

**IMAGINARY ORDINARY IS A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE
WHERE DIFFERENT GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS OF ALL AGES
CAN MEET AND CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER**

**IMAGINARY ORDINARY IS A COMMUNITY CENTRE
– A PLACE WHERE EVERYBODY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
CAN COME TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES,
SHARE INFORMATION, OR SIMPLY BROWSE AND HANG OUT**

A COMMUNITY MAPPING PROJECT: *Imaginary Ordinary*
INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTISTS: Eric Moschopedis & Laura Leif (with Mia Rushton)
PARTICIPANTS: Residents of Crescent Heights, Regal Terrace & Renfrew
DURATION: May 8th to August 29th, 2009
LOCATION: Calgary, Alberta, Canada

SPEROS IS MADLY IN LOVE

WITH ANNA BANANA



DEDICATED TO LAURA TUOMI
painter, poet, photographer & long time
social activist.

IN MEMORY OF AGNETA WENZEL
friend, community member & wonderful
person to be around.

THIS PUBLICATION

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HAPPENING JUST

NORTH OF DOWNTOWN

UP CENTRE STREET

RECONNAISSANCE AND RECONFIGURATION
IN *IMAGINARY ORDINARY'S* COMMUNITY-MAPPING PROJECT

In his 1961 article “Happenings in the New York Scene,” Allan Kaprow attempted to clarify the purpose of the confusing range of performances that were becoming known as the “Happenings.” Often thought of as spontaneous and chaotic affairs, Kaprow admitted that the Happenings’ “form [was] open-ended and fluid,” but he hoped to make clear that the absence of distinct formal boundaries did not mean that the artform also lacked a more pointed rationale. Articulating the goals of the practice, Kaprow noted that “nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won, except the certainty of a number of occurrences to which we are more than normally attentive” (16–17). To Kaprow, the Happenings offered an experiential paradigm that permitted the opportunity for the concentration of one’s attention. Focusing upon the everyday world and customary social practice, the Happenings re-enacted and re-cast the familiar in a new frame, briefly bracketing off an experience to yield a heightened awareness of the commonplace.

Situated within Calgary, one of Canada’s fastest growing urban centres, the community-mapping project *Imaginary Ordinary* facilitated just this sort of heightened attention. Suffering from a developmental sprawl enabled by a dearth



**RACHAM WEARS
SWEAT PANTS TO THE GYM**





TYLER STILL

LOVES POKEMON, EVEN THOUGH

HIS FRIENDS DON'T

of natural boundaries and an impoverished view of urban planning, the geographical footprint of Calgary spreads as a bewildering proliferation of “new communities” that perpetually redraws the map of the metropolitan area. Instead of looking towards the ever-shifting edges of the city, the project concentrated upon the city’s centre and framed the communities of Crescent Heights, Regal Terrace and Renfrew as an extended area of investigation. Inviting its neighbours to explore both the physical terrain and the social practices that together constitute the project’s imagined community, *Imaginary Ordinary* offered a range of activities that were simple invitations to re-consider the familiar and the commonplace.

Located north of the city’s downtown core of petro-wealth bolstered corporate office-towers, posh boutiques and high-rise condominium complexes, *Imaginary Ordinary*’s theatre of operations was not a popular cultural destination, but a well-established residential sector featuring small independent businesses and tree-lined streets. Straddling Calgary’s North Western and North Eastern quadrants (as distinguished by the bisecting roadway, Centre Street North) these communities are officially bound by the mass-transportation thoroughfares Deerfoot Trail to the east and by the Trans-Canada Highway (known as 16th Avenue North as it passes through Calgary) to the north. To the south the communities are aligned along the ridge of an escarpment that overlooks Calgary’s downtown, while the western most community, Crescent Heights, bleeds into the relatively affluent enclave of Rosedale. Neither prosperous nor impoverished, the communities have historically been home to successive waves of immigrants and continues to be home for many New Canadians that resist suburban ghettoization at the edges of the city.

I describe the area with this familiarity because I am one of its citizens. While I try to be factual, I yearn to be more persuasive. I live in this area because of its character. Rather than thinking of character as a nostalgic trace that privileges a specific history or a distinct architectural style, character here is something that sets the area apart and as distinct from other areas. Character exists as the aggregate of qualities, attitudes and perspectives evident in both the physical aspects of the community and the way that its inhabitants live their lives. In a city that has gotten too big, too quickly, this constellation of communities has a livability that has been imperiled by irresponsible and profit-driven development. Because of their proximity to the city’s core and the population’s reluctance to invest in meaningful urban planning, Renfrew, Regal Terrace and Crescent Heights are areas primed for a type of urban “renewal” that threatens the very character that has made them communities worth living in. These specific aspects of character are what *Imaginary Ordinary* proposed to explore.

IMAGINARY ORDINARY

Imaginary Ordinary’s base of operations was located on the east side of Calgary’s Centre Street North, in the Tigerstedt Block (established 1932), a one-storey

commercial building that once housed a string of independent businesses. When *Imaginary Ordinary* took up its temporary residency, the building had a one third occupancy rate. It was home to the popular neighbourhood pub, The Studio Café. The street-level storefront space (once the pet groomer, The Dapper Dog or was it Mr. Cappuccino, the outlet for all things espresso?) required extensive renovations that included the installation of a series of trays within the rafters to catch rainwater. Yet, even as this work was nearing completion, the property management company attempted to renege on its prior negotiated rental rate and thought that they should charge some \$25 /sq. ft. for such a prime location. To those of us who had lived in the community for years and witnessed a succession of businesses struggle, fail and disappear, the alleged “prime-ness” of the location came as some surprise.

When this economic dispute was resolved, *Imaginary Ordinary* opened its doors to its neighbours. The inaugural party featured a broad range of age groups from the under-ten set to the senior ranks, with the largest contingent being aged twenty to forty. Accommodating a crowd of eighty or so visitors, the space featured a large circular coffee-table that served as a prime site for chat. Re-acquainting with long-time friends or finally meeting those seen a dozen times throughout the community, the event differed from the see-and-be-seeness of gallery or exhibition openings. Instead there was an air of expectation and peeked interest as people discussed what might be in store for the community. Rather than offering spectacles and entertainments that radically confronted the community, the party established dialogue as an important aspect of community awareness and initiated the discussion of what possibilities existed within this shared community. Intimating the off-site investigations that would soon unfold and establishing the site as an assembly point for shared experience and the sharing of experience, the inviting and comfortable milieu reminded us of the importance of the familiar and the commonplace.

RECONNAISSANCE & RECONFIGURATION

To situate the ordinary and often overlooked aspects of the community within a state of heightened attention, *Imaginary Ordinary* offered a “mapping” process. Spanning from reconnaissance to reconfiguration, mapping requires the use of a number of differing skill sets that contravene our habitual responses to the world around us. To initiate this changed perspective, the project invited participants to practice a more attentive and responsive attitude to familiar places and situations. Utilizing sustained observation, careful measurement and studious data collection, the participants gathered information and experiences. While the experiential value of these reconnaissance engagements was a vital aspect of *Imaginary Ordinary*, the project also proposed to make these ephemeral and transient encounters more permanent, durable and sharable. To explore this possibility, the project engaged cartographic reconfiguration, where the data and knowledge of experience could



RENNY READS

"END OF THE WORLD" FICTION

NICK'S FIRST CAR WAS A BLACK

PONTIAC TRANS AM

be translated, categorized and archived so that it was retrievable by, and legible to, subsequent participants. Displayed within the physical site and throughout the temporal duration of *Imaginary Ordinary* these documents provided intriguing examples of the participants' attention – what they were attentive to, how they were attentive, and demonstrating how we, too, might be attentive to the possibilities often overlooked within our community.

To ascertain what had gone unnoticed and un-remarked throughout the community's physical terrain, the project offered such reconnaissance experiences as its weekly "Urban Wanderers" nights. Meandering as a group through both familiar streets and less consciously visited spaces such as back alleys and parking lots, the wanderers were invited to share memories and recollections provoked by the different locations. As the group unpredictably advanced on foot through the unfamiliar familiar, the intriguing detritus of urban life repeatedly arrested their attention. Obscure fragments of refuse and curious bits of dis-used matter were considered "specimens" of the community and were collected and their locations charted. Upon returning from the off-site excursion, the participants were introduced to methods for organizing and re-presenting their accumulated community samplings. Analyzing the different relationships and resonances suggested by the amassed material, the participants determined an organizing principle. Selecting which collected materials best represented the evening's experience and encountered terrain, the participant organized those remnants that merited preservation upon pre-printed display card templates. Framed and exhibited on the walls of the *Imaginary Ordinary* site, these collections combined to form an unexpected and imaginative map of the community.

In addition to group undertakings like the Urban Wanderers events, the project also facilitated more individual engagements. Organized like a lending library, *Imaginary Ordinary* provided a series of bright-yellow "kits," each one containing the necessities for a specific creative investigation of the community. If an individual desired a leisurely and sedentary experience, they might choose the kit designed to enable the drawing of the clouds. Finding a suitable vantage point, the participant could observe Calgary's ever-changing cloud formations and intuitively translate these into unexpected associative imagery. Another participant might have long been bothered by areas of urban space in need of a greater variety of foliage; to rectify this observed problem, they could select the kit containing all that was needed to plant a "guerrilla" flower garden. If one had always admired a particular person in the community and long wished for an opportunity to engage that person in conversation, then the "interview yer neighbour" kit could be chosen. Armed with a stack of suggested questions and a pad for recording the subject's responses, the kit provided the simple, but accessible means to start a conversation and learn about the perspectives and the experiences of the people that make-up the community.



