



**The Cedar Tavern Singers
AKA Les Phonoréalistes**

**Art Snob Solutions,
Phase 2: The Age of Mechanical Reproduction**

October 10th - November 8th, 2008
Reception: Friday, October 10th, 8pm
Performance: Friday, October 10th, 9:30pm
(reception for members and invited guests only)

Note...

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with the Mountain Standard Time Performative Art Festival. www.mstfestival.org

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THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE

The Cedar Tavern Singers AKA Les Phonoréalistes
Art Snob Solutions, Phase 2: The Age of Mechanical Reproduction

BY SCOTT ROGERS

Quotation has become synonymous with contemporary art practice and in many ways it is the mode of our era. Recent exhibitions at Power Plant and DHC/ART dealing specifically with artworks re-making existing cultural artefacts indicate that Canada is assuming an interest in these trends as well. When Nicolas Bourriaud wrote in *Postproduction* "It is no longer a matter of starting with a 'blank slate' or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material but of finding a means of insertion into the innumerable flows of production," he summed up the fact that artists today are discovering a wide variety of ways to mine the mass accumulations of global capitalism through unique and ingenious means.¹

One such strategy is the specific implementation of DIY culture for the purposes of writing about and producing artwork. From its roots in punk rock and counter culture movements of the late '60s and '70s DIY has proceeded from an underground practice to a well understood form of production distinguished by self-sufficiency, economy and the usage of everyday materials. With the advent of the Internet, the capacity for these activities has increased exponentially along with the global proliferation of available information about the history, ideas and techniques of art. Today DIY practices can draw upon a wealth of available resources that previously were unimaginable, creating hybrid worlds of online and real life artefacts which can be marketed and disseminated simultaneously.



"Infiltration-Homogen for Soprano Ukulele", 2008, felt and ukulele

Cultural quotation as a practice has developed in relation to the technological capacities of the World Wide Web. Specifically, our experiences of art and art history are now truly global, with blogs, websites, databases, print-on-demand publishing *et cetera* accelerating our capacity to study, debate, share and reproduce artworks. This technological revolution has resulted in a networked understanding of knowledge, criticism and appreciation of art that is rhizomatic rather than hierarchical. This emerging approach is a holistic one which considers the world as a massive field of hyperlinks and sources of material that can be exchanged, used to develop meanings and carve out subjectivities from the reified pillars of art history.

For the exhibition *Art Snob Solutions, Phase 2: The Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, the Cedar Tavern Singers AKA Les Phonoréalistes (the identity under which Mary-Anne McTrowe and Daniel Wong perform and produce their work) create their own network of DIY tactics and art historical quotation through subtly novel articulations. These articulations are specific to the space where art and music, past and present meet. Their work, described in their own words as "fan art" (art which is of itself a tribute to previous art or artists) combines art historical research with McTrowe's and Wong's own particular brand of multimedia production. For example *Art Snob Solutions, Phase 2* consists of numerous diverse works including the text "Art is All Over" (a phrase by Ian Baxter&) painted in the Superstar Shadow font used by Garry Neill Kennedy, "music videos" which blur the line between tributes to John Baldessari or Bruce Nauman and artworks in themselves, performances and recordings of folksy pop songs about Joseph Beuys and Robert Smithson and a series of images, objects and multiples derived from the work of Andy Warhol, Yves Klein and Hans Haacke. Through this process, McTrowe and Wong insinuate themselves between appropriation and appreciation, delineating a form which is one part talking about art, one part making art, and one part documenting art.



Video stills; "Art is All Over", 2007

Artist Biography: *Daniel Wong* is an interdisciplinary artist from Lethbridge, Alberta working in a range of forms including installation, performance, writing, drawing, and music. He received a BFA from the University of Lethbridge in 2003 and an MFA from the University of Western Ontario in 2006.

