project on narratives of the mobile self (soi-mobile) which seeks to explore the many ways in which Montrealers experience space dynamically; a presentation on how research can be disseminated through the media or by creating public spaces in order to reach larger audiences and provoke change by Laure Waridel and Lara Rosenoff Gauvin; and a final discussion by all workshop participants on field work, its ethics and the implications of applied/engaged research facilitated by Leila Qashu and Karina Benessaiah.



Dance-based movement intervention in public space, photos by Lisa Szabo-Jones (left) and by Lara Rosenoff Gauvin (right). Click to enlarge.

A special thanks goes out, not only to all those who led and participated in the exhibit and the workshop the following day, but also to the CEREV team at Concordia University, Dr. Ronald Rudin, and to the [Trudeau Foundation](#) for providing us with the space and the support to make this happen.

Post by Karina Benessaiah, Alana Gerecke, Danielle Peers, Leila Qashu and Lara Rosenoff-Gauvin.