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CRITICAL PARTICIPATION

by Amish Morrell

This issue of *C Magazine* introduces a discussion about some of the ways that artists take up sports in their work. Two feature essays address this topic explicitly: Elizabeth Matheson's "The Beautiful Game: Art and Sport in the Work of Humberto Vélez," which looks specifically at Vélez's work with amateur boxers and body builders in Europe and in Latin America, and Ray Cronin's "Graeme Patterson: The Grappler," about Patterson's engagement with Canadian popular culture and memory through his elaborate installations focused on hockey and wrestling. Both Vélez and Patterson challenge the separation between high art and popular culture by involving participants and viewers not often considered as making art or being interested in contemporary art. In particular, Vélez's 2007 piece *The Fight* involved musicians, dancers, and amateur boxers competing in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in London, while Patterson's 2006 piece *The Hockey Rink* re-stages the hockey rink from his childhood hometown of Woodrow, Saskatchewan, along with many of the town's (now largely abandoned) buildings. Both artists examine the relationship between sport, memory and identity—with Patterson taking up of the tropes of Canadian cultural memory and Vélez examining the body and its relation to physical and aesthetic ideals (looking especially at how the body engages codes of collective identity). This issue also includes an artist project by Patrick Krzyzanowski, whose fastidious watercolours of wrestlers and baseball players express how professional sport is so readily turned into a spectacle of masculine excess.

When adopting sport as a theme, it is possible to engage many of the critical ideas about art and performance that address how gestures code the body's relationship to larger structures of society, like nation, race and gender. With the 2010 Winter Olympics taking place in Vancouver as I write this editorial, the connections between sport and both national and corporate identity require critical analysis. Though the Olympics may encourage viewership and consumption over participation, the event still creates permanent infrastructures for citizens to become increasingly involved in sport. However, it's also important to encourage forms of critical re-invention and a critical discourse around sport, which is where artists and critics stand to play an important role.

Also in this issue, we're extending the C104 discussion about contemporary feminist practices. As such, we've included a piece by Kaitlin Till-Landry, a Toronto-based artist and curator who interviewed Martha Wilson the performance artist and founder of Franklin Furnace. Wilson's early works were done when she was living in Halifax during the 1970s. She discusses these pieces in relation to the conceptual practices that were beginning to take shape in Halifax at that time, and describes important precursors to contemporary feminist art. Deborah Root's article on Mexican artist Lorena Wolffer introduces a different set of concerns complementary to those addressed in our last issue. Wolffer's performances deal with the day-to-day violence that affects many women in Mexico, particularly the murders of hundreds of women living in the regions that border the United States, where many poor women come to work in foreign-owned factories. Addressing how global economic disparities enforce vio-

lence against women, in particular women of colour from among the economic underclass, Root argues for the continued urgency of art that examines these issues.

Related to these two articles, as part of *CSchool*—a new initiative that extends the work of C The Visual Arts Foundation (which publishes *C Magazine*)—we held a panel discussion at Toronto's Drake Hotel in February. The panel included *C Magazine* writers Jen Hutton, Gabby Moser, Helena Reckitt and Stephanie Rogerson, as well as Toronto-based filmmaker Elle Flanders. What had been imagined as a very casual conversation became a much larger discussion among members of the Toronto art community, academics, and activists from across different generations. *CSchool* aims to further extend this conversation with a programme that makes magazines available to students in studio, art history and cultural criticism.

This spring, I look forward to visiting art fairs and conferences in New York, Vancouver, Chicago, and St. John's, Newfoundland, to promote this magazine and its writers, and to meet artists and critics in these cities. We continue to expand C's coverage of contemporary art practices occurring outside major urban centres and we also continue to encourage emerging critics. Each issue includes reviews from a diverse range of places, a practice dependent on writers engaged with interesting new practices and lesser-known art scenes. And we also have an emerging critics competition, where the winning writer's work is published in our fall issue. If you're an emerging critic, consider this a personal invitation to contribute. We look forward to continuing and expanding the conversation. ♦