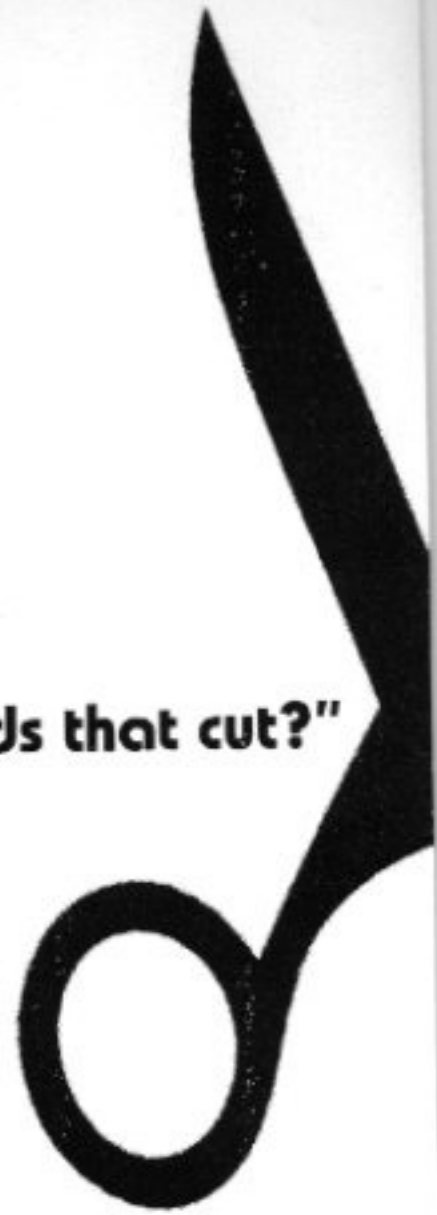




Glad Day Bookshop

**"(Mary, Mary)
Are these the hands that cut?"**



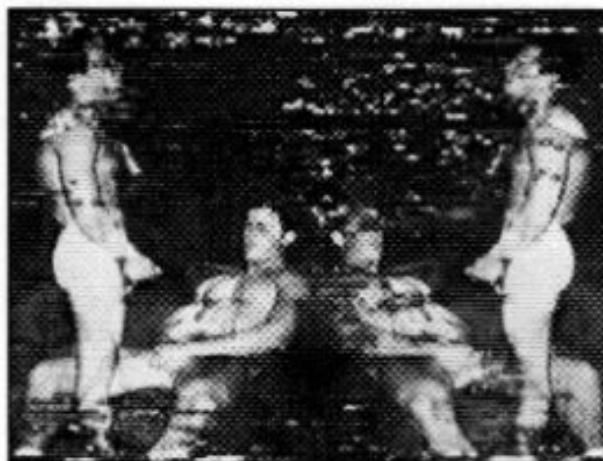
A Benefit for Glad Day Bookshop



Soap Soap, Colin Campbell with Rodney Werten (1981)



Yew Jerevona, Lenna Boshman (1992)



1989 Camabob, Wayne Jung (2003)

It is not only Glad Day who benefits

by Linda Feesey, Pleasure Dome

We applaud Glad Day Bookshop's successful challenge of the Ontario Film Review Board. The case took many years and over a hundred thousand dollars to fight through the courts. The verdict is considered to be a significant legal victory for charter rights.

Glad Day was charged with violating the Ontario Theatres Act for selling a video that had not been submitted to the censor board for prior approval. In April 2004, Ontario Superior Court Justice Russell Juriansz struck down the act because prior approval contravenes Canada's Charter

of Rights and Freedoms. In his decision, Justice Juriansz concluded that "mandatory submission of films and videos to the board for its approval ...infringes the fundamental freedom of expression guaranteed by section 2(b) of the Charter." He allowed the Ontario government eight months in which to enact new legislation to conform with his judgment.