A woman with long blonde hair is captured in a dynamic pose, performing a backbend on a bed. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a dark, abstract pattern and a black skirt. Her back is arched, and her hands are reaching towards her feet. The bed is covered with a vibrant, multi-colored patterned blanket and a red and blue striped blanket. In the background, a wooden nightstand holds a lamp with a white shade, a bottle, and a small animal. A dark wooden wardrobe is visible on the left side of the frame.

DIMA'S GRANDMOTHER

PRACTICES RACHMANINOFF

IN THE MORNINGS

A photograph showing a woman from behind, talking on a white corded telephone. She has dark hair tied back and is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater. In the background, two children are visible: a boy in a yellow shirt on the left and a girl in a white shirt on the right. The wall behind them is plain and light-colored, with a decorative wreath of dark, textured material hanging on it.

YOLANDA FIXES BIKES

IN HER GARAGE

DISTRACTION

I had attended the opening party with my life partner, Linda, who secured one of the pre-printed display cards. Immediately she decided to document the sidewalk chalk drawings of children that we always admire on our evening walks. I, however, was attracted to a different sort of spontaneous creativity and counter-creativity. As civic law uses the threat of fines to force property owners to promptly remove or paint-over graffiti, I thought I might document the traces of this action and re-action by photographing the oddly-shaped patches of effacing colours that indexed tagging and its obliteration. Despite our initial enthusiasm for these projects, we soon realized that something happening much closer to home would divert our attention.

Across the back alley from where we live, a new housing development was beginning. Where a modest rental bungalow had once stood, a three-storey fourplex was being built. As neighbours directly affected by this structure, we had attempted to be engaged within the planning and development approval process, but the City of Calgary let us down by providing misleading information and no forum for public consultation. Faced with a development project that seemed to contravene the requirements of its initial permit, we soon lost sight of our community-mapping projects and focused upon developing strategies to rally community-dissent against the contentious development that we were now calling, the “Monstrosity.”

As avid walkers, we still traversed Renfrew, Regal Terrace and Crescent Heights nightly. Moving throughout our extended neighbourhood, we would often admire the effort and ingenuity of the temporary images that children inscribed upon the walkways. One that stands out, though, was a forty-foot long (12 metres) drawing diagramming the (3 hour) drive between Calgary and Edmonton. Since our evening strolls had become heated strategizing sessions where we debated our next move in our on-going battle against the Monstrosity, we forgot to bring our camera and could not document this amazing work. The next day it rained and only traces of the drawing remained.

SHARED SPACE / SHARING SPACE

The *Imaginary Ordinary* site itself also provided a space to learn about the perspectives and experiences of the people living in the neighbourhood. Framing common interests and unexpected skills, the project drew attention to the variety and the vitality of experience that might have been overlooked in the community. On several occasions the project invited its community to “Ask an Expert,” where members of the community offered their expertise and insights to anyone wanting answers. After all, who hasn’t wondered what it takes to be an expert or gone through the mental litany of his or her own skills, interests and fascinations to access whether their knowledge base would reach “expert” status. The project,

