

INTERTWINING

Landscape, Technology, Issues, Artists

John K. Grande



Montréal/New York
London

Copyright © 1998 BLACK ROSE BOOKS

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system—without written permission from the publisher, or, in the case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a license from the Canadian Reprography Collective, with the exception of brief passages quoted by a reviewer in a newspaper or magazine.

Some portions of this book have appeared in *Art Papers, Sculpture, Artforum, Vie des Arts, Espace, La revue Etc* and *Musicworks*.

Black Rose Books No. AA257

Hardcover ISBN: 1-55164-111-9 (bound)

Paperback ISBN: 1-55164-110-0 (pbk.)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-74159

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Grande, John K.

Intertwining : landscape, technology, issues, artists

ISBN 1-55164-111-9 (bound).—

ISBN 1-55164-110-0 (pbk.)

1. Art and society. 2. Art and technology. 3. Art, Modern—20th century—Social aspects. 4. Nature (Aesthetics). I. Title.

N7445.2.G73 1997 701 C97-900737-2

Cover Design by Associés libres, Montréal

Cover image from Yasufumi Takahashi, *Van* (interior view), 1994.
Recycled underwear and wooden railway ties, colour slide projection.
Plus-Minus Gallery, Tokyo. Courtesy of the artist.



C.P. 1258
Succ. Place du Parc
Montréal, Québec
H2W 2R3 Canada

250 Sonwil Drive
Buffalo, New York
14225 USA

99 Wallis Road
London, E9 5LN
England

To order books in North America: (phone) 1-800-565-9523 (fax) 1-800-221-9985

In Europe: (phone) 44-0181-986-4854 (fax) 44-0181-533-5821

Our Web Site address: <http://www.web.net/blackrosebooks>

A publication of the Institute of Policy Alternatives of Montréal (IPAM)

Printed in Canada



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
---------------	-----

LANDSCAPE

1. Spirit of Place: Kathryn Lipke	3
2. Photo-Synthesis: Roberto Pellegriuzzi	7
3. Ec(h)os of Bic	11
4. Landscape: Site and Scene.....	21
5. Headwaters Action Art/Nature: Boréal Multimedia	29
6. Nils-Udo: Social Ecology	38
7. Under the Garden: Martin Borden.....	40
8. Photowrites: Bill Vazan	42
9. Designing Disney.....	47
10. Amazons of the North: James Bay Revisited, Rainer Wittenborn	51
11. On Harvesting and Art	54
12. Eco-art Revisited	59

TECHNOLOGY

13. Alzheimer Social: Paul Grégoire.....	65
14. Body Machine Medical Machine	67
15. Digital Gardens: A World in Mutation	69
16. 1-800-Anxiety.....	71
17. Collective Amnesia: Catherine Widgery	77
18. Hybrid Industrial: Louise Delorme	79

ISSUES

19. Time Gaps & Culture Zones.....	85
20. Oh! Canada. Eh?	89
21. The Starving Can't Eat Stone: Scott MacLeod.....	93
22. UnHuman Kind	97
23. Survivors In Search of a Voice: The Art of Courage	103
24. Bang Bang You're Dead (Toy Gun Shop): René Price....	108
25. Engines of Anxiety: John Scott.....	112

ARTISTS

26. Metaphysics of Materials: Henry Saxe	121
27. Psycho-Objects: Jean-Pierre Raynaud.....	126
28. Terra Incognita: Francesc Bordas.....	128
29. From Russia with Love: Natalya Nesterova	131
30. Blank Bank: James Carl	133
31. ANA Hotel Series: Luis Molina-Pantin	135
32. Voices and Spaces: Ted Rettig.....	138
33. Anthro-Photography: Dieter Appelt.....	142
34. The Golden Age of America: Stephen Lack.....	144
35. The Locus of Memory: Louise Bourgeois.....	147
36. Real Real Gone: Michael Robinson	149
37. Red Reflection: Yasufumi Takahashi	152
38. The Shadow Edge: Aspects of Contemporary Japanese Photography	159
39. Broken Music	161
40. The Columbus Boat: Carl Beam.....	164
41. House Painting: Serge Lemoyne.....	166
42. The Incredible Fragility of Being: Betty Goodwin	169
43. Survival Painting: Monique Crépault	173
44. Natural Form: Barbara Hepworth	178