However the new Film Classification Act still requires all films and videos to be submitted for classification (e.g. PG - parental guidance, R - restricted, etc.) before they can be shown, rented or sold in Ontario. Although the board has relinquished its power to directly cut scenes out of videos and films, it can refuse to classify a film or video—in other words, it has retained the authority to continue banning videos and films. Many prominent charter rights lawyers and activists have voiced their concern with the government's unwillingness to abide by the Glad Day decision and have stated that the Ontario Film Review Board's new powers still violate Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Pleasure Dome continues its policy of not submitting our film and video programming for prior approval by any censoring bodies. Some limited exemptions to the Film Classification Act are granted to film festivals and art galleries but Pleasure Dome, like many other cultural organizations that present artists' film and video in the province, does not comply with the act.

**"(Mary, Mary)
Are these the hands that cut?"**

**A Benefit Screening
& Party for
Glad Day Bookshop**

Presented by: **A Space, CFMDC, Charles Street Video,
FRDO, Images Festival, LIFT, MOCCA, Pages
Bookstore, Pleasure Dome,
Prefix, Trinity Square Video, and
Vtaps**

Saturday, April 8, 2006
8pm @ MOCCA, 952 Queen St. W.

With DJ Will Munro and DJ The Robotic Kid



Video Programmes

Faces, Geoffrey Pugen (2004), Interactive Installation,
Canada

My Tango with Porn, Siobhan Devine (2003), 11 min.,
excerpt, Canada

Glenda and Camille Do Downtown, Glenn Belverio
(1993), 29 min., USA

1000 Cumshots, Wayne Yung (2003), 1 min.,
Canada

True Inversions, Lorna Boschman (1992), 24 min.,
Canada

Snip Snip, Colin Campbell with Rodney Werden
(1981), 30 min., Canada

Programme Notes

by Jean-Paul Kelly

Faces, Geoffrey Pugen (2004):

An interactive DVD of interviews with various artists, academics, and activists on the subject of censorship in the 21st century. *Faces* is a vital document of the ongoing fight for free expression in Ontario. Distributed by Vtape.

My Tango with Porn, Siobhan Devine (2003), 11 min. excerpt:

Lesbian filmmaker Siobhan Devine joins the Ontario Film Review Board and brings a camera with her, providing an insider's look at how films are classified and who makes decisions behind the scenes. Distributed by Kinetic Video.

1000 Cumshots, Wayne Yung (2003), 1 min.:

A rapid-fire montage of shots culled from mainstream gay porn that illustrates the similarities of the bodies used to promote a certain type of desire. With his version of a "White Party," Yung ironically eschews the politics of circuit culture. Distributed by Vtape.

Glenda and Camille Do Downtown, Glenn Belverio (1993), 29 min.:

Anti-feminist establishment Feminist scholar Camille Paglia and drag queen provocateur Glenda Organ

hit the streets of Manhattan on a mission to, in Paglia's words, "trash the feminist establishment" and its "anti-porn, anti-sex agenda." After all, as Glenda puts it: "A day without porn is like a day without sunshine!" Distributed by Vtape.

True Inversions, Lorna Boschman (1992), 24 min.:

This complex, self-reflexive work by the Kiss & Tell collective analyses the politics of pleasure and its representation while suggesting that the conflicts within censorship debates are not limited to opposing community standards of representation but also exist as internal conflicts that can divide intimate relationships and personal identity within "homogenous" communities. Distributed by Vtape.

Snip Snip, Colin Campbell with Rodney Werden (1981), 30 min.:

In this biting satirical piece, Colin Campbell stars as former head of the Ontario Censor Board Mary Brown as she holds a "cutting party" with some concerned friends to purge risqué material. As Ms. "M" instructs, if you find something offensive, "just say cut." Distributed by Vtape.

Just Say Cut!

by Jon Davies

Any discussion of moving image censorship has to attempt to tease out the knotted, complicated mess of different motives, positions and philosophies involved in the debate. Because it would be impossible to deal with all these threads in a relatively short editorial, I have provided a bibliography for further research.