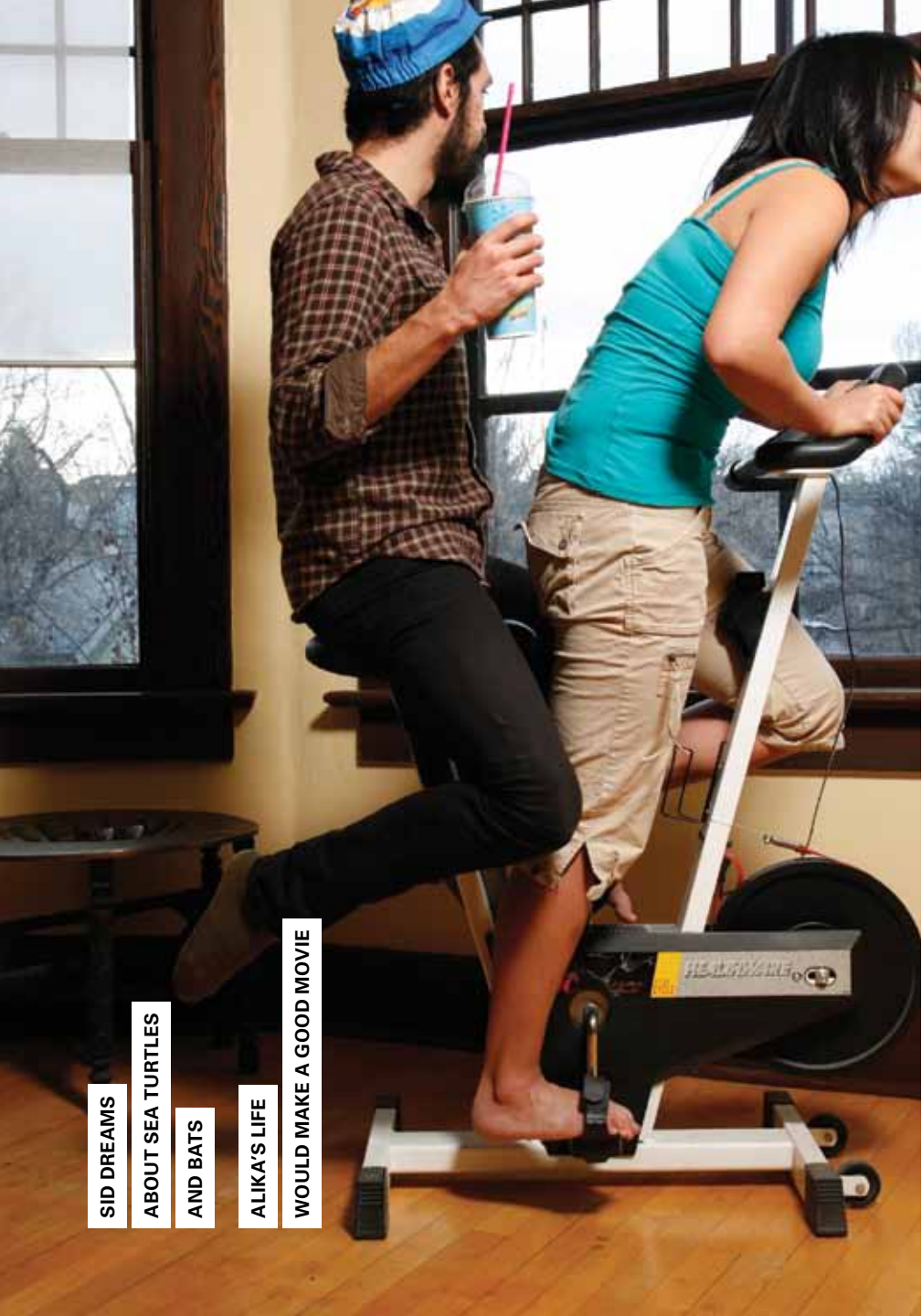
SID DREAMS

ABOUT SEA TURTLES

AND BATS

ALIKA'S LIFE

WOULD MAKE A GOOD MOVIE

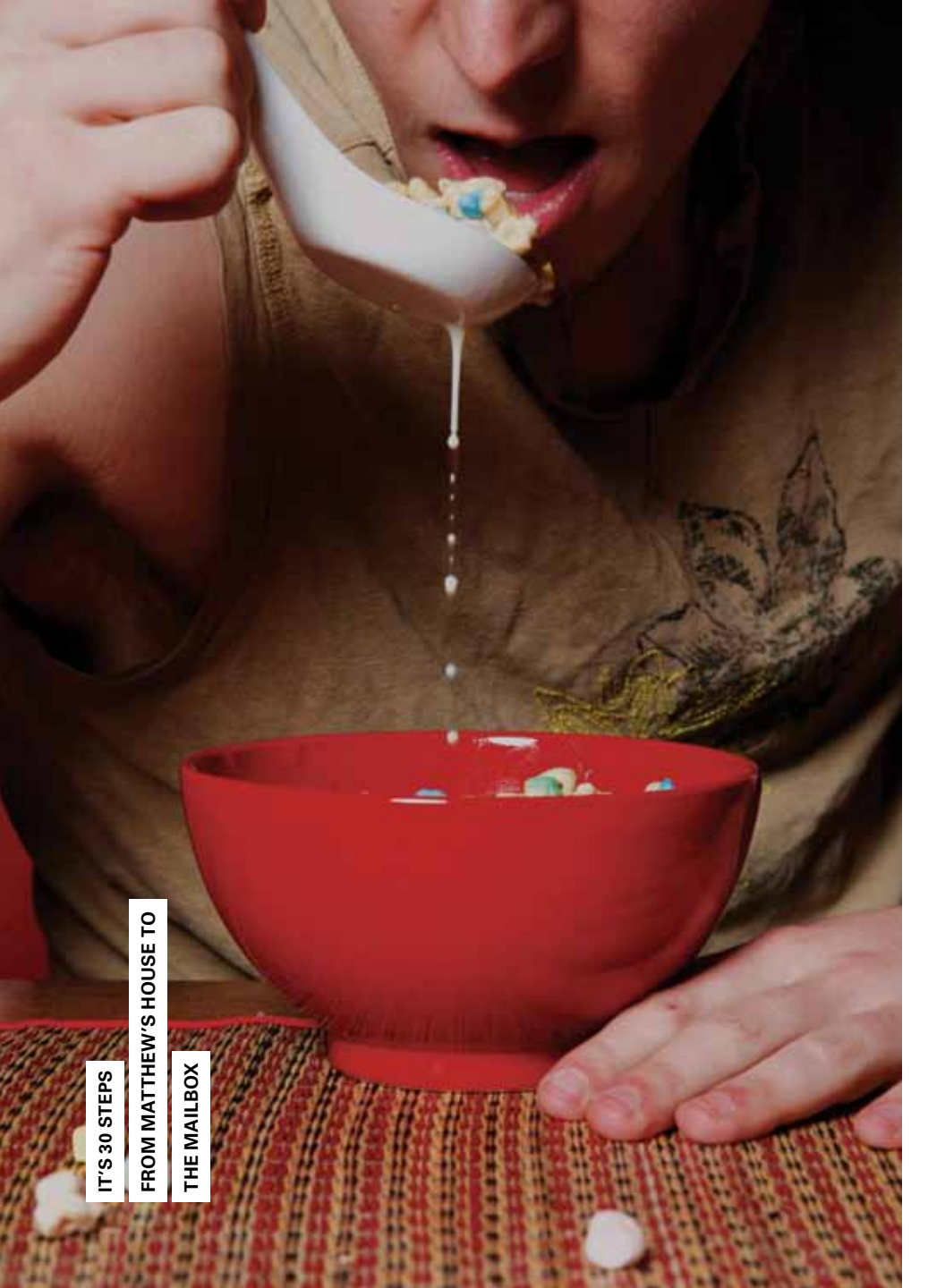


though, provided an opportunity to see an expert in action as they bravely fielded questions and generously dispensed advice. Turning over the floor to the community's youngest residents for "Kids Talk Sharks," the project allowed local youths to show how much they knew about a specialized branch of knowledge. On another afternoon, the site provided the opportunity to learn the intricacies of tap-dancing from a qualified instructor and have a chance to practice participants steps in a supportive environment of friends and neighbours. Implicit in such offerings was *Imaginary Ordinary's* invitation to explore the expertise and the potential that are the everyday attributes of the community. By July our efforts to halt the development of the Monstrosity finally yielded building inspections that resulted in a stop-work order being issued. It was then that I wondered if Linda and I should offer our newly-developed expertise in dealing with Calgary's development approval system to the community.

ART & LIFE

Like the Happening before it, *Imaginary Ordinary* was designed for a temporary life, destined to disappear and be judged by the quality of the memories it left behind. My memories of the project include the 19 sketches of dogs that Mia Rushton encountered one day at Rotary Park and the 14 shiny objects collected by Fallan and Greg that would make any crow envious. I also remember the story of the two young girls who borrowed the filmmaking kit. Instead of following the script provided, they spent an hour videographing each other as they wandered through Crescent Heights, generally acting silly and spontaneously re-scripting the anticipated activity. But here is the perfect example of an everyday occurrence that the project invites us to be attentive to; everyone has wandered aimlessly and acted silly, especially as a youth, but the camera and video documentary evidence preserves this everyday experience and asks us to be attentive to it. Thinking about its implications, these young girls' subversion of the kit's purpose is a creative response that intersects "art" into common everyday life.

Like the Happenings, *Imaginary Ordinary* used artistic and creative practices to draw attention to the everyday. Through a series of reconnaissance experiences and encounters, the project re-framed the familiar and the commonplace as subjects worthy of heightened awareness and close scrutiny. While the project might be suspicious of my association of its efforts with a once avant-garde, now securely canonical art practice, the project's continuing resonance stretches far beyond its immediate imagined community towards the field of art. Considering contemporary art's enthusiasm for the participatory appeasement of art and life, *Imaginary Ordinary* merits our close attention and this volume illustrates the project's innovative efforts. Underscoring the relation of life and art, *Imaginary Ordinary* privileged neither option but instead offered opportunities to experience how art and life, when attentively participated in, may be mutually enriching.

A close-up photograph of a person eating cereal. The person is holding a white spoon with cereal and milk, and a stream of milk is falling from the spoon into a red bowl below. The person is wearing a brown t-shirt with a graphic. The bowl is on a colorful, textured placemat. The background is dark.

IT'S 30 STEPS

FROM MATTHEW'S HOUSE TO

THE MAILBOX

POST IMAGINARY

It would not be a Calgary story without an up-date on developmental issues. Since winding-up operations, the Tigerstedt Block has seen some changes and will apparently see more. The Studio Café is gone, replaced by the Tropical Corner, a “coffee lounge.” The *Imaginary Ordinary* space has been taken over by a vacuum repair outlet. The façade of the block currently features a large-scale advertisement illustrating the site’s future development. It seems as if it will be a mixed commercial / retail / residential complex, a type of development that signifies the imminent gentrification that has eroded the character of other communities in Calgary. Calgaryans will be able to imagine the boutique and condominium template that pre-figured the decline-through-revitalization paradox that blighted Mission, Lower Mount Royal and Kensington in the past.

The development blight upon my own personal view of the sky also signals foreboding changes in the offing. The aforementioned Monstrosity, languished in a “stop-work” induced stupor for several months as city officials negotiated with the developer about possible revisions – the inspectors seems to have revealed some significant discrepancies between the permitted development and the as-built structure. To inform our neighbours about the situation, Linda and I spent many hours canvassing the community. We gathered 100 signatures for a letter of “registered complaint,” with no less than 95% of those we contacted agreeing to sign. Widespread community dissent, though, made little impact – the city recently issued a new permit for the Monstrosity. Despite my continuing attention to this issue, and my regret at failing to fulfill my own envisioned community-mapping project, I am glad for the distraction of recounting *Imaginary Ordinary*’s creative interventions into my community.

RICHARD SMOLINSKI

resident of Regal Terrace & interdisciplinary artist

Hello

ALL ARE WELCOME!

916 CENTRE STREET NORTHEAST, CALGARY, AB CANADA
MAY 8TH TO AUGUST 29TH, 2009

Community centres can create “maps” of a community. They identify and connect the people who live, work, and play within a neighbourhood. Community centres are for all kinds of people, including people based on shared geography instead of shared demographics or ideals. Community centres are not so much about the physical building as the people who use the centre and the relationships that they have to each other and to their places.

In addition to being a nice place to hang out, *Imaginary Ordinary* hosts a variety of one-time and ongoing events. Check our schedule to see what’s coming up! We also have a variety of activities that you can check out during our regular hours.

Anyone can come to *Imaginary Ordinary*, but our programming is focused on the communities of Renfrew, Regal Terrace and Crescent Heights.



LEAS
BRUC
LIAN
606-0



9 avenue NE

centre street



FROM DELAPITATED EMPTY STOREFRONT
TO COZY COMMUNITY HANG OUT, THIS IS "OUR" SPACE.
SHOULD WE SIT WITH A CUP OF TEA?

Hello

THE OPENING PARTY
NIGHT OF FRIDAY MAY 8TH, 2009







IMAGINARY ORDINARY:

THOUGHTS

“TO BE IN A PLACE where no one expects anything to be happening is a rare and powerful thing. Don’t get me wrong, the journey to a mecca is valuable and inspiring, and the arrival can be just as sweet, but there is something real and tangible about carving out space for yourself. I have been telling people things like that for a while in Calgary, and for the most part I really believe in those ideas. There are few rules in the creative game, but above all you have to show up and you have to do good work. At the same time that game of hide and seek gets old pretty quickly. Once in a while, a beautiful break turns up – maybe in the form

of a space, a ruin if you will, stained less by time but by play: part hall, part speakeasy, part community centre – a place where the tea was hot and the dreams are free. *Imaginary Ordinary* did have some kind of magic to it.

When people come together out of joy they seem ready to do anything, even dance in the street (in tap shoes and bumble bee costumes to Michael Jackson hits). That was the power of the imaginary and the ordinary this summer, it began and ended with play, with joy and with potential.”

– KRIS KELLY



“WITH *IMAGINARY ORDINARY* – and the numerous experiences it fostered – I found that I somehow started to identify ‘magic’ in the environment around me. This subtle change in the way I was seeing the community became apparent one afternoon while borrowing the ‘Guerrilla Gardening Kit’. By accepting the kit, I was given the task to identify a place to create a small, but unexpected garden. When walking through Crescent Heights I noticed manicured gardens sprawling across peoples’ lawns and small colourful flowerpots placed on balconies and porches. These gardens of course were not unexpected, nor were they ‘imaginary’. I began to let my eyes and mind wander. I located a dirt patch under a bench, then a bare patch of ground surrounded by cracked concrete next to an alley, and finally a moist dirt patch shaded by some garbage cans. I imagined a

small garden sprouting up right before me.

All of these places I was now seeing, I would have simply walked by in the past. I walked on like this for a while before I stumbled upon the perfect spot – an old parking meter post that had the meter removed from it. I scooped up some soil up from a nearby pile of dirt and filled the post, placed in some seeds, and then gently sprinkled my garden with water from a puddle. With this act, I found that I had contributed in some small way to making the environment that much more magical for others and myself.

Without *Imaginary Ordinary* or the Kits that they supplied, I am certain I would still be admiring lawns and not the weeds that pop up in the cracks of sidewalks or the moss that make bricks their home.”

– NATHAN HUNT



Find It

THE HUNT











COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS

It's true, our community is already mapped! But the maps that exist identify the location of sewers, internet subscribers, streets and avenues, business licenses, and property lines (boring!). What about all of the forgotten, discarded or marginal elements of the hood? What can collecting this ephemera tell us about where we live and who we live with? Knowing "10 places where dogs pee," or "10 things that start with P or N found in an alley" are more vital to understanding the community than the property lines at which I should stop mowing my grass (for fear of doing my neighbours a favour!)

So map it people! Piece by piece! Choose something (anything really) and collect it. When you are finished bring it back to the storefront and we will frame it and exhibit it along with all the others.



