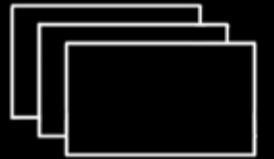


STREET / SCREEN ENCOUNTER

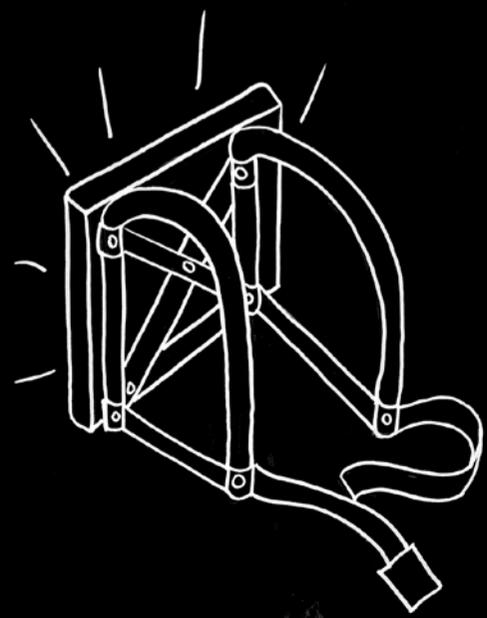
MEDIAPACKBOARD + EYE LEVEL GALLERY'S WORLD PORTABLE GALLERY CONVENTION 2012



World Portable



GALLERY CONVENTION
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STREET / SCREEN ENCOUNTER

MEDIAPACKBOARD + EYE LEVEL GALLERY'S WORLD PORTABLE GALLERY CONVENTION 2012

BY DANIEL DUGAS AND VALERIE LEBLANC

KEYWORDS: MOBILITY, PORTABILITY, OPPORTUNITY, TECHNOLOGY, REINVENTION, INTERACTION.

*The trick is to be where the people are*¹.
Weegee (Arthur H. Fellig)

Created in 2005, the MediaPackBoard (MPB) is both a performance assist apparatus and a series of performances based upon encounters, conversations, and video playback. It consists of a customized backpack-style rack on which a battery operated monitor screen plays back signal from live or prerecorded sources. The inception of the MPB came from our previous portable/mobile experiences: the TRUNK© Gallery (1996-2001) in which we showed works in the trunk of our car and the Location Location Location: We Are Getting Closer (2002), a roaming wireless webcam expedition created with Emmedia in Calgary and the Atlantic Cultural Space Conference in Moncton².

The MPB is a hybrid beast: media arts gallery, performance space and a conversation all at the same time. It is portable; you can wear it on your back and carry from one place to another. It is also mobile, capable of recording and playback on the move. The fine line between portability and mobility crosses over many times here. *Mobility* comes from the old French, *Mobilité*³ and alludes to ideas of movement and speed, change and inconsistency, as well as fickleness! It is ironic that fickleness, a form of unreliability, would be part any technology. We like this, especially today, where the idea of mobility has become so closely understood as a technological phenomenon. One of the strangest things about it is that corporations have appropriated the idea of mobility for themselves. They have become *our mobility*. What is there for us other than Bell, Telus or Rogers? Can we be mobile and not subscribe to any plan? As a society, we tend to think not. The origins of mobility relate to plain old necessity. Historically, in the realm of the nomad, the concept of movement, migration and *keeping* moving, was a way to find something better, to improve one's status. It was a basic strategy for human survival. When the tribe moved on to the spring or winter location, everyone came along, and communication within the group remained insular. In the case of MPB, mobility is provided by legwork as opposed to reliance on a communications provider. But, being a good hybrid animal, it is capable of using mobile computing as a tool of dialogue and interaction.

We are all aware that in today's world, the meaning of mobility has everything to do with staying connected *while* moving. And with modern technology, we are now able to search everywhere in the world to find individuals that we connect with, our searched and chosen tribe that we carry with us. Click and we are together, we experience, and we bond. What we don't expect or experience as often in contemporary society, are social encounters in the physical world, the *one on one* in the public realm – unless a marketing campaign is involved. We can seek it out; make a trip to the market to exchange goods, services and conversation on a physical level. But practically speaking, the day-to-day social scene is more often online, through a screen. In all of this, there remains an endless opportunity for artists to expand consumer use of these technologies, to make them their own, to carry out their vision. In doing so, they follow the precedent established as each new technology has shown its face in the marketplace. (See Portability-Mobility insert) The concept of reinventing social interaction might require a willingness to step outside of the comfort zone. Slipping into the role of the entrepreneur is one way to retake control over the public space, to intervene.