In the Glad Day Bookshop case, inspectors visited the store on several occasions to covertly see if they were selling porn videos that did not bear the Ontario Film Review Board's sticker of approval, a privilege that costs \$4.20 per minute to enjoy, the cherry on top of a process of "prior restraint" that almost always results in the porno being classified as 18+. This is largely unnecessary because the porn industry, the jurisdictions the movies came from, and virtually everybody else already recognize hardcore sex tapes as 18+. The OFRB believes in the need to sniff out obscene acts—some embarrassingly old-fashioned, some entirely sensible—before the public can decide such a designation for themselves. Even though the adult video industry is three times as profitable as Hollywood, it is not the big-wigs but small retailers like Glad Day that get stiffed because they are expected to pay the OFRB to rate the small, unprofitable pornos they

bring in without a distributor. And because many cannot recoup the screening fees, they take the risk of selling tapes sans sticker, most of which are legally produced and distributed in the United States (and often the rest of Canada) and not the kind of illegal, "underground" material that little Suzie could find in plentiful supply on the web, that Aunt Molly reads about with wide-eyed enthusiasm on the front page of *The Star*. The internet has swiftly exposed all the fissures and faults in the War on Smut. Like the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, it can never be won but as long as it turns a profit we will soldier on. As John Greyson has suggested, censorship is "a hegemonic, illusory veil that has been cast over the raw power relations of this society."

In 2000, the OFRB laid charges against Glad Day over one specific title, *Descent* (Steven Scarborough, 1999), what Adult Video News termed the "dictionary definition of 'art house porn,'" which could potentially have been considered obscene because it includes scenes of the hero restrained and jerked-off on, which is not the rarest occurrence in gay porn. By choosing to criminalize a small, independent community bookstore for what is a widespread and victimless bit of necessary penny-pinching is an extreme form of bullying and arguably homophobia at a provincial level. Few people realize that Glad Day went to court several times before their case with the Ontario Film Review Board case, shelling out about \$125 000 over twenty years to fight for the freedom of a queer retailer

to sell queer material: In 1982 they were charged with obscenity for selling a magazine called *Come Watch* (their guilty verdict was overturned on appeal); in 1987 they fought and beat Canada Customs' seizure of *The Joy of Gay Sex* as obscene; in 1992 they took Canada Customs to court over the seizure of about a dozen magazines with Judge Hayes seemingly deciding that any depiction of gay sex is "completely degrading" (and in some cases "subhuman") and harmful to the public, and the same year were charged with obscenity for selling the lesbian magazine *Bad Attitude* soon after the notorious Butler decision. The most recent witch-hunt over *Descent* cost \$100 000 for Glad Day to defend themselves. They won, and the courts instructed the province to essentially put the OFRB out of the pre-screening and censoring business. However, the real end result is that Glad Day is now very close to bankruptcy (even more so than usual for an independent queer bookstore) after what has been yet another long court battle that has extinguished their resources and left the staff exhausted and exasperated. What makes matters worse is that the province willfully went against the spirit of the superior court ruling by introducing a new law that maintains this intrusive privilege - and the precious revenue it generates - with a few minor changes, even raising the fines for disrespecting the procedure. They claim that they are out of the censorship business because they will now only classify and not censor non-adult films, and will turn potentially obscene adult material over to the police rather than ban

it, yet they still require prior restraint. That's why we're still so angry.

Another form of censorship? Gay and lesbian bookstores in Canada including Glad Day - and more famously, Little Sister's in Vancouver - regularly have shipments of pornographic and non-pornographic books and magazines stopped by Canada Customs under the suspicion that they might be obscene. In the Little Sister's case, the court found that queer bookstores' material is often "wrongly delayed, confiscated, destroyed, damaged, prohibited or misclassified." Customs' ridiculous policies of harassment are a clear case of abuse of power and discrimination as the same titles bound for mainstream bookstores are never seized. Customs also does not make any effort to get obviously non-obscene merchandise back to the store, sitting on it for ages - sometimes forever ("oops, we lost it!") - thus making sure that queer bookstores are severely punished for the chutzpah of importing merchandise, losing thousands of dollars with each shipment that is delayed or that never arrives, which Customs never compensates for.

