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"WADE" ...Sandra Rechico & Christie Pearson / [Wade Collective](#) & [YYZ Artists Outlet](#)

Local Toronto Wading Pools (June 25, 2004)

ARTISTS: Chris Arnoldin & Su-Ying Lee, Florencia Berinstein, Cecilia Chen, Julie Fiala, Maxine Heppner, David Hoffos, Gwen MacGregor, Sarah Peebles & Rob Cruickshank, Lisa Deanne Smith, Gene Threndyle, Colette Urban & Sonya Shonberger



GWEN MACGREGOR IN STANLEY PARK

MacGregor sought to combine the sense of pleasure and fun evoked by wading pools with another childhood treat: Jello! The pool was surreally filled with aqua-blue gelatin. Participants squished, tossed, waded, and immersed themselves gleefully in a memorable community free-for-all.

WADE launched the opening of Toronto's wading pools Friday night, June 25th, 2004. Seventeen site-specific performances and installations by fourteen artists continued to Sunday night.

WADE was co-presented by the WADE COLLECTIVE and YYZ ARTISTS OUTLET, and curated by Sandra Rechico and Christie Pearson. It was well attended by wading pool and park regulars and the arts community, with approximately 200 people at the opening in Bellevue Square, plus over 2000 people attending the weekend program.



GENE THRENDYLE IN TRINITY BELLWOODS PARK

"Dante and the Killer Whales" was an installation using inflated plastic killer whale toys. The whales were painted with lines from Dante's Inferno in red, as a testimony to environmental destruction. A victrola played 78s as children rode their mounts blissfully in the water at this festive apocalyptic party.

WADE got people thinking about the wealth of publicly-owned resources of parks, pools, and

water, and the participatory celebration which underlies both art-making and recreation. The project gave opportunity for more creative interaction between citizens and public space and encouraged an appreciation of art and wading pools. Some attendees came to their local parks only, while many were seen at multiple events, which the schedule encouraged. This helped reinforce the network of wading pools and parks connecting all our communities together.



COLETTE URBAN AND SONYA SHÖNBERGER IN DAVID CROMBIE PARK AND KEW GARDENS

The "Secretkeepers", invited audience members to share their secrets in confidence. The two costumed performers held listening horns while seated in the pool on bright lawnchairs with matching parasols. Adults and children became active participants and contributors to the action. Secretkeepers mimicked the ritual of the confessional, while providing a public service through a non-traditional approach to this confidential moment.

Artists addressed the idea of "immersive environments" in diverse ways, yet all of the projects encouraged the audience to "get in" in some form. The wading pools worked well as stages. Each site had its own particular patterns of traffic which changed over the course of the weekend. WADE successfully opened a dialogue between artists and communities through the engaging projects. Some of the most successful events engaged children from the start. Needing no instruction or explanation, they were some of the most free improvisors in the settings. There was a very festive and open atmosphere at all the projects, with artists and participants alike uncertain of where things would go next. The element of play permitted serious subtexts to reach audiences who may not be looking for a gallery or theatre experience.



FLORENCIA BERINSTEIN IN WITHROW PARK

The artist made visible the intricacy and complexity of the water system as a carefully engineered document of our culture. "Flow" painted a map of the neighbourhood's water mains on the wading pool surface. The lines evoke a board game or sporting boundaries and allow the children to make their own rules. Ringing the pool is text taken from headlines of the Toronto Courier Mail from 1914-17.



SARAH PEEBLES AND ROB CRUICKSHANK AT HANLAN'S POINT

"Music for Incandescent Events: Hanlan's Sunset" used the site of a silenced wading pool which has been filled in with earth and flowers. The sky's changing light at dusk was measured by sensors which trigger stored fragments of sound derived from the tones of the shō (Japanese mouth organ) and played through loudspeakers encircling the wading pool. The audience lay on grass mats watching the sky amidst mirror fragmented lights in the wading pool garden.



DAVID HOFFOS IN BELLEVUE SQUARE PARK

Hoffos' night-time installation placed one cut-out silhouette of young boy beside the pool and one of his model boat in the pool. The cut-outs became screens for video projections. The piece created a melancholy and somewhat lonely illusion that made us consider children, now grown, who have played at the site.



LISA DEANNE SMITH IN DUFFERIN GROVE AND TRINITY BELLWOODS PARK

"Over and Over and Over Again" focused on the use of the wading pools by children and parents in a lighthearted play on the repetitive giving of parenthood. The artist stood on the edge or centre of the pool wrapped in a large egg-sac. She then proceeded to throw hundreds of small plastic golf balls over her shoulder while counting one through four. Children counted, chased and collected the floating spheres.



CHRIS ARNOLDIN AND SU-YING LEE IN BELLEVUE SQUARE PARK

"Amaze" brought together two models of public water features which are typically kept separate: a water garden and maze. Artificial plants floated to form a topiary maze on the water surface. Participants wandered through the maze or played with its configuration. It felt like a snaking pool toy in this well-used park.



CECILIA CHEN IN CLOSE AVENUE PARKETTE

This project mirrored the concavity of the pool form in the construction of a dome. A geodesic dome made of colourful foam pool "noodles" responded to the playful nature of the site and its users. Children used the dome in their games as both a space and an object.



JULIE FIALA IN GRANGE AND JIMMIE SIMPSON PARK

"Welcoming All Aquaphobes" was a performance which blurred the roles of performer and audience. A life guard/collaborator invited aquaphobes and children to assist with the artist's attempt to confront her morbid fear of water. Comically over-dressed in flotation devices, the artist became a living and inflated instructional prop who eventually floats peacefully in the water singing swimming songs until pool closure.



MAXINE HEPPNER IN BUDAPEST PARK

"Boat Ballet" was a performance of four different dance movements next to Sunnyside Beach. "Explorers" canoed to the site, and disembarked in full snorkeling gear. Once submerged in the pool, they re-emerge with miniature boats for a regatta. In conclusion, they return to their canoes by lake and paddle off into the sunset. The piece poetically connected the pool to the lake and to the shoreline's history.

- Sandra Rechico & Christie Pearson, curators

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