



## PAVED PARADISE: L'ART VILLAGE

**Curator: Clara Hargittay**

**Artists: Vera Frenkel; Cecilia Berkovic; Sharon Switzer; Janis Demkiw, Emily Hogg, and Olia Mishchenko; Kevin Krivel and David Warne; Gyula Kalko.**

For ten festive days in June, in the shadows of the Gardiner Expressway and abandoned silos, will rise a small 'village' reclaiming in the name of art a patch of industrial wasteland waiting for redevelopment. Visitors arriving from Harbourfront by L'Art Boat at the Parliament Street Slip and making their way to the Distillery District, will encounter a row of shipping containers transformed into exhibition spaces, each holding surprising and engaging art environments; installations, video screenings and interactive experiences.

*Paved Paradise* is inspired just as much by its geographical location adjacent to a commercial port as by Joni Mitchell's popular ballad that laments the loss of nature in the built urban environment of the city. The setting also invites contemplation about mercantile capitalism, from its rise in the seafaring society of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Holland when "man's empire of things" (Barthes) first fully emerged, to its turbulent and relentless march of progress through the centuries to the "cargo cult" (Frenkel) of Globalization today.

The artists included in the *Paved Paradise* exhibition acknowledge a love/hate relationship with consumer culture and are aware of the seductive power that commodities have on our daily lives. Vera Frenkel, Canada's foremost video artist traces the collusive bonds between messianism and consumerism "our two most prevalent romances of rescue, next to Romance itself" (Frenkel) in her influential 1991 video *This is Your Messiah Speaking*. In her artistic practice Cecilia Berkovic seeks to create meaning out of everyday mundane objects. Her *Found Hat* project invites engagement with the audience through the familiarity of a consumer brand and the offering of a free poster. Sense of humour mingles with a sense of pathos in Sharon Switzer's video *Gravity*, where viewing a kitschy footage of Niagara Falls the viewer is bombarded with rolling phrases of intrusive banal pronouncements about personal well being. Mimicking the empty rhetoric of mass media, the artist laments the loss of meaningful communication, honesty, and even faith in our consumer oriented media culture. Janis

Demkiw, Emily Hogg, and Olia Mishchenko create fantastical environments from a menagerie of objects collected over many years, mirrors, figurines, houseplants, rocks and trophies, that when assembled in *Terrarea* transforms these minor artefacts into monumental public works, as if by magic. *Synaptic Light #1*, an interactive sculptural environment by Kevin Krivel and David Warne, explores the deep seated and unstoppable human quest to control our physical environment through technology. Inspired by neural activity within the brain, this experimental work is triggered by one's bodily presence creating a chain reaction of cascading fluorescent light and sound. At night when darkness descends on the Dock Lands, hovering above the cluster of containers, a projection of Gyula Kalko's images of light on shimmering Northern Ontario waters will serve as reminder of a simpler less complicated time, when human existence and the natural environment were in harmony, but which today, just as the effects of light on water, is only an illusion.

The exhibition, *Paved Paradise: L'Art Village* was commissioned by the **Luminato Festival of Arts and Creativity** and is generously sponsored by **WATERFRONToronto**.

**When:** June 2 – June 10, 2007

**Where:** Parliament Street Slip (East side); Parliament and Queen's Quay, Toronto

L'art Boat departs Distillery District: 2 pm – 9 pm daily; 10 am – 9 pm weekends

L'art Boat departs Harbourfront: 2 pm – 10 pm daily; 11 am – 10 pm weekends

*Paved Paradise: L'Art Village* is open to the public; 2 pm – 11:00 pm daily; 10 am – 12:00 am on weekends. This is a free event.