Corporate branding of mobility has positioned itself to appear as the only motor capable of moving us forward. Like the tethers of condominium living, as consumers, we become locked into never-ending monthly fees. Are we mobile or are we harnessed to the strings of a service provider? While modern mobility is on some levels, more about goods and less about people, it defines and dominates the world we live in. Future portable galleries might address these concerns.

For the present, what is the relevance of a project like the MediaPackBoard in a world of walkie-talkies, handheld transceivers, and mobile theatres? Does it have a place? Is it pertinent? These are questions that we continue to ask ourselves and with each project we find answers that point to its relevance. To exchange words during a live encounter on the streets presents an element of risk, and ultimately, the chance to meet *the other*. It offers an opportunity to have a public conversation on a personal level without plans for broadcast and sponsorship driven content. For us, it is worth the effort. Let's keep moving.

Daniel Dugas and Valerie LeBlanc

Moncton, NB September 17, 2012

¹Weegee once explained: *"Here's my formula – dealing as I do with human beings, and I find them wonderful: I leave them alone and let them be themselves – holding hands with love-light in their eyes – sleeping – or merely walking down the street. The trick is to be where the people are. One doesn't need a scenario or shooting script, all one needs to do is to be on the spot, alert and human. One never knows what will happen.... I am often asked what kind of Candid Camera I use – there really is no such thing – it's the photographer who must be candid"*

From Lee D. Witkin, and Barbara London, "Selected Photographers: A Collector's Compendium," The Photograph Collector's Guide, Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1979, 266.

<http://www.leegallery.com/weegee/weegee-biography>

² Trunk © Gallery: <http://valerie.basicbruegel.com/trunk@gallery-1996-1999/>

Trunk75 : http://www.basicbruegel.com/trunk75_event/main.htm

Location Location Location: We Are Getting Closer: <http://wearegettingcloser.com/frontpage.htm>

³ Online Etymology Dictionary, Retrieved September 17, 2012, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=mobility>

⁴ For more information about Roger Fenton: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ftncnw/>

⁵ Sony Portapak Global Affects by Michael Shanks: <http://documents.stanford.edu/67/624>

⁶ Liggett, L. The Museum of Broadcast Communications. Nam June Paik. Retrieved December 9, 2011, from

<http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=paiknamjun>

Daniel Dugas is a videographer, poet and musician. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions as well as festivals and literary events in North America, Europe, Mexico and Australia. His seventh book of poetry: *Au large des objets perdus* was published by Les Éditions Prise de parole, 2011. His novella, *The Moss Theory*, was published by Basic Bruegel Editions this summer. Born in Montréal, Daniel currently lives in Moncton, NB.

Originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia, pluri-disciplinary artist and writer **Valerie LeBlanc** has worked in Canada, the United States, France, England and Australia. Her creations travel between poetry, performance, visual and written theory. Valerie LeBlanc has been creating video poetry since the mid 1980's, and is the creator of the MediaPackBoard (MPB), portable screening / performance device. She is currently based in Moncton, NB Canada.

Eyelevel Gallery is a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to the presentation, development and promotion of contemporary art. Through a range of programming initiatives such as exhibitions, performances, special projects, and workshops, Eyelevel Gallery has provided a forum for the discussion and education of contemporary visual art for 37 years.

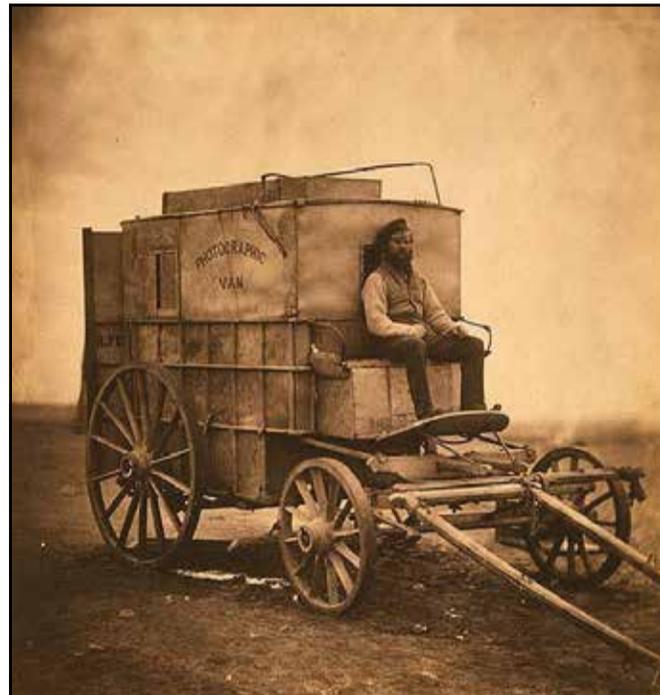
The World Portable Gallery Convention 2012 is an international convention on portable galleries and alternative spaces hosted by Eyelevel Gallery during the month of September. The project celebrates the variety of spaces with which curators around the globe have extended public interaction with art institutions.

