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ART MEDIA POLITICS

# FUSE

M A G A Z I N E

## Taking over by screen:

Argentinian independent media  
rises from the ashes of neo-liberalism  
(as told by David McIntosh)



### Also in this issue

Considerations of Ché, A-bombs,  
and interactive strategies

Reviews of Jeff Thomas, Joscelyn  
Gardner, and the inheritors of  
Duchamp

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# contents

27.3

7 Editorial

9 Archival Strategies at Work  
*Blake Fitzpatrick*

14 Like Ché  
*Ingrid Mayrhofer and Nery Espinoza*

18 Ellipsis and Insurrection: Argentina, Media, Experiment  
and Liberation  
*David McIntosh*

30 Cynthia F. Interviews Peter K.  
A fictionalized conversation between Cynthia Foo and  
Peter Kingstone  
*Cynthia Foo*

35 Fugitive II — What Runs Underneath?:  
Natasha Dwyer in Conversation with Simon Penny  
*Natasha Dwyer*

40 Jeff Thomas: A Study of Indian-ness  
*Margot Francis*

45 Black Hair/Her-Stories and Joscelyn Gardner's  
Inverted Portraits  
*Charmaine Nelson*

49 This Is Not an Exhibition: The Future of the Reciprocal  
Readymade (the use-value of art)  
*Carl Skelton*

52 Short Fuse  
Art Or Social Work? A Handy Career Placement Quiz  
*Janna Graham and Richard William Hill*

## Columns



## Features



## Reviews



## Short Fuse

# editorial

Watching CNN, it would be tempting to believe that the Kobe Bryant trial is at least as significant a world event as the American occupation of Iraq. And recent events in Sudan seem completely off the radar. This is not unlike the Rwanda genocide ten years ago, when 800,000 people being hacked to death with machetes seemed less compelling to the mainstream media than the question of whether O. J. Simpson would be found guilty.

It has often been noted that there is a hierarchy of media interest in human suffering. On September 11 we learned that at the high end of that scale are American victims of large-scale terrorist attacks. These are followed closely by anyone alleged to have been molested, raped or murdered by a male African-American celebrity. The mainstream media seem to notice the rest of the world, particularly the non-Western world, only when some part of it gets in the way of us interests.

Similarly, American soldiers are the highest priority victims in the Iraq war. Iraqi civilian casualties are also occasionally noted, but they affect the American conscience not for the inherent value of the lives lost, but precisely because they have been killed by Americans. Those who

are murdered or starve to death elsewhere are likely to be left to suffer outside the spotlight of us media attention.

Human history's most horrific self-inflicted disasters have been facilitated by a failure to extend empathy beyond one's immediate circle. But failure of empathy can function more insidiously as well. We can be sharing socialists with our family and friends, and ruthless capitalists when we vote or do business. And the complacency of the over-fed and over-developed world conveniently meshes with the agendas of even more powerful interests, including those that control media empires. The result insures that empathy does not extend to those whose exploitation feeds first world excess and maintains extraordinary individual wealth. The result is the nightmare of inequity that is our world.

When Argentina rejected the neo-liberal economic model in 2001 the mainstream media did pay attention (a mass uprising in the streets is photogenic), but the revolutionary political implications were ignored in favour of treating it as an economic crisis. As David McIntosh details in this issue's feature, where the mainstream media failed, media arts exploded within the country itself. People began to use

media to create culture from and through their own political experience.

This is a lesson we might want attend to in Canada, where our Liberal government continues to campaign and win power on social issues while quietly making the "structural adjustments" that are gradually turning us into the us. If empathy is a capacity rather than a given, then we need to learn it. Argentina is culture that has the potential to teach us, but mass media do not provide us with this sort of culture: we must create it for ourselves in whatever spaces are left open to us.

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*As this issue was going to press we learnt the sad news of Bob Boyer's death. Bob was a thoughtful, talented and generous artist and art educator of Métis heritage. As a professor and department head at the Regina campus of the First Nations University of Canada, he influenced many generations of Aboriginal artists. Bob died doing what he loved: powwow dancing. He was 56 years old. We can't afford to be without him, but we are.*

— The Editorial Board