IMAGINARY ORDINARY COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS

 ONE	 TWO	 THREE	
 FIVE		<p>THESE 10 <u>DEAD BUGS</u> WERE COLLECTED IN THE COMMUNITIES OF CRESCENT HEIGHTS & RENFREW (REGAL TERRACE) BY:</p>	
		<p>01. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 02. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 03. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 04. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 05. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u></p>	
 NINE		<p>06. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>JUNE 18</u> 07. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 08. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 09. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u> 10. <u>ERIC</u> on <u>June 18</u></p>	

IMAGINARY ORDINARY
COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS



Name: _____
Date: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

MAGIC

HOW MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN MAGIC NOW, EVEN IF I DON'T DO IT, THEY DO BECAUSE THEY WERE READING WITCHES THEY KNOW IT IS NOT.

MY SWEET DREAMS ARE LIVED TOGETHER TO MAKE THEM.

THESE 10 ^{HELPFUL} **SPECIAL** TIME WERE COLLECTED IN THE COMMUNITIES OF CRESCENT HEIGHTS & RENFREW (REGAL TERRACE) BY:

01. **KIARRA** on July 25
02. **KIARRA** on July 25
03. **KIARRA** on July 25
04. **KIARRA** on July 25
05. **KIARRA** on July 25
06. **KIARRA** on July 25
07. **KIARRA** on July 25
08. **KIARRA** on July 25
09. **KIARRA** on July 25

BECAUSE OF THEM, I STILL BELIEVE IN MAGIC, AND NONE (THE REAL THING) CAN SEE THEM.

I FEEL LIKE THERE ARE SO MANY WISE WARRIORS & TALENTED PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN. JUST LIKE THEM, THEY MAKE ME FEEL AT HOME.

BECAUSE OF THEM, I STILL BELIEVE IN MAGIC, AND NONE (THE REAL THING) CAN SEE THEM.

I FEEL LIKE THERE ARE SO MANY WISE WARRIORS & TALENTED PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN. JUST LIKE THEM, THEY MAKE ME FEEL AT HOME.



IMAGINARY ORDINARY COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS



THESE 10 BUTTS WERE
COLLECTED IN THE COMMUNITIES OF
CRESCENT HEIGHTS & RENFREW

(REGAL TERRACE) BY: Jennifer



01. Du Maurier on August 8th 2009
02. Canadian Classics on August 8th 2009
03. Player's on August 8th 2009
04. Player's on August 8th 2009
05. Export A on August 8th 2009
06. _____ on August 8th 2009
07. Canadian Classics on August 8th 2009
08. Du Maurier on August 8th 2009
09. Benson & Hedges on August 8th 2009
10. "7" on August 8th 2009

IMAGINARY ORDINARY COMMUNITY COLLECTIONS



THESE 10 **PURPLE THINGS** WERE

COLLECTED IN THE COMMUNITIES OF

CRESCENT HEIGHTS & RENFREW

(REGAL TERRACE) BY:

Nick on July 29th 20

- | | | |
|-----|-------|----|
| 07. | Sarah | on |
| 03. | Sarah | on |
| 04. | Sarah | on |
| 05. | Nick | on |
| 1. | Sarah | on |
| 07. | Sarah | on |
| 08. | Nick | on |
| 09. | Sarah | on |
| 10. | Nick | on |
- ↓

FIVE

NINE

TEN
something
for the big 70
the ground





DO IT YOURSELF

TAKE-AWAY YELLOW LIBRARY KITS

I know that there are rumors spreading (very loudly and annoyingly and late at night) throughout the community that you can borrow a megaphone from the *Imaginary Ordinary* storefront for free, no strings attached. It is true! There are several different kits that you can borrow (think of them as library books, except what you read is the community). And while there may be no strings attached, there will be a bright yellow suitcase in your hand that makes you lean slightly to one side while you walk the streets of the neighbourhood as a "tourist" (we know the metaphor is obvious). So come and spend an afternoon doing it all yourself! The kits are filled with all of the necessary supplies you will need to be an auteur, birdwatcher or shit disturber.

Take It Away

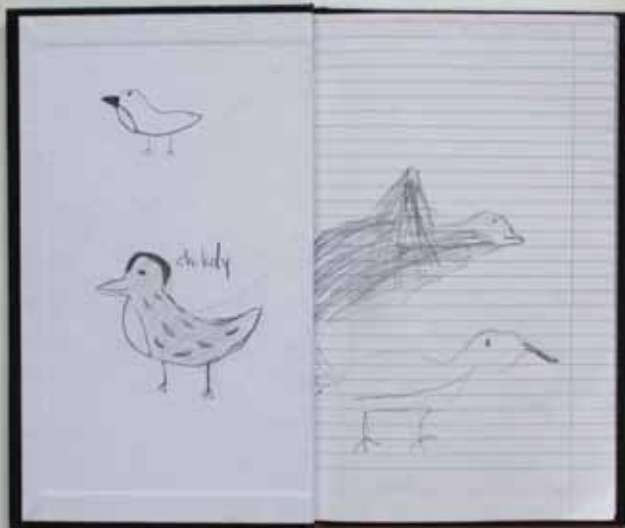
**BIRD
WATCHING
KIT**

This kit is really tweet (hey, there is a reason bird rhymes with nerd!)

While we didn't invent bird watching, we did compile all of the stuff necessary (seeds, bird caller, binoculars, book of Alberta birds, and a journal) into a small case so that you could become experts.

IN THE KIT:

**BOOK ABOUT ALBERTA BIRDS
SKETCH BOOK
PENCIL
BINOCULAR
SEEDS**



**ROMANTIC
DRINK
KIT**

Where was this kit all throughout my teen years (and sadly, my twenties)! Well, the situation has been rectified. Imagine: it is early evening (or late afternoon) and you and your _____ sit (or stand) over looking the city (or each other) while sipping on a sweet soda from fancy glasses. Yeah, we know: rad!

**IN THE KIT:
TWO GLASSES
LEMONADE
CHOCOLATES
BOTTLE OPENER**



Take It Away

GUERRILLA GARDENING KIT

While we really love the idea of several apes digging in the dirt, this is a different kind of guerilla people! With art as your camouflage, you can beautify the neighborhood by planting wildflower seeds anywhere you like!

IN THE KIT:

WILD FLOWER SEEDS
SPOON (FOR DIGGING)
SIGN



DRAW THE CLOUDS KIT

Elephants, sail boats, Batman, the future...these are just a few of the things people see in the clouds. So come and be a cloud-ographer and document the many different shapes you see in the sky!

IN THE KIT:

SKETCHBOOK
SIXTEEN COLOURED PENCIL CRAYONS



**SAY
YER PIECE
KIT**

If only Ms. Kranjec could see me now. She was my grade-nine science teacher who always insisted I was “too loud”. “It is my heritage,” I would retort. “It is just how we talk!” Well, now I could tell her how I feel in super-highdef(initely) too loud!

**IN THE KIT:
MEGAPHONE
EIGHT RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES**





Take It Away

MOVIE MAKING KIT

If Woody Allen's new movie is as bad as the New York Times says it is, then you really ought to make a flick that is worth watching! Come sign out the Movie Making Kit and put local screen writer, Ethan Cole's script into action while transforming yourselves into *Imaginary Ordinary* stars!

INTERVIEW YER NEIGHBOUR KIT

My neighbour across the street gives me grief all the time for parking in front of her house. Even when it is obvious I am searching for my cat in the bushes (he escapes a lot!), she'll come across the street and ask "can't you park someplace else"? After playing this scenario out several times it finally hits me: (not to move my car, obviously) but that I don't even know her name and that shouldn't I be the one asking the questions here? And now I can. I can ask, "What is your favorite childhood memory" or "Would you return to the scene of the crime?" This kit is for her, but is also for you to find out who lives next to you!