So these are just two reasons why smut retailers are particularly interested in the Glad Day case, but what about the dozen or so independent media arts organizations that are here tonight to express their solidarity with Glad Day in opposition to the OFRB? We are in a bit more of a privileged position compared to retailers, we get exemptions that allow us to show whatever we please as long

as we make our film festivals and art galleries accessible to those eighteen and over, just like a peep show. (On a personal note, when I moved to Toronto from Montreal at the age of 22, I walked around the streets in a daze, shocked at the very idea that my adolescence spent exposed to art and film at the Cinémathèque Québécoise, the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma and the Musée d'Art Contemporain might never have actually happened if I had the ill luck of being born in Ontario!). This is cold comfort of course because if anyone other than a minor should decide what they watch, it should be the young'un's guardians, not that there's anything that a precocious tween couldn't find online that would put Kurt Kren or Bruce LaBruce to shame. In any case, we reject the tokenism of these exemptions because film and video are the only artistic media that are deemed to require prior restraint by the government before an audience can see them. We do not refuse because we think film and video should be a rarefied artistic medium exempt from scrutiny but because we think all moving images - hardcore porn included - should not require approval from the province before citizens have a chance to decide for themselves whether there is anything that we need protection from. Box office staff at arts venues have the personal power and political obligation to protest the law by allowing in any minors who are interested in seeing a piece of film or video art, regardless of their organization's official policy on the matter. It is vitally important that we as independent media arts organizations

refuse exemptions made just for us, and instead work to make sure that the OFRB is either abolished or put to the task of investigating complaints of obscenity, not what is currently considered obscene mind you, but the utopian definition that I will propose below.

Our draconian obscenity laws need to be re-hauled to prevent the abuses that have and continue to take place and we need to have a real conversation about what should and should not be considered obscene, led by experts in non-normative and queer sexuality and not by the heinous Butler decision. As feminist critics Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter have pointed out, the Canadian government's definition of obscenity as laid out in *Donald Butler vs. Her Majesty the Queen* follows the spirit of the more extreme elements of the American anti-porn feminist movement - aligned as it was with homophobic, right-wing Christian organizations - whose own municipal ordinances to ban pornography outright south of the border never achieved fruition. Essentially, in this model all pornography is treated as harmful and discriminatory towards women instead of morally objectionable, with some harmful enough to be illegal. Of particular interest to the Glad Day case is that these ordinances written by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin defined pornography as the "graphic sexually explicit subordination of women" and gay men who are "in the place of women" are defined as "women," therefore ignoring the specificity of gay male porn. But what is even more unsettling is that

this obscenity legislation has been used almost exclusively against artists and queer material rather than the straight pornocrats. The Film Classification Act abbreviates the convoluted dictates of Butler into the following guidelines:

(4) For the purposes of clause 7 (1) (c) of the Act, in exercising its powers to review and approve or refuse to approve a film under this section, the Film Board shall consider the film in its entirety, take into account the general character of the film and consider whether the film includes a depiction of,

- (a) explicit sexual activity coupled with violence;
- (b) explicit sexual activity that is degrading or dehumanizing; or
- (c) a person who is under the age of 18 years or is intended to represent someone under that age and the person appears,
 - (i) nude or partially nude in a sexually suggestive context, or
 - (ii) in a scene of explicit sexual activity. O. Reg. 452/05, s. 8 (4).

(5) The Film Board shall approve a film under this section if it does not include a depiction described in subsection (4) and may refuse to approve a film under this section if it includes such a depiction. O. Reg. 452/05, s. 8 (5).