Mary-Anne McTrowe has a BFA from the University of Lethbridge (1998) and an MFA from Concordia University in Montreal (2001). Her work has spanned a number of media, and recent interests include the crocheting of cozies for everyday objects and the proposing of ever-larger cozies for natural and man-made architecture, and performance and static work about the sasquatch.

It was during a thematic residency in 2006, perhaps under the influence of cabin fever, at the Banff Centre, that Daniel joined talents with Mary-Anne to form the Cedar Tavern Singers AKA Les Phonoréalistes, to fight the good fight and sing the good song (and occasionally the bad song).

Writer Biography: *Scott Rogers* is a multidisciplinary artist, writer and facilitator currently based in Calgary, Canada. He has shown his work in group and solo shows throughout Canada as well as internationally in Germany, the United States and Ireland. He has upcoming exhibitions at Eyelevel Gallery (Halifax), Galerie Sans Nom (Moncton) and Stride Gallery (Calgary). Scott has upcoming residencies at the Banff Centre (Reverse Pedagogy Thematic Residency), Akureyri Artist Studio (Akureyri, Iceland) and KIAC (Dawson City, Yukon).



"1963 Pop Daniel and 1963 Pop Mary-Anne", 2007, digital print



"We Are Making Art", 2007, CD cover

Simultaneously, this "fan art" takes an ironic turn, carefully masked by an aesthetic which undermines the official nature of traditional art history sources. The nature of "fan art" is one which is defined by intense sincerity; an earnest admiration for the works or ideas of specific people or groups. One need only consider the obvious examples painstakingly rendered in correction fluid or retractable pencil on junior high binders to have some notion of the concept. Clearly, "fan art" in its truest form has no conscious criticality toward its source of devotion. But with the Cedar Tavern Singers AKA Les Phonoréalistes, this earnestness is developed through a concerted self-conscious evaluation. CTSAKAP is both a band and not a band, and their music is performance, lecture and pop song. The artworks and physical material associated with this band/non-band are products for exhibition and tools for promotion (primarily of other artists interestingly enough). The research sources for CTSAKAP are diverse, including entirely subjective additions as well as historical inaccuracies derived from memory. The result is a freewheeling collection of objects, documents, performances, recordings and multiples which effectively satirize the canons of high art while seamlessly acknowledging the debt contemporary artists owe to their forebears. The Cedar Tavern Singers AKA Les Phonoréalistes' work is not straightforward devotion to a person or cause; it is appreciation with a satirical edge, a compliment with a wink, a tongue-in-cheek pat on the back.

Thus, for many viewers with an educated eye/ear, these projects signify clearly cheeky references from art history textbooks. If you are an artist or you have gone through any contemporary art history courses, you are probably going to let out a knowing laugh at some point while experiencing *Art Snob Solutions, Phase 2*. These are "in" jokes that are most accessible to "in"siders. But just because the jokes are obscure is not to say that this work is elitist (really it is anything but). The co-opting and reimagining of elitist frameworks is where the tension of McTrowe's and Wong's project lies. Through their actions, McTrowe and Wong are engaging new audiences for the art history they are tearing down and building up. These audiences are encouraged throughout the exhibition to view art history as a site for specific personal engagement rather than an abstract field for privileged academics. Ultimately, the mantra "take some notes, Google it" which CTSAKAP espouse is a particularly relevant piece of DIY advice. This gesture of encouragement pushes viewers to use their experience with *Art Snob Solutions, Phase 2* to determine their own understandings and start reconstructing art history themselves.

¹ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, 2d ed. (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005), 16-17.

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Detail, "Klein and Bowie in Space", 2008, gig posters



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Gallery hours: 11 AM - 5 PM, Tuesday - Saturday
Admission is free and everyone is welcome.

The Mountain Standard Time Performative Art Festival (M:ST) is a biennial festival that celebrates innovative and critically engaged performative art in the Southern Alberta region. The fourth edition of the festival will take place from October 3rd to 17th 2008 in galleries, art centres, and public spaces throughout Calgary and Lethbridge. For more information, please visit the M:ST website at www.mstfestival.org.

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