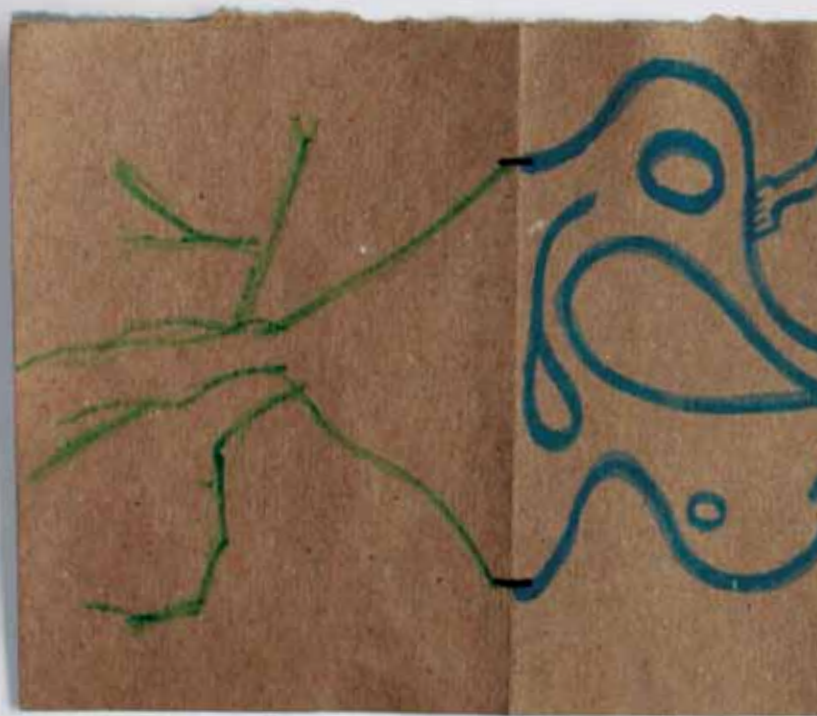
IN THE KIT:
VIDEO CAMERA
SCRIPT

IN THE KIT:
QUESTIONNAIRES
PENCIL









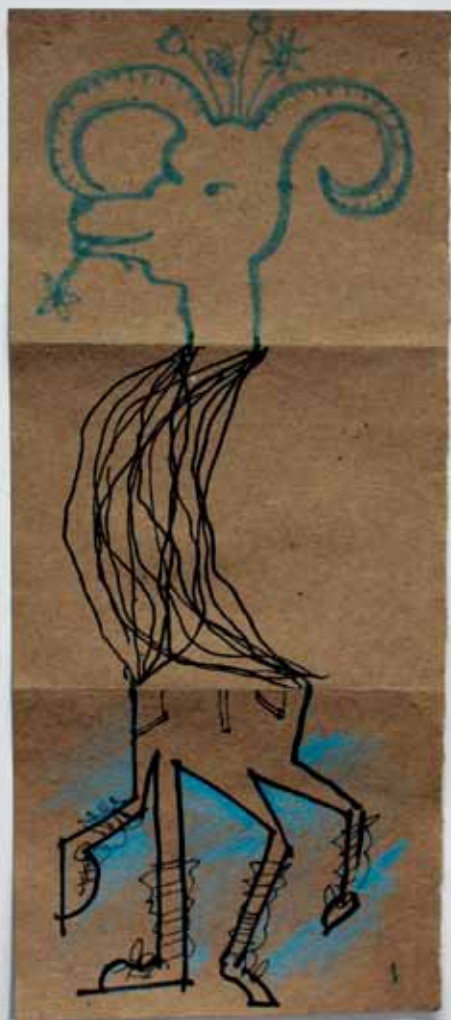


A SERIES OF COLLABORATIVE DRAWINGS

BETWEEN KRIS (25 YRS OLD) & COLIN (4 YRS OLD)

AFTERNOON OF 23 / 05 / 09







EVENTS

**ON GOING, ONE OFFS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN RESIDENCE
& SO MUCH MORE!**

The thing is, despite the weeks that went into preparing the physical site of *Imaginary Ordinary* (from tarring the leaking roof, to re-finishing the floors, to wiring in lights) the storefront (the most tangible component of the project) was always secondary. Far more significant were the ephemeral encounters that occurred in and out of the storefront. So as a way of generating engagement amongst the different constituents in the neighbourhood, nearly fifty different events were devised by community members and us. *Imaginary Ordinary* was always about the people and this was one way of bringing them together.



GROCERY
STORE
TOUR

Man, when Kris Demeanor told us the idea for this project we couldn't believe our ears! And then we began to salivate. Join Kris as he takes you from local grocery store to local grocery store touring the aisles, looking at the products, meeting the people, and preparing your stomachs for a super feast. Move from the various Asian, Italian and Halal markets, until we fill our (reusable) grocery sacks with tasty ingredients we'll use to cook a sweet (or savory) meal.

"WHY DO I FREQUENT small, independent run 'international' grocery stores in my community and why does it bring me such joy?

One could argue there is something inherently noble about the hole-in-the-wall, independently against the odds next to the big chain stores. We can imagine a romantic story of the immigrant family struggling to find a feeling of community in Canada and finding it through creating their own business. And while these factors come into play to some extent when I enter a quaint, family run store, the main reason I would rather walk an extra few blocks to patronize a number of small groceries to fulfill my shopping needs is this: it is aesthetically a more rewarding experience. There will be fruit I've never seen, a language I don't understand, the smell of incense, a tiny religious shrine in the corner, and exotic song in 6/8 time.

I shop at Safeway, but I rarely enjoy it. The lighting is harsh, the satellite radio never deviates from a station that has soft rock divas

of both sexes wailing and howling so that it wracks the nerves. Products are sold through obnoxious advertising and unnecessary packaging, and the demeanor of the tellers ranges from forced friendliness to utter boredom.

And there is the fact that we know the Safeway has been cast from a mold, that there are thousands across North America identical to it. Yes, there is the undeniable convenience of having many diverse products in close proximity, and we count on a certain standard of, or at least appearance of quality and cleanliness, but the shopping experience itself is essentially a conformist and soulless exercise.

In the independent store, where the teller is often the owner, the emotions seem genuine. The hospitality is real, and when they are grumpy or surly, it seems as though it's for good reason. And there are always fleeting yet memorable encounters, smells, and discoveries that enrich our day."

— KRIS DEMEANOR resident of Regal Terrace



GREEN CURRY WITH TOFU OR MEAT & VEGETABLES

A quick, hearty, and flavourful meal that will impress family and guests alike.

Tip: Do not overcook the vegetables. The first few times I did this dish I had the vegetables in too long and they lost their colour and crispness.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- 2 shallots, minced
- 1 inch piece of ginger root, minced
- 1-2 tablespoon Thai green curry paste
- 1 (14 ounce) can chicken /vegetable broth
- 2 cups assorted vegetables, tofu sliced, cooked chicken or beef or pork
- 1 (16 ounce) can coconut milk
- 1 (8 ounce) can sliced bamboo shoots, drained
- 1/4 teaspoon salt or 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 cup shredded basil leaves
- lime wedges
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar (or brown sugar)

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large skillet or wok over high heat. Add shallots and ginger. Stir-fry until fragrant, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium. Stir in curry paste. Stir in chicken broth. Cook until broth is reduced by half, about 10 minutes.
2. Stir in chicken or tofu, vegetables, coconut milk, bamboo shoots and salt. Heat to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in basil.
3. Serve in bowls over steamed rice or noodles with lime wedges on the side for squeezing over.
4. Eat!





**URBAN
WANDERS**

Every Wednesday evening for one hour, the communities of Crescent Heights, Renfrew and Regal Terrace will become mobile as we collectively wander the streets, parks, back alleys, and forgotten spaces of the community. Like archaeologists who look for the past in the present, we will stumble across places that hold significance for one person or another – a park, an old friend, or a house. These sites or people will spur stories and conversations that will help us to map the community while on the move.

**URBAN
WANDERS
ALTERNATIVE
VERSION**

This week you are on your own (well, not really, it is just that we won't be there to walk with you). So simply meet other residents from the community out front of *Imaginary Ordinary* and forge your own path into the night. Might we recommend a tour of Peter Pan Grocery or the new Persian Market on Centre Street. They are both really excellent.





KIDS TALK SHARKS

Kids from the neighbourhood discuss various topics they've been researching, starting with sharks and ending up wherever. Adults are also welcome and are encouraged to listen and ask questions of these young enthusiasts. First question, should we really be calling Capitalists sharks? How fair is that to the sharks?!

ASK AN EXPERT

Is there that one question that you keep asking yourself over and over again? Why doesn't my girlfriend call me anymore? What kind of trees can I plant in Calgary? What should I buy my granddaughter for her birthday? Then come Ask An Expert! Community members are invited to eat a snack, drink some tea and engage in dialogue with a selected local resident who will answer any question you might need answers to.

TELL IT LIKE IT ISN'T!

"Tell it like it isn't" is a public lecture series that invites a local resident to address topics that pertain to their own cultural practices and experiences of the neighbourhood. Lecture topics will range from personal biographies, how to garden in Calgary, where one sleeps when the snow falls or how our neighbourhood children perceive the community.

TELL IT LIKE IT ISN'T **HOME CLEANING EDITION**

Wanna learn how to make environmentally friendly and super cheap home cleaning products. Yeah, me too. I can't believe I spend money on gross yellow and blue liquids that have a list of ingredients longer than Tolstoy's War and Peace (and I suppose you might consider cleaning your house as both of these things--war and peace!) Well, come and join Amy as she takes you through "a few simple steps to better cleaning". All materials supplied by us.

COMMUNITY
MEMBER
IN "RES..."

Wanna be the heart of the Tiger (Block)? Starting August 5th, *Imaginary Ordinary* is adding one more ingredient to our already tasty mix: a community member in "res...". We are looking for individuals or groups that would like to use *Imaginary Ordinary* as a the headquarters for res(t), res(idency), res(earch), res(istance), or plain old res(ignation)! Perhaps there is a series of events you want to run, a project you want to work on, a record about the community you want to tape on a ghetto blaster, or perhaps you simply want hang out and meet people as they come to visit. Anything goes!

Turns out we have some really awesome people to res(pond) to the community. Jennifer Crighton found a way to send "signs" of our times to other parts to the city via postcards. Bryce Krynski ostensibly created the first ever "year book" of people walking along Centre Street. And Kristopher Kelly transformed *Imaginary Ordinary* into the most nostalgic thrift shop (so thrifty everything was free) ever!



**WRITE IT
DOWN ON
A POSTCARD
EDITION**

**RESIDENT:
JENNIFER CRIGHTON**

Playing with the idea of being a tourist in your own community (or in your own city, for those of you who are not from the 'hood), this week's community member "in res",

Jennifer Crighton, has designed a series of postcards depicting the signage of Crescent

Heights, Renfrew and Regal Terrace. From 2-6 on August 8th, Jennifer will lead a hang-out session where you can write up a postcard to the ones you're thinking of, and she will mail them off for you later that day. Bring your address book, we'll provide the rest! She'll leave some postcards here, too, in case you want to come tour Center Street later this August.









**FILM
SURVIVES.
EYES CRY.
MINUS THE
\$4 EDITION**

**RESIDENT:
BRYCE KRYNSKI**

Missed your grad shots? Need a photo of yourself to show to the grandkids? Have no pictures where your hair looks good? Bryce Krynski is this week's fella "in res", and he will be here to take your portraits for free on August 13th and August 16th from 4-7 pm. He takes really nice pics. He will make you look good and then email a copy to you later.