As I stated above, consensual bondage could fall under the obscenity law, and there is quite simply no way that

anyone can decide for anyone else what can be considered "degrading and dehumanizing" or whether this is harmful. While now-illegal representations of S/M, fisting, water-sports and scat play should arguably be legal if one considers that degrading and dehumanizing treatment can in fact be consented to (a nuance that the law currently ignores in its oversimplifying refusal of porn performers' agency), it is probably clear to most people that video recordings of someone of any age being raped or of bestiality (cruelty to animals?) would immediately be illegal not for their obscenity but because they are evidence of actual criminal acts taking place. That is, of course, if one can tell, for example, whether a legal adult has consented to something or not just by watching them on video. (In a scene from Siobhan Devine's *My Tango with Porn* not included in tonight's programme, it is strongly implied that the OFRB's banning of *Baise-moi* in 2000 was due to board members' inability to distinguish dramatized from real rape.) Informed consent of the participants should be the deciding factor in whether a representation is criminal or not, but unfortunately this extraordinarily complex-and politically loaded-agreement is near-impossible to represent beyond a shadow of a doubt within the bounds of a film frame. Obviously, there is still a lot of necessary debate that needs to take place on this subject but it should be as obvious as dirt that non-normative-queer and/or S/M and fetish-sexual practices will be disproportionately targeted in an arrangement where bureaucracies rather than specific individuals (or even subcultural communities) could make such decisions.

Beyond obscenity, we have separate laws for child pornography that are among the strictest in the Western world. They are so broad in fact, that somehow the OFRB was not able to see any redeeming merit in Catherine Breillat's *Fat Girl*, instead banning in 2001 what is at heart a blunt and unromantic film about teenage sexuality (their ban was later reversed). While the laws dictate that people over fourteen can legally have sex in most circumstances (unless the Conservative Party's terrifying Justice Minister Vic Toews has anything to say about it - he wants to raise the age to sixteen) it is illegal to document said sex until one is eighteen. Rulings like *Fat Girl* fall under the totalitarian grey zone of material that is not pornographic but has nudity and non-explicit acts and where the actors look like or are playing characters under eighteen, even if they are over eighteen themselves. It should go without saying that youth must also be involved in the re-hauling of any laws around sexual representation as well, especially as the importance of their artistic and sexual educations are considered expendable in the name of their safety.

Perhaps most damaging of all is the chilling effect that such legislation has - artists afraid to make challenging work, retailers fearful of bringing important but controversial material into the country, funders and institutions afraid of aligning themselves with transgressive practices. One could read the Vancouver Art Gallery's cancellation of Paul Wong's *Confused: Sexual Views* in the eighties through this lens (Wong never faced charges) not to men-

tion the dozens of decisions that happen behind closed doors that determined that such-and-such an artist will not get funding from such-and-such a government arts agency because their work deals with issues that our society does not want to admit we are obsessed with: painful sex, dirty sex, teen sex. And then there is the work that is just too political. In conclusion, we congratulate Glad Day for their most recent victory and their tireless fight against institutionalized homophobia and for the freedom to read and watch whatever one pleases. The OFRB's audacity in flaunting the superior court ruling and continuing to maintain a greedy death-grip on their profitable powers of prior restraint is a huge blight on the cultural freedom of our province, and one that we must remain ever-vigilant in standing up to and fighting so that we can direct our attention to battles outside of the realm of representation.

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National Coalition Against Censorship.
<<http://www.ncac.org/>>

A Short Film/Videography of Censored Work and Work about Censorship:

National Film Board of Canada:

Little Sister's vs. Big Brother, Acrlyn Weissman, 47:00, 2002

Vtape:

After the Bath, John Greyson, 1995, 45:00

Byte, Lyla Rye, 2004, 5:00

Censored: The Business of Frightened Desires, Vera Frenkel, 1987, 25:00

Citizens Against Censorship, Ian Murray & Trinity Square Video, 1985, 180:00

Confused: Sexual Views [Compilation Edit], Paul Wong et al., 1984, 59:00

See Evil, Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak, 1985, 28:00

CFMDC:

Pleading Art, John Porter, 1992, 3:00

Rameau's Nephew..., Michael Snow, 1974, 270:00

The Art of Worldly Wisdom, Bruce Elder, 1979, 55:00

Misc.:

A Message from our Sponsor, Al Razutis, 1979, 9:00

The (Fetishistic) Cut by Jean-Paul Kelly

Marsha: I'm a bit nervous. I mean, I admit it, I've never done this before.

Mary: It's very simple all you have to do is say *cut*. If anything offends you just say *cut*.

