



Gwen MacGregor

*A few reasons for
messing with time*

The Koffler Gallery

May 25 - July 2, 2000

Curated by Carolyn Bell Farrell

OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, May 25, 7 - 9 pm

ARTIST TALK

Thursday, May 25, 6 pm

Gwen MacGregor

A few reasons for messing with time

The practice of Toronto artist Gwen MacGregor has continued to elucidate the ways in which we register the passage of time. In *A few reasons for messing with time*, she has chosen a different situational context for each of the four works conceived for this exhibition.

Cinco Pesos comprises a series of objects in the gallery vitrine purchased while riding the metro in Mexico City last winter. MacGregor's inventory – which includes coffee flavoured gum, batteries, a precision screwdriver set and a calculator – enumerates the wares peddled by local vendors, while marking time in concrete measures. Similarly, *How hard can it be?* records the routine gestures of daily existence. Shot over fifty consecutive days, the video documents the activities of labourers in a construction site in Mexico City, with a voice-over of the artist practising phrases in Spanish. Time is protracted, the tempo commensurate with progress based on sustained, cumulative effort.

Two video installations in the gallery probe these valences of time. In one room, two simultaneous projections capture views of a grounds keeper raking leaves around a monument. Erected in 1728 at Bunhill Fields Cemetery in London, England, the memorial is dedicated to Dame Mary Pace. Opposing vantage points enable us to read the text on the reverse side: "In 67 months she was tapd 66 times. Had taken 240 gallons of water without ever repining at her case or fearing the operation." 240 helium-filled balloons materialize this obscure inscription, while their festive appearance subverts the somber tenor of the video. Slightly weighted, some drift through the gallery, fugitives

of the site. Others hover in the skylight well. Gradually deflating, they descend to the floor as the duration of time lapses between their release and our encounter. Their presence as trace demarcates a point in time, while their demise underscores the temporal conditions to which we are ultimately bound.

In the second room, an image of a female figure ascending a snow-covered hill is projected onto a large vertical screen. The full black of her cape moves to the full white of the ground as she disappears out of the top of the frame. Only her red shoes escape the banality of a world reduced to light and shade. The sound of her breathing envelops the space, yet the audio track is reversed, confounding our sense of direction. The continuous loop generates a perpetual cycle of motion. Without a sense of purpose or meaning informing her actions, we experience only the dull self sufficiency which inscribes her in time. The "present" as an event is eclipsed; the future is instantly consumed by the past.

Gwen MacGregor graduated from York University in 1982. Since this time, she has continued to exhibit nationally and internationally. Her recent solo shows include those at Ex Teresa Art Actual, Mexico City (1999); Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge (1998); Mercer Union, Toronto (1994); and Main/Access Gallery, Winnipeg (1992). *Cinco Pesos* and *How hard can it be?* were developed during an artist residency in Mexico City, December 1, 1999 to January 30, 2000, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, Canada/Mexico Program/Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes Mexico (FONCA).

Around, 2000
video projection (colour, 2 minutes)
with audio
dimensions variable
photo: courtesy of the artist

Bunhill Fields, 2000
two video projections (colour, 4 minutes),
240 silver party balloons, weights
dimensions variable
photo: courtesy of the artist

Cinco Pesos, 2000
approximately 20 objects bought from
vendors on the metro in Mexico City
gallery lobby vitrine
photo: courtesy of the artist

How hard can it be?, 2000
video (colour, 30 minutes) with audio
gallery lobby
photo: courtesy of the artist

The Koffler Gallery
Koffler Centre of the Arts
at the Bathurst Jewish Centre
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Canada M2R 1W6

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GALLERY HOURS
Sunday to Friday 10 am - 4 pm
Closed Saturday
Admission is free

The Koffler Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of its Patrons and Members, Bank of Montreal, Rothmans Benson & Hedges Inc., the Bathurst Jewish Centre, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council and The Canada Council for the Arts.

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Gwen MacGregor

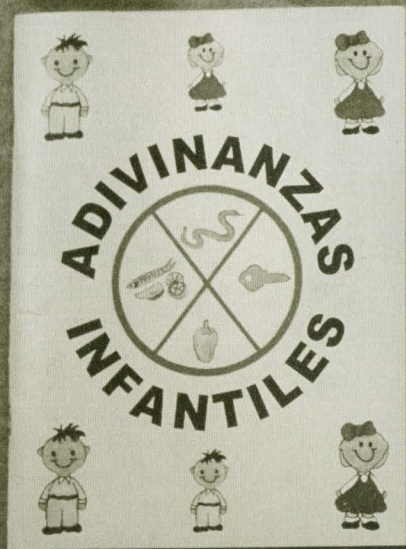
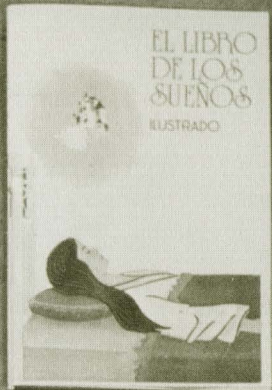
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How hard can it be?, 2000 (detail)

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