A PERSONAL HISTORY MUSEUM GIVE-A-WAY

RESIDENT:
KRISTOFER KELLY

Ok, you've figured us out! In the early 1990's we listened to Red Hot Chilli Peppers and they taught us a very valuable lesson: "Give it away, give it away, give it way now".

So we offer you some free tea and cookies, tell you stories about ourselves and then you return them in-kind. *Imaginary Ordinary* has been all about giving.

But you ain't seen nothing like what

Kristofer Kelly, our Community Member in Residence has got up his sleeve! This local architect moved out of his parents house a number of years ago. And like most of us, he left all of his memories behind (letters from lovers, old photographs, journals with handwritten poetry, stuffed animals, and "what the heck is that!")

Beginning a couple of years ago, Kristofer began cataloguing every last bit of this stuff. He photographed it, wrote about





it, and boxed it up for the last time (all of the boxes created a 5 foot by 5 foot cube in the basement). Instead of keeping the actual stuff, he only wants the catalogue (is he crazy, I could never do that)! Which means he's giving all of this really wicked stuff to us. I'm not kidding you, I've got things I am sure Kristofer wished nobody had! And it is all free. Well nearly...unlike FOUND Magazine, where you get to guiltlessly look at peoples funny photographs, letters, and personal moments,

you actually have to talk to Kristofer about the object, understand its history and relevance to him. The objects are free, sure, but they are also haunted with the stories attached to them! There are endless boxes of stuff! Come and take it away!



IMAGINARY ORDINARY:

A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

“WHEN I WAS first told about the goings on at *Imaginary Ordinary*, I must admit I was somewhat mystified. As with everyone and all things, I was looking for the easy answer. Is this a community centre? Is this an art project? Is this a gathering place for like-minded individuals? Why are kids talking about sharks?

Once Monika and the girls (Fallan and Quinn) had attended and returned with positive reports, I realized that I had to attend *Imaginary Ordinary* to understand. A short stroll to the physical location and a brief chat with those in attendance provided a clarity of mission which was intriguing and admirable.

To me *Imaginary Ordinary* is precisely what the name implies. Take the ‘ordinary’ community gathering place and apply the ‘imaginary’ to create a newly envisioned entity. This was a completely fresh take on what a community gathering spot could be. This was not a mid-winter skating party with hot chocolate, hot dogs and a hired clown. This was not a Stampede breakfast with paper plated pancakes and a country band. This was a spot to meet and discover community members and surroundings in a manner that inspired.

Eric and friends managed to take the tired clichés of community gathering and dig deeper into the possibilities and notions of what that means. Uncovering community secrets (ethnic store stroll) surprises (collection art pieces); instigating in-depth conversations (kids talking about sharks and play bullhorn pranksterism); provoking participation (movie and bird watching kits); and providing a sense of warmth and belonging (potluck suppers) were the new priorities of community.

Congratulations on a fully realized concept. My notions on community gathering will forever be graded next to your achievements. You shall be sorely missed.”

– GREG CURTIS

“IT HAS BEEN a real bonus to our neighbourhood and to our city to have a destination like *Imaginary Ordinary* over the last few months. If more community connections could be forged in such a creative, open and accessible way, others would benefit as Crescent Heights has. From discussion groups to potlucks to discovery walks. *Imaginary Ordinary* offered something for every walk of life. My personal favourite component were the kits, free to borrow, offering countless fun opportunities to capture the community spirit and share in light hearted activities with family and neighbours. I feel as though we were just starting to tap into the potential of this resource and now it is coming to an end. It has left a legacy of new friendships and possibilities in the community and will be sorely missed.”

– MONICA WENZEL-CURTIS

“*IMAGINARY ORDINARY* WAS one of the highlights of my summer because of multiple reasons. Reason one – I met a ton of friendly people. Reason two – I had a chance to voice my opinion on numerous occasions. Reason three – it is a one of a kind experience. Reason four – I am more aware of what is around me in the community right now. Reason five – I had an opportunity to participate in many activities I thoroughly enjoyed. Reason six – it provided me with curricular activities like bird watching in my spare time.”

– FALLAN CURTIS (AGE 10)

“I LIKED RENTING the kits and the potlucks. The people there were nice. I am sorry it will be gone. Thank you for organizing this Eric and Laura. P.S. Eric, I like your glasses.”

– QUINN CURTIS (age 7)

One Off Events

CHOOSE YER OWN FESTIVAL

Remember when you were a kid (or still are a kid) and your parents would buy you a book that never ended be-

cause you could continually choose a different plot line? Well Choose Yer Own Festival is like that, except instead of the book pacifying you and keeping you from asking from the back seat, how much longer the drive to Edmonton is you are the driver of this super rad festival! You choose the level of your own involvement!

SHOW & TELL 2ND EDITION

We know! Show and Tell is so elementary school. But is it really? We spend much of our

time explaining the significance of objects to our friends (new phones, rings, coffee mugs, family photographs, etc.) We do this because these objects hold meaning and memories – they are autobiographical. So bring something interesting you'd like to share? It can be a piece of information, an old relic, something cool you own, or something you found on the way over. Once assembled we will take turns talking about whatever we brought.

PLANT SHOW & TELL & TRADE!

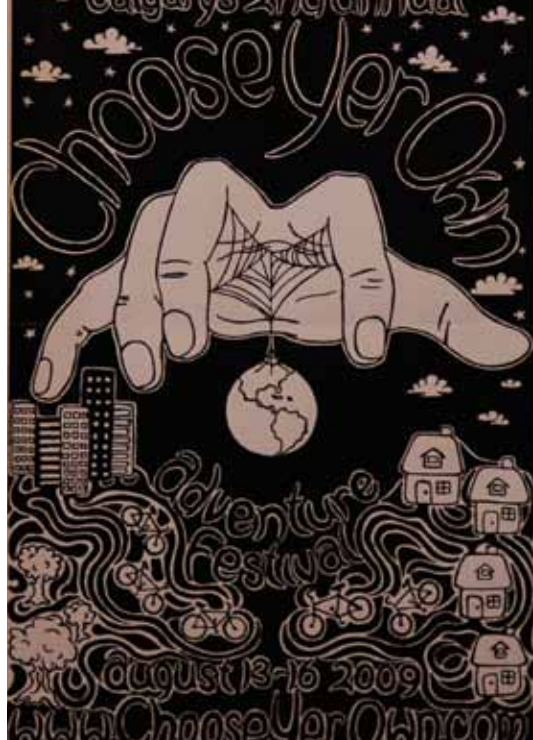
Do you have some plants you love, but just can't take care of? Or maybe you have a sneaky spreader who just

keeps multiplying, and you need to get rid of its babies? Bring down your green and leafy friends and trade them off to new good homes! As opposed to other trades, this one will involve much more talking, as we take turns discussing our green pals in order to find them the best new homes. Perennials, house plants, and transplants all welcome! presented by Damon Johnston.

FREE MUSIC SHOW.... if you want

Lovely Liam Gordan who lives down the street has put together a show spanning multiple genres with the

intent of creating a pointedly accessible event. On the bill is local vegan thrash band "Pack Rat", the weird folk of "Free Nude Celebs",



enjoyable and friendly "Bat Feets", nice rockers from out east "Caledonia", the mysterious "James and Sam" and "Tychoanomaly and Crordata Primate". Gee wizz, even if you have no idea who any of these bands are, you're likely to enjoy something. Maybe you'll even find your new favourite band!

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

ke

Do you spit?

•••• No

Do you understand electricity?

It kills cats

Who did you vote for in the last election?

a white guy?

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

L. T.

How do you feel about geraniums?

i love them!

How much money do you make?

enough.

What is your mother like?

tough and wise

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Joelyn

Who is the first teacher you remember?

Mrs. Parent

Who do you blame for the world's 8th?

Squirrels!
I am not sure, but
my cat looks suspicious

WTFPS TOO.

Have you ever grown anything from a seed?

Yes - a herb + some flowers

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Jeremy

Who is the first teacher you remember?

Mr. Jones

Who do you blame for the world's 8th?

George Bush

Have you ever grown anything from a seed?

Yes. Lemon tree.

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

MARIE

Who is the first teacher you remember?

MRS. FARRIS

Who do you blame for the world's 8th?

ADAM JOVE

Have you ever grown anything from a seed?

YES

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

James

Who is the first teacher you remember?