Suzanne: We don't have to say it all together though...

Mary: No, then we can talk about it, what's wrong, what's right. And just discuss it. It's very democratic.

Marsha: And do we have to reach a unanimous decision? Or if one of us really believes that it's disgusting, for example...

Gerry: Well there is no, for instance, there is no, I believe, I've been on, I've served several times, and there really isn't a democratic process, I don't think that...

Mary: Well, really it's what I feel.

Suzanne: Well you are the most qualified.

Mary: But I want your support, you understand.

- from *Snip Snip* by Colin Campbell with Rodney Werden. Featuring Colin Campbell as Mary, chair of a nameless Film Review Board; Suzanne Gillies as Suzanne from the Anti-foot Fetish League; Marsha Roban as Marsha from the Humane Society; Lisa Steele as Gerry, a Sex Counselor from the Clark Institute; and Berenici as Bernise from Right to Life

The word 'cut' perforates the dialogue in Colin Campbell and Rodney Werden's *Snip Snip*. More than any other word spoken in the video it punctuates with celebratory, almost cathartic reverie from Campbell's film censor, Mary. For Mary, "the cut" is a thing, a thing that needs identification. She and her colleagues on the Film Review Board compulsively repeat, "That's a cut" or "Is that a cut?" It is less of a debate over where to cut the film as it is a question of identifying where "the cut" occurs.

In fact, the work that is reviewed in *Snip Snip*, a "kinky" Danish film called *Lesbian Picnic*, is never seen. Instead, we are given incredibly vague verbal descriptions of the film's content - and this only occurs when that content is characterized as objectionable by the Board. Even these objections are vague and meandering. We do, however, see the physical filmstrip. Mary cuts away at it. We see the physical substance of the medium as a thing that contains "the cut." While others on the panel deliberate over context-such as, in what context two or three fingers inserted in a vagina while masturbating is appropriate-Mary blankly ignores such trivial questions of content and gets right to work finding "the cut":

Gerry: You see there is a theory of self-pleasure that is not as for instance detrimental to the society if...

Marsha: But to get back to your word context, in the context of this film I think it's quite suspect.

Gerry: Well, yes. If it were simply one person for instance.

Mary: Was it at the point of two fingers in or three? [Mary gestures with her fingers along the filmstrip with two fingers, then three to where the cut will occur.]

Suzanne: Two.

Mary: Suzanne for two.

Suzanne: I'll start with two. If there's a disagreement I'm prepared to go with three.

Marsha: Two.

Mary: Marsha for two.

Bernice: Three.

Mary: Bernice for three?

Bernice: Three. Oh, just cut the whole thing.

Gerry: Well, I'm gonna abstain on this one. I think there's a context for the self-pleasure.

Mary: You think there's a context for the three fingers? Or two?

Gerry: Well it's the self-pleasure aspect of it, Mary. We've had this argument before. I bow to the majority in this case.

The debate does not matter to Mary. She takes "two or three fingers" to, literally, mean where the film should be cut-the physical cut. Holding the film print up to the light, she uses her own two fingers to make the cut somewhere near the point where two fingers are used in the film. Mary's hand, like all censor's hands, returns the moving image to the empirical laws of reality again and again. The film becomes objectionable material.

With "the cut" in the censor's hand, film or video is no longer permitted to have its own structure. Each edit-that is, each point where an artist or author creates meaning or a range of meaning by forcing two or more cuts to meet-is susceptible to the censors castration. The censor's singular cut is an attack on the construction of meaning-the meaning created from the artist's edit is altered or denied. Mary and her fellow suburban censors identify and replace the disgusting images in the narrative with cuts. But any primary referent to that disgust is quickly lost. The moment that a cut is made it creates a void-a rupture in the meaning of the work that signals lack. There is nothing there. There is no meaning and this is frightening. "The cut" is wide open.

