



l o i s
a n d i s o n
r e l a y

relay

The exploration of kinetic sculpture is at the core of Lois Andison's practice. Although she also makes multidisciplinary works using video and text, it is her juxtaposition of movement and conceptual gestures that create a sense of wonder. Her use of kinetic elements ties her to other pioneers in the field of kinetic art and technology from Jean Tinguely to Rebecca Horn and Norman White (who she studied under at OCA, now OCADU), but she chooses to create works of art that inhabit a much more personal and pensive space. Less shambolic than the work of many of her male peers, her projects take form as elegantly refined Minimalist objects. Yet as thoughtful and considered as her works can be they also exhibit an absurdist sensibility underlined by the artist's use of unexpected gestures and wordplay. Her best works subtly interrogate our perceptions of meaning and gender, while at the same time revealing the potential for empathy between engineering and aesthetics.

the floor's the limit is a three-channel video installation depicting three young women: Kerry, Alyson and Caitlin. This striking triumvirate was filmed rollerskating throughout an empty gallery, specifically the Olga Korper Gallery in Toronto. Although all similarly attired in black, from hair colour to attitude, they do not conform to typical stereotypes. The combined videos are a deliberate response to the imposing circumstance of the gallery itself as well as a determined shout out to girl power. The unexpected incursion of rollerskaters amidst the four white walls of this secular temple demonstrates a clear sense of empowerment rather than any semblance of objectification. While the gallery certainly frames and in a sense limits each performance, the actions and personalities of the individual performers remain unimpeded and largely unscripted.

The exhibition features several eponymous text-based artworks. *salt, sugar, sweet, sour* is a customized wordfinder made up of 25 frosted acrylic cubes inset with letters that light up using LEDs. All of the consonants and vowels are used to spell new words not unlike the classic game Boggle. SAGA. SAGAS. SAGE. SAGES. SASS. SARS. SAW. More than 125 word permutations appear in sequence over the course of the generated display.

good grief, bad grief is rendered in neon, once commonly used for commercial signage. Alternately flashing the catchphrase 'good grief' followed by it's opposite, the flashing neon evokes the opening and closing of a linguistic circuit and is purposefully reminiscent of the probing wit of American conceptualist Bruce Nauman, who also uses neon in a poetic and beguiling way.

Part of an ongoing series the artist has succinctly titled *afterworks* each work is based on a readymade artwork by another established 20th century artist. *trophy, after picasso II* merges the readymade assemblage *Tête de taureau* (1942) by Pablo Picasso with a sculpted porcelain flower acknowledging Georgia O'Keefe. When the viewer approaches a motion sensor activates the bull's head so that it gesticulates much as the enraged animal would. Suggesting a decapitated rodeo bull the mirrored glass horns fruitlessly attempt to gore the viewer or dispatch the O'Keefe from plain sight.

solving man ray's obstruction is an elegant yet deceptively complex mobile made in homage to Man Ray's *Obstruction* (1920), a Dadaist assemblage of 63 wooden hangers repurposed into an object of futility.¹ By altering the scale of the coathangers, subsequently increasing or decreasing their dimensions as needed, Andison ingeniously resolves the conundrum. Rather than using readymade components, she had all 63 coathangers custom fabricated in proportionate sizes so that when arranged they would work in concert rather than impede each other's trajectory. Her cunning restaging of the *Obstruction* in a working configuration should be applauded. Rather than simply appropriating another artist's work, she took it a step further. By resolving the dilemma in a masterful way Andison surreptitiously reinvigorates the original gesture while asserting herself as an equal.

Her most recent installation, *nudging marcel*, alludes to the inscrutable Marcel Duchamp, progenitor of the readymade. *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) was a gauntlet dropped that radically altered the meaning of sculpture and marked the beginnings of Conceptual art.²

September 11–November 1, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF
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University of Waterloo Art Gallery
East Campus Hall 1239

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Tuesday to Saturday 12:00–5:00 pm

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FIVE



Long a target for send-ups and rip-offs, Andison's remake is remarkably proactive. Rather than copy the single wheel, she pairs it, then activates the assemblage using motors and motion sensors. Once the first wheel begins to rotate it smoothly leans over as if kissing its mate, transferring its kinetic energy to its neighbour and causing it to spin for a short while before the inertia wears off. Following an approach similar to that used in *solving man ray's obstruction*, *nudging marcel* makes no attempt to overturn the radical necessity of the original but once again manages to nurture the readymade impulse by returning a semblance of the objects original, albeit inverted function as a set of bicycle wheels that function in tandem.

Andison integrates these seemingly incompatible elements into an intrinsically cohesive whole that begins to level the playing field. Her ongoing attempts to generate a balance between grace and precarity is a singular quality found in many, if not all of her artworks regardless of media. Andison retains an unapologetically poetic sensibility in her work and her combination of readymades, wordplay and kinetic elements suggest both strength and vulnerability.

— Ivan Jurakic

Artist Biography

Lois Andison is a Canadian artist who has exhibited nationally and internationally in Toronto, Montréal, Lethbridge, Mexico City, Boston, Buffalo and New York. Her work can be found in private and corporate collections including the National Gallery of Canada, Bank of Montreal and the Donovan Collection. She is an Associate Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo and lives in Toronto. Lois Andison is represented by Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto and Art Mûr, Montréal.

Acknowledgements

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1. Man Ray authorized a remake of his readymade *Obstruction* in an edition of 15 (1961).
2. Marcel Duchamp remade multiple versions of his pivotal *Bicycle Wheel*, including a third version (1951) in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and a sixth version (1964) in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

All artworks courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. Images (front and back covers): *the floor's the limit*, photos: Lois Andison and Jade Rude. (interior, top to bottom): *solving man ray's obstruction*, photo: Michael Cullen. *nudging marcel* and *good grief*, *bad grief*, photo: Cat O'Neil. *trophy, after picasso*, photo: Lois Andison.

List of Works

the floor's the limit, 2009
3 channel video installation: 3 DVD set,
3 plasma HDTV's, 3 Blu-ray DVD players,
2 sound bars, custom TV mount
roller skaters: Kerry, Alyson, Caitlin
cinematography: Jason Ebanks
editing assistant: Avril Jacobson
metal fabrication: Tredegar Kennedy
edition of 9, 2 A/P
400 x 122 x 122 cm

trophy, after picasso II, 2012
bicycle seat, porcelain, wood, metal,
custom mechanics, custom electronics
mechanical design: Automation FX
machining: Paul Cahill
66 x 48 x 76 cm

solving man ray's obstruction, 2012
maple, stainless steel rod, bearings,
bushings, powder coated aluminum,
motor, clutch, custom electronics
mechanical design: Automation FX
machining: Paul Cahill
wood fabrication: Blaine Evans
edition of 2
139 x 471 x 3 cm

good grief, bad grief, 2014
neon, transformers, wire, controller
neon: Orest Tataryn, Larry Cosman
animation: Tech22
edition of 7
72 x 58 x 6 cm

nudging marcel, 2014
bicycle wheel, found stools, wood, metal, acrylic,
custom mechanics, custom electronics
mechanical design: Colin Harry
machining: Auged Machine Shop,
Bruno Machine Shop Ltd.
191 x 209 x 117 cm

salt, sugar, sweet, sour, 2014
white acrylic, LEDs, iColor Player, DMX
acrylic: Marc Littlejohn Inc.
programming: Patrick Dinnen
84 x 104 x 24 cm