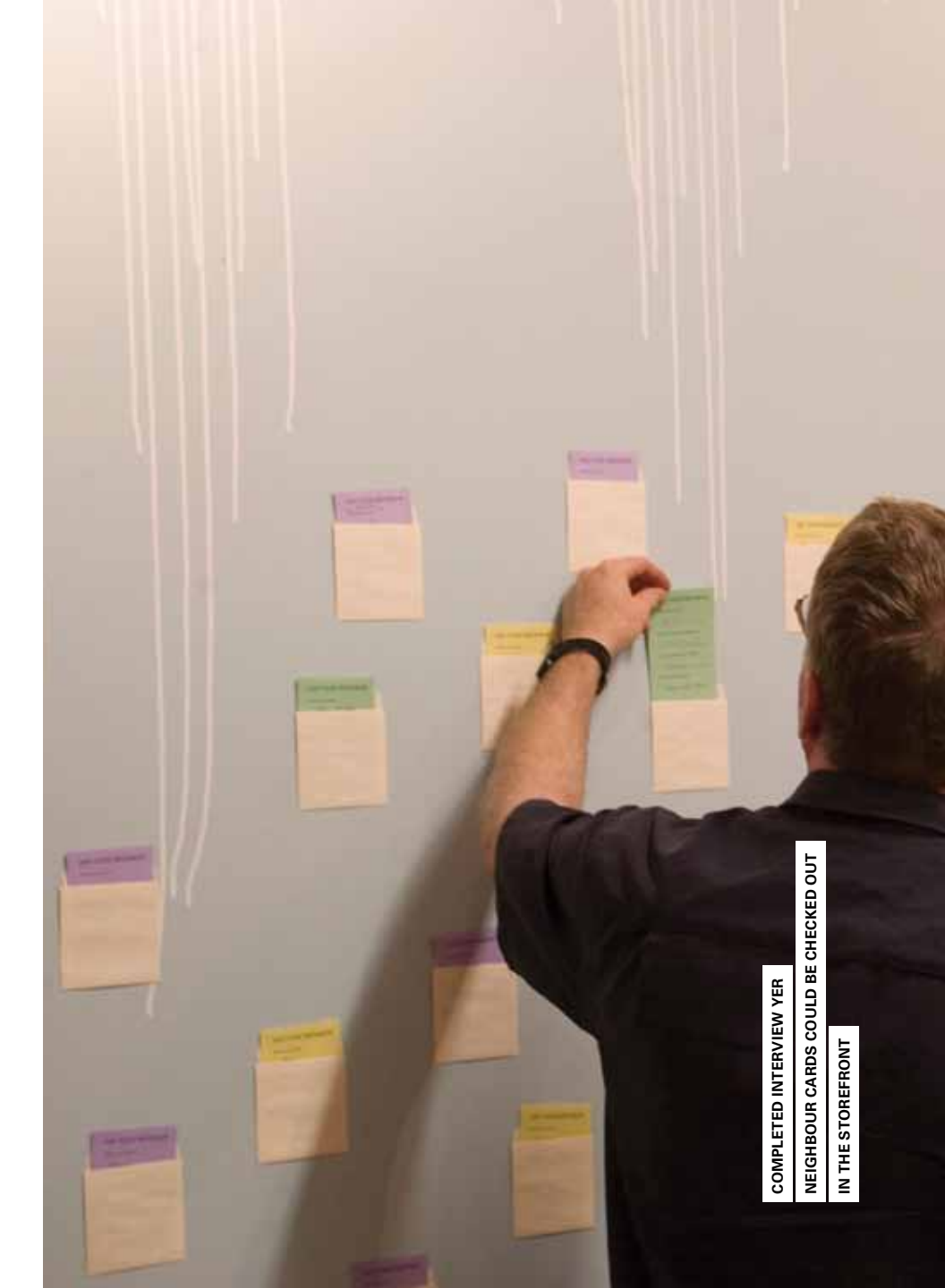
Mr. Wang

Who do you blame for the world's 8th?

No comment

Have you ever grown anything from a seed?

Flowers



COMPLETED INTERVIEW YER

NEIGHBOUR CARDS COULD BE CHECKED OUT

IN THE STOREFRONT



ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Pa-Linn

Have you ever been in an accident?

Yes

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

A loaf of Sourdough

What is your father like?

Affable/Handy

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

James

Have you ever been in an accident?

Oh yeah

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

Guitar strings

What is your father like?

Awesome

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Eric

Have you ever been in an accident?

ya not a car though bike

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

jacket (fall season)

What is your father like?

like me but more late

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

kric

Have you ever been in an accident?

yes he has

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

microton

What is your father like?

driven hard

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Ashley

What do you want done with your body
when you die?

ashes shot out of
cannon

What is your favourite colour?

Green

How many hours do you sleep on average?

9 hours.

ASK YOUR NEIGHBOR

What is your name?

Shawn

Where did you last travel to?

Bonaire

Where do you buy your groceries?

Buy groceries?

What would you name your child if there were no consequences?

No children wanted

One Off Events

CRAFTS WITH LAURA!

All right! We've been waiting for this all summer long. Laura is moving out of her house and how better to put

to use all of those crafting supplies that she has been hoarding for too many years! What might the day bring? Macaroni necklaces? Well, you'll have to show up to find out. All ages welcome (that means you too Grandpa!)

VEGGIE POTLUCK

TAKE MY VHS TAPES
& CLOTHES EDITION

A few years back Liam's dad bought 1600 VHS tapes from a video store that was going out of business. "What a gift for my son" he thought, but

Liam really doesn't want them anymore. Nor does he want bags full of sweet clothing! Do you? Do you have your own clothes you want to give away? Take a shirt; leave a bag full of boots and sweaters! That is the motto of this weekend's veggie potluck. So come load up on tapes and clothes, for FREE! But bring some veggie fare to share: this event is a mixture of give and take!

DANCE WITH DAD!

This is for real people! Even we are bringing our dads and they are (kind of) old. Consider this an early

Father's Day activity. Don't just get your dad another Bill Cosby paper back, get him a sweet, sweet tie to wear to "Dance with Dad!" Young. Old. Everyone!

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Musicians from the neighbourhood perform with their various projects! Come listen, dance, and drink soda pops. Playing will be: Great Speckled Fritillary nice folk stomps featuring Maria who works next door; Lesssound and Secret Brothers ambience and glitchy beats from Aaron MacInnis who lives down the street; and Ryan B's new band a musical surprise attack from Ryan! (he's our neighbour).

WE ARE ALONE

A MICHAEL JACKSON
TRIBUTE NIGHT

I have this theory that my generation (well, whatever that means) is in a perpetual state of disillusionment because of the rise and fall of M.J. When we were young the future looked bright – I mean sparkly glove bright! Our optimism paralleled M.J.'s success. We were the generation that saw the first man to walk on the moon (on the stage). There was nothing that we couldn't do! But as M.J. fell from grace, so too did our ambitions and our desires to "make a change". We believed that there might well be life after death (as a rad dancing zombie). In truth, I had \$20 tucked away in my sock drawer to buy M.J.'s new album if it ever came out. Now I'm going to spend the money honoring M.J. in the most appropriate way possible: "Make a little space, Make a better place...Heal the world..." Or just through a sweet tribute to the guy.





**CRASH
BANG
BOOM!**

Come make noise with your feet!
Free beginner tap dance classes to anyone who is interested this Saturday afternoon. If it is beautiful outside we may shake up some street corners in the neighborhood. Bring your own shoes (tap or a hard leather sole) or use some of the pairs we have available to lend! No experience necessary! All ages, skills and aptitudes welcome. Hey check out this killer dance one group put together in only an hour and a bit:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=cevlDo3GW3c



STAMPEDE GUERRILLA INTERVENTION

PREPARATIONS

Sure, Mike Holmes is marshalling the parade this year, but is he planning an art invention? (I suppose that depends if you consider his muscles political!) Well, a number of artists who live in our neighborhood (some in houses, some in parks) are using I/O as home base to create a Stampede midway fair game. In this playful project, the public will have the chance to be blindfolded and let loose to try and “pin a by-law ticket” on a giant Panhandling Panda mascot (a la ‘pin the tail on the donkey). The artists initiating this project are looking for your participation in the preparations. So come out and practice being a radical artists!

HOME MOVIE NIGHT!

Kids falling, dogs napping, grandma singing! If you've got them, we'll show them. Bring your favorite home movies (VHS or DVD), eat some popcorn and have a laugh (or cry). Oh, and we'll be showing one of Eric's most humiliating moments ever: a game-show host announcing to the nation that he has a crush on some girl from school (oh, grade three!).



PATCHES, BATCHES & MISMATCHES

Do you have a boring jacket, backpack or t-shirt? Wanna punk it up with a handmade, silkscreened patch or original design? Then join Joel (and his cute pooch) as they lead you through a workshop on how to not only silkscreen, but how to build, stretch, and burn your own screen at home! Dad, your father's day tie is going to be the best ever!



SCARY JAZZ NIGHT

Huh? Exactly, you'll be asking yourself the same thing. What are scary jazz movies? Well come and find out (hint: there will be a masters class video with Cecil Taylor). Following the screenings there will a free jazz jam. So bring your noise makers.



CLOSING PARTY!
FOR ALL AGES

It's true people! After four really excellent months, *Imaginary Ordinary: A Community Mapping Project* is coming to a close! There have been so many wonderful events (nearly 50!), conversations, and surprises throughout the summer and we want to celebrate them with you! There will be lots of FREE food, FREE nonalcoholic beverages and dancing music! So come and fill your belly with tasty treats, your brain with sweet memories and your feet with a few dancing calluses!



THE EXTRAORDINARY

OF IMAGINARY ORDINARY

BY MELANIE BENNETT

My husband and I moved from Southwestern Ontario to Calgary during Stampede in the summer of 2006. Calgary was at the peak of riding Alberta's dramatic growth wave making it the envy of the rest of Canada. With a naïve sense of adventure and anticipation for our new life in Canada's promised land, we purchased an old rusty moving truck for \$500 in lieu of the inflated \$3,500 price-tag that U-Haul was charging for truck rentals moving West (even U-Haul was cashing in on Alberta's fortune). Bumbling along the Trans Canada Highway, we could hardly contain our excitement as we began to see the first hints of the city on the horizon. The sun shone brightly (as it normally does in Calgary) on a skyline of sleek glass office buildings and construction cranes that seemed to welcome us as we made our way to our rented apartment. As our truck crawled along the congested streets of the downtown, we watched cowboy hats bobbing along the sidewalks, heard people laughing and shouting, and admired all the shiny luxury vehicles with country music blaring from their open windows. The vibe of the city was confident, vibrant, and youthful. Upon arrival to our apartment, we wondered if we had the wrong address, since the alley behind the building was populated with about a dozen homeless people and the building looked rundown and dirty. We were shocked to discover that this apartment located in what's known in Calgary as "crack alley" was to be our \$1,200 /month one-bedroom apartment. We had been on several



MILES LIKES MAKING PIES (BUT

NEVER HAS THE TIME)



DAMON TAKES PRINCE TO

FOOTBALL GAMES

waiting lists before being contacted that we could sign a one-year lease at this place in a “prime neighbourhood.” This was the beginning of what became a tumultuous love-hate relationship with Calgary.