Mary wants to control meaning. In fact, her job is just that. As a censor she controls meaning by deferring it away from the author's control. And although "the cut"

operates to remove disgust, when meaning is restricted in this process, lack appears as an even more troublesome repulsion than the precipitating content-based disgust. Mary's solution to this further revulsion, that of meaninglessness, is to do what we all do when faced with disgust. She fetishizes it. And here, she fetishizes her disgust in the form of "the cut"—a cut becomes "the cut." She uses the power of this fetish object, the censor's power, to sublimate her anxieties. It is reassuring rather than dangerous. Her friends also feel this relief when she cuts the film:

Bernice: I'm just so relieved when she cuts through that.

Suzanne: It's a purification of sorts isn't it?

Gerry: It's a very definite action. And that's the part that feels good.

But the power of "the cut," just as with any fetish object, is that it hides the acknowledgment of its deception. Mary and the girls like it because it denies what is bad and it "feels good." There is no reminder of disgust left by the cut. It is a metonymic endless deferral of meaning. It is not a metaphor. It does not stand in for something else. It obfuscates.

Fetish is effectively a kind of envers of the symptom. That is to say, symptom is the exception which disturbs the surface of the false appearance, the point at which the repressed truth erupts, while fetish is the embodiment of the Lie which enables us to sustain the unbearable truth... In this sense, a fetish can play a very constructive role of allowing us to cope with the harsh reality: fetishists are not dreamers lost in their private worlds, they are thoroughly

"realists," able to accept the way things effectively are - since they have their fetish to which they can cling in order to cancel the full impact of reality.

-Slavoj Zizek, "Self-Deceptions On Being Tolerant and Smug," *Die Gazette*, Israel, 27 August 2001

And, when a fetishist controls the cancellation or permission of representation, their fetish becomes meaning—"the cut" is legitimized and censorship applauded.

There is some serious, often vicious disdain for organized acts of suppression in the videos featured in this programme. Wayne Yung's *1000 Cumshots*, Lorna Boschman's *True Inversions*, *Snip Snip* and the guerilla style cable-access show *Glennnda and Camille Do Downtown* featuring anti-feminist feminist Camille Paglia and drag queen Glennnda Orgasm, all employ some form of aggressive elision against those who would censor. Though the pieces by Yung and Boschman are more personally reflective than *Snip Snip* or *Glennnda and Camille*, they are not quiet, contemplative ruminations on the issue. All of these works use similar rhetorical devices to elide cultural repression. In each work, metaphor and irony are used to relinquish the dominion of the censor and "the cut": metaphor is used in the form of visible, irregular edits that are symptomatic of overbearing regulated standards; and irony exposes the fallaciousness of the censor's anxiety.

"An edit," the meeting of two or more cuts, is a metaphor. When an artist or author dictates the meeting of an 'out-point frame' and an 'in-point frame,' meaning is constructed. It is opposed by the censor's forced violation of mean-

ing. The point of contact between frames is an empty one. The fetishistic cut denies this lack. "An edit" fills that liminal space of nothingness as a metaphoric symptom from which repressed meaning from all the sources edited together erupts. "An edit" is not a frayed end. "The cut" is. "An edit" is what Jacques Lacan would call a *point de caption*, or an "anchoring point." It is a literal "upholstery button." For Lacan, signification requires this point so that "the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification" (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, Tavistock, 1977, 303). In other words, the "button" stops the constant deferral of meaning found in metonymy by making metaphor. Meaning does not pass continually, uninterrupted, and unacknowledged from one cut to another. "An edit" stands in between and marks the substitution of one idea for another. "An edit" is not supplemental to the meaning suggested in the narrative structure. "An edit" constructs meaning.

These artists' videos strategically use the edit to expose what might lie beyond the physicality of the medium, beyond the physical splice. This practice stands apart from and critiques the invisible, continuity-based editing of Hollywood cinema and commercial television by replacing that set of stylistic criteria with separate set of standards. Here, rapid, often uneven, low quality editing is employed as a metaphorical challenge, not only to what is accepted in commercial venues, but to a system that requires the submission of all titles for review. Most of the works shown this evening contain either intention-

ally abrupt, uneven editing from scene to scene or stylistic elements that deliberately problematize "standards" of production: both *Snip Snip* and *Glennnda and Camille Do Downtown* use all the trappings of low-budget cable access shows; Wayne Yung's *1000 Cumshots* builds to a clamorous finale with an onslaught of screen-noise in an excessively rapid montage; and, while skillfully produced, Lorna Boschman's *True Inversions*, contains conscious non-diegetic inserts that trouble easy analysis of the video's content. Such strategies undermine the invisible process of censorship by exposing the limitations of the language and systems used to affirm or deny content.