Blank Bank: James Carl

Displayed on a platform usually assigned to BMW's or Jaguars amid all the postModern affluence of the Scotiabank Plaza, James Carl's cardboard replica of a Chevy Caprice was detailed right down to the "tires" whose cardboard contours were crushed to achieve a tread-like appearance. But the piece was only partially three-dimensional. In back of the car, a structure resembling those used to prop up three-dimensional imagery in promotional display presentations in banks, business conventions and movie theatres could be seen. For *Still Life* (1996), various replicas of disposable consumer objects again assembled out of found cardboard were equally "look alike" that emphasized the throw away values of consumer capitalism. Not only were Carl's reconstructions of BIC lighters, napkin dispensers, milk cartons, pop-top cans, twist-top juice bottles, soap dispenser bottles, and ballpoint pens "lifelike" reproductions of functional consumer objects, as "artlike" designs they entailed a kind of labour intensive creative craft-type self-employment, something completely contrary to the instant gratification the objects themselves represented. Their oversized dimensions became a superbly ironic comment on the crass commercialism of Claes Oldenburg's permanent public art renditions of similar objects as James Carl's have no actual consumer value. To bring the message home, Carl threw the works amid a pile of found cardboard garbage beside *Caprice* (1996) and in the showroom window for passers-by to see.

At Galerie Clark in Montreal in 1993, Carl's recreations of domestic objects such as record players, fridges and stoves were produced in a 1:1 scale out of the cardboard boxes these items originally came in when new. After the show, he placed them into an alley next to the gallery and documented them being taken away by passers-by and a garbage truck using a spy camera. In another previous exhibition at the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, China, he presented a toy replica of a giant panda that activated with the clap of one's hands like the toys in a Duracell commercial surrounded by a construction made of 2,000 disposable chopsticks. East may be meeting West somewhere between the product assembly line and the recycling depot these days, but somewhere the ghosts of Henry Ford

and Gautama Buddha must be commiserating together on the throw away mindset of consumer culture.

James Carl has now broadened his scope to address not only the disposable object *per se*, but the nature of symbolic and structural design in the built environments as well. The typical Venturi-type building has marble, steel and tiled surfaces that disguise rather than embody the inherent structure of a building. The skin deep veneer of opulent materials applied over the interior pillars, walls, ceilings and floor of the Scotiabank Plaza, like so many of these places, is like a kind of material mascara that covers the concrete and I-beams, creating a delusion of surface sensation. As the surface look is to post-Modern architecture, so short term profits are to the international banking community. The ultimate effect on local economies and sustainable resources is about as wholesome as a Big Mac is to one's holistic well being. Indeed, you would generally be as unlikely to find a "disposable" street person in one of these places as you would Carl's "disposable" art. These inherent contradictions were succinctly expressed in *Empirical* (1996), three cardboard replicas of banking machines Carl built in a 1:1 scale and displayed behind a glass wall in the Plaza mezzanine just inside the 100 Yonge St. entrance to the building. The *tabula rasa* look of Carl's "dummy" machines was as abstract and unreal as the experience of withdrawing money from the real ones. When watching TV, digitalizing data on a computer screen or reading a newspaper, one feels that same sense of disconnectedness from one's immediate physical surrounds. The piles of blank newspapers placed in stands in the public mall space of the building, was Carl's comment on the media's mind numbing reinforcement of consumption and production values. Working with a glue gun and Exacto knife as his main tools and cardboard as his main material, James Carl disposes with the ephemeral throw-away values of consumer capitalism, and by adopting a permacultural perspective on it all, he reifies the materiality of reality.