No city is particularly generous during an intense flourishing economy. With a remarkably low unemployment rate and housing crisis, a spirit of competitive recklessness where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer is inevitable. It is also foreseeable that artists – a demographic normally among those least likely to be among the economy’s beneficiaries – will respond to such a problematic culture climate. It was during Alberta’s boom that I first met Eric Moschopedis, a Calgary interdisciplinary artist whose recent practice involves creating events that cultivate a sense of community. With a background in theatre, Moschopedis is among the recent surge of artists who desire to create new forms of intersubjective experience that connects art with the broader social sector. His projects are generous, friendly, and critical. Moschopedis defies the city’s conservative ideology and Wild West mythology by creating projects that promote a broadened concept of what it means to be a Calgarian. For him, it is more important for a city to be inclusive of a wide variety of perspectives than to hold onto alienating outdated themes. Moschopedis’ artistic values and practice resonate with my own work as a site-specific performance practitioner and researcher. By participating in and attending his and others artistic projects over the past few years, I discovered the fruitful potential of Calgary as an ideal place for experimental performance. These events and the people I met there also helped me create a feeling of belonging in a city I didn’t think I could ever call “home.” This article reflects upon Moschopedis’ most recent project *Imaginary Ordinary* as an alternative to the assumption that Calgary is an ungenerous city that lacks a sense of community. I am interested in analyzing the effectiveness of this work in its attempt to be accessible to broad perspectives.

Imaginary Ordinary is a community-mapping project that is designed to foster social networking in and around the Calgary neighbourhoods of Crescent Heights, Regal Terrace and Renfrew during the summer of 2009. Co-creators Eric Moschopedis and Laura Leif wanted to create a space where community members could connect with one another, socialize and participate in various scheduled activities. Together they transformed an abandoned storefront located on Calgary’s busy Centre St. into a welcoming gathering space. Cheerful mural-covered walls, celery green chairs, a large coffee table to gather around, and a kitchen for making tea and cookies are among the items used to create a welcoming comfortable aesthetic. As part of the project, community members are invited to sign out one of several “Library Kits” located at the back of the store. These yellow suitcases contain different objects that provide the borrower with everything they need to complete a task, such as filming a movie, bird watching, starting a guerilla garden, drawing the clouds, concocting a romantic drink, interviewing your neighbour

with a series of questions, and speaking your mind with a megaphone. The playful childlike tasks are meant to encourage the community members to become self-reflexive tourists in their own neighbourhood. Visitors of *Imaginary Ordinary* can also create a "community kit" to be hung on the wall of the storefront once completed. These glass case shadow boxes resemble scientific specimen displays similar to those found in museums. Participants are invited to create their own specimen display with objects from their neighbourhood. Discarded shopping lists, bottle caps, gum wrappers and even dead insects are among the quirky collections that people made.

In addition to these assignments and just being a nice place to rest, *Imaginary Ordinary* hosts regular scheduled events. For example, on Wednesday evenings, participants are invited to become flâneurs as they accompany the artists on a drift through the streets and back alleys of their neighbourhood with the purpose of discovering something new about their community. Ask An Expert invites community members to speak and answer questions about a specific area of expertise. Potlucks, show-and-tell, tap lesson, garden lecture, a silk screening class, clothing swap, collective drawing of a mural, grocery store tour, dance parties, and music concerts are among the other scheduled events.

Moschopedis and Leif wanted to emulate the spirit of an inclusive community centre where people of all races and socio-economic backgrounds could connect. As an art project, *Imaginary Ordinary* challenges the assumption that experimental art must be shocking or difficult to understand. Deviating from the tradition of object making and adopting a process-based approach, artists like Moschopedis and Leif are "context providers." [1] In *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Grant H. Kester states that relational artists "have defined their practice around the facilitation of dialogue among diverse communities" (1). These works rely heavily on the participation of community members. By designing a "creative orchestration of collaborative encounters and conversations" (Kester 1), *Imaginary Ordinary* hopes to create a positive project in a democratic space that is directed towards the world beyond art enthusiasts and theatre patrons. Its utopian framework built around the fantasy that a shared geography will be enough to unite people, creates an optimistic politics that is increasingly prevalent in a lot of current urban community art initiatives. In practice, however, most of these practices appear to attract the young, educated, middle-class art connoisseur demographic.

The hidden stories and spaces that a lot of these projects uncover work to reinvigorate an identity ignored by a city's official themes, but they inevitably endorse another, albeit alternative, elitist enclave. While the idea that by reframing our engagement with each other, we reframe our engagement with the city has good intentions in theory, as artists practicing this model we need to question who this work benefits. Laura Levin and Kim Solga's article, *Building Utopia:*



KATHLEEN TEACHES

MOVEMENT CLASSES TO CHILDREN

A photograph of a man sitting on a wooden bench inside a sauna. He is shirtless, wearing blue athletic shorts with orange and purple accents. A white towel is draped over his shoulders, and he is holding a white cloth to his face. A dark glass beer bottle sits on a wooden shelf behind him. The sauna walls are made of light-colored wood.

IN GRADE ELEVEN

PETAR LEFT HIS HOME COUNTRY

Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto, offers a critique of the emergence of grassroots performance encounters that claim to have “a belief in the socially liberating potential of creative play to transform the city from a place of alienation to a space for meaningful connection” (43). While the artists working in this model assert that their work is “free and open to all,” they have the potential to erect their own “barriers to access, built upon unacknowledged assumptions about which spaces and citizens count and which don’t” (45). What I’ve always admired about Moschopedis is his continued commitment to breaking down barriers that could emerge in his projects. Given his prominent role in the Calgary arts community – a role he both embraces and resists – Moschopedis is always sensitive about how his work is viewed by those in the community who may not be among the arts community. He advocates for an aesthetic that invites differing meanings, interpretations and points of view. For him, art can be viewed as a kind of conversation.

The whimsical imaginative quality of the kits is meant to be playful and facilitate new discoveries of community, but its artful framework and aesthetic tends to attract participants who have time to complete the assignments (bird watching, making a movie) or possess some creative aptitude (drawing a picture). For someone like my husband who has no experience or interest in performance or visual art, these kits weren’t of any interest. Rob’s desire to participate in order to feel included in the community project meant that he was drawn more to the activities where participants engaged in conversations. In order for an event to feel equalitarian, it needs to cater to or at the very least, acknowledge various types of people instead of assuming a “consensus over what constitutes community values, morally, aesthetically, and politically” (Levin and Solga 52). Moschopedis is sensitive to those community members who may not be inclined to attend art events, so he tries to include activities where anyone can participate. *Imaginary Ordinary*, with its potlucks, neighbourhood walks, and dance parties works to not only create a space for neighbourhood residents to meet, but to tighten the gap between self-proclaimed artists and those who don’t claim they are artists. Moschopedis and Leif would most likely argue that trading recipes at a potluck or exploring the back alley’s of a neighbourhood can be every bit as creative as painting a mural and that’s what makes *Imaginary Ordinary* so refreshingly charming.

I am delighted that there are many artists in Canada recently who are replacing conventional theatre with “sociopolitical relationships” that link new forms of intersubjective experience with social activism (Kester 3). As an artist whose performance practice is directed toward the world beyond the purpose-built theatre and gallery walls, I am passionate about wanting to advocate for this kind of work and continue to see it flourish in Canada. I wonder, however, if there are even more ways of creating community events that have the potential

to include the marginalized and are accessible to a broader spectatorship than art and theatre patrons. Perhaps these events could extend into a spirit of community volunteerism, where a portion of the work concerns offering services to those in the neighbourhood who are marginal – the sick, elderly, single parents, and homeless. Furthermore, as Levin and Solga suggest, instead of creating a utopian ideal of community that leaves no room for other points of view, these events could explore the varying multi-perspectives that may conflict with the ideals of the artists. An authentic intersubjective exchange is one that embraces the complexities and contradictions that exist when various people live and work alongside each other in urban communities. These are some of the dreams that *Imaginary Ordinary* inspired in me on the flight from Calgary back to my current place of residence in Toronto. There's something about these relational projects that make me want to be a better citizen in my own community. How can I take the kind of spirit of playful citizenship that Moschopedis and Leif created and model that into the way I interact daily with my own neighbourhood? How do I imagine making the ordinary in my community more extraordinary?

MELANIE BENNETT

former resident of Calgary & site-specific artist

Works cited: Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004. Levin, Laura and Solga, Kim. "Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto." *TDR: The Drama Review* 53:3. Fall 2009. New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[1] The term "context providers" was developed by British artist Peter Dunn.



EDWARD'S FAVOURITE SOUP

IS THREE BEAN

A BIG THANKS

TO YOU!

It has been just over a month since *Imaginary Ordinary* ended and we'd like to say to Crescent Heights, Renfrew and Regal Terrace: **THANK YOU!** Thank you for such a wonderful summer. From early May until the end of August, *Imaginary Ordinary* was the humble host to nearly 50 different events, was open 5 days a week with hundreds of visitors drinking tea, eating cookies.

And while the storefront was the primary tangible component of the project, far more significant were the people and all of the ephemeral encounters that occurred in and out of the space. This means you, and we couldn't be more grateful for your participation! We made many great friends over the summer and met some wonderful neighbours.

ERIC MOSCHOPEDIS & LAURA LEIF

September 2009

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