This project has been made possible with the support of artsnb, EyeLevel Gallery and its funders.

PORTABILITY MOBILITY

It did not take long after the invention of photography to find travelling photographers roaming the countryside with their apparatuses. Roger Fenton was one of them⁴. He brought his photographic van to Balaklava and Sevastopol during the Crimean War (1855). Providing some of the first photographic reports of war, those images bear firsthand witness and remain landmarks to the psyche of modernity. Flash forward into the 20th century: soon after the invention of the Portapak (the grand daddy of the MPB), artists began working with it⁵. These first consumer-grade portable video camera and recorder units went on sale in New York in 1965. Battery powered and self-contained these videotape analog recording systems could be carried by one person. Nam June Paik and Les Levine were two early users. Nam June purchased one and got out to videotape during Pope Paul VI's historic visit to New York City⁶. When the motorcade was held up in a traffic jam, he was able to record the parade and showed it the same evening to friends at Greenwich Village's Café A Go-Go. From that event, he became known as the first video artist!

Whether it is the Acoustiguide's first interactive museum recorded guide (1957), the US Army Signal Corps wartime horse-mounted field radios (1940), or the first wireless telephone (1908), technology and mobility have been historically bound together through application. The first cell phone with a touchscreen, what we know now as smartphone, was the IBM Simon Personal Communicator (1994-95). The talk at the time was that access to the tools of multimedia would soon become prevalent, affordable, and available for everyone. It took another 10 years for the smartphone market to explode into what we know today.



Top to bottom: Roger Fenton (1855), US Army Signal Corps (1940's), Portapak (1965).

MPB - WPGC 2012

Thursday, September 6

We shared the delivery of an artists' talk at the Sea Horse Tavern, Argyle Street with WPGC Artists / Curators **Hannah Jickling** and **Gordon B. Isnor**. A discussion on the concepts of curating and presenting portable galleries followed.

The tavern is currently opposite to the future site of the proposed new Halifax Trade and Convention Centre and, as the discussion ended, we stepped out onto the street with the MPB.

We assembled a bamboo fishing pole and hooked up a mini-spy cam to it. I put on the MPB and we stepped out to explore views of the city not readily visible to passersby. We talked with other pedestrians and pointed the camera into spaces that they were interested in examining. Several of the WPGC curators and Eye Level Members stepped out with us to try out the apparatus. As images were transferred from the spycam to the MPB monitor on my back, I used a separate camcorder to record what the spycam saw.

MPB-WPGC on Vimeo : <http://vimeo.com/49426527>



Still from Vimeo: (left to right) Michael McCormack (fishing pole), Matthew Carswell (camera), Valerie LeBlanc (MPB).

Photos top to bottom: Michael Eddy (fishing pole) talking to a passerby; looking at the NOVA Center sign; against the fence-Nova Centre; Valerie on Argyle St.; stills from spycam.

Photos: Daniel Dugas, MPB.



MPB - WPGC 2012

Friday, September 7

On Friday evening we attended the opening of the **161 Gallon Gallery** and the Curators' presentation by Daniel Joyce and Miriam Moren. After the talk, we stepped outside to show a program of works by Daniel (Dugas) and myself. We invited passersby to view the videos that played as we walked slowly around the block. Several Eye Level Members accompanied us on the walk. - VL

Photos top to bottom: Andrew McLaren, Valerie LeBlanc (with MPB), corner of Cunard and Robie during the opening at the 161 Gallon Gallery; in front of the Tony's Pizza on Robie St.



VIDEO PROGRAM



Still: Corps Flottants

Tablets, 2011, 4:15 min / DD
Animal, 2010, 1:10 / VL
Bye-Bye 3/4 Inch, 2004, 6:30 / VL
Corps flottants, 2011, 2:04 / DD
Downtown, 2003, 7:25 min / VL



Still: Jellyfish Philosophy

Gull, 2011, 2:04 / DD
Jellyfish Philosophy, 2008, 1:34 / VL
MPB Was There Then, 2011, 1:05 min / VL
Fashion as Passion, 2008, 55 sec / VL
Sailing, 2005, 1:08 min / DD

Cover image: Valerie LeBlanc, Argyle St. Halifax, WPGC 2012. Photo: Daniel Dugas. Logos: WPGC 2012, MediaPackBoard.