Of course meaning and the ability to represent meaning are precisely what is censured in censorship. "An edit" is vulnerable to "the cut." When submitting a film or video to a ratings or censor board, that work's meaning is susceptible to being eradicated by the fetish of the censor's cut: to re-cut a film or video, to use "the cut" to remove what is represented, is a final, irreversible alteration of the work. This reconstituted form is a harbinger of what is missing, of what is lacking. "The cut" haunts the censored work like a ghost.

But like Mary, the censor, compelled by "The (fetishistic) cut," is not concerned with the artists' voice. Censorship does not regard the experimentation with set standards or constraints that is often imperative to creation and development as an integral part of the work. The censor is only concerned with presenting the power to restrict

meaning that they hold in "the cut." To preserve this dominion and to enjoy of "the cut," the censor must hold tight to the disavowing disgust of "the cut." Any threat to the sovereignty of "the cut" and to the resulting autonomy that it provides the censor can only develop when the primary disgust, the profane transgression appearing onscreen, is incapacitated. The deftest critiques of censorship, like the works featured in this screening, polemically challenge the dominion of the taboo. When what is culturally sanctioned as "disgust" is refuted or opposed, the censor is forced reveal the meaning behind "the cut." And this meaning is, of course an empty deferral of the disgusting threat.

The perverse or taboo presented in these videos cannot become the fetish-object of the censor's gaze because disgust is already disavowed within their texts. Here, the power of the taboo is ironically obfuscated by the overt presentation of the taboo. When it is permitted to show, when it isn't cut, the primary disgust, the objectionable material in the visual content under review, is vulnerable to interpretation. This is what frightens censors the most. In this process, these authors' are able to produce multiple meaning outside of and other than the meaning of disgust.

True Inversions features a complex, ironic back and forth between confession and performance; real-life lovers and onscreen pornographic lovers; seduction and rape *fantasy*. But here, none of these oppositions are ever clear. There may be a little confession in performance, a little

performance in confession, and perhaps a little seduction in a rape *fantasy*, a little bit of rape *fantasy* in seduction.

Camille Pagila would agree with this latter pairing. In *Glennnda and Camille Do Downtown*, she calls for a revision of the intolerant classification of seduction as an removed from physical risk. Standing at the edge of the piers on New York City's West Side, Hudson River, Camille and Glennnda talk:

Camille: Yes. You really risk death *here*. The timbers seem *shattered* with the force of so many orgasms!

Glennnda: But that's the thing that gay men understand—the *risks* that you take sometimes in these public situations, that there's a little bit of a thrill. And maybe it's irresponsible, but if that's what you're *into*, you know, you have a *right*, if you want to come out here. Maybe you'll fall in the water, maybe you won't!

Camille: That's exactly right, Glennnda. This is what I'm always saying about the feminist problem with date rape, okay? That gay men understand there is *risk* and danger in sexuality, particularly the outlaw kind. I've learned so much from gay men. I'm sick and tired of women *subtling*. They go on a date, they get in this car with a stranger, go to a man's room, and then they're surprised when something happens, you know? I mean, I love the gay male attitude, which is to go out into the dark, have anonymous sex. Right from the period of the Roman Empire—under the arches of the Colosseum—people understood that you go out on a sexual adventure as a gay man, you may not come home again. You may get beaten up. That's one of the *thrills*.

And whether or not you agree with her, it is her right to say that sex is risky. Furthermore, it is her right to see pictures or buy pictures of adults performing this *risk*. Paglia's fight is against rigid sexual identity and the repre-

sentations that go with it. She wants to show the taboo so that the taboo can enter into representation, defeating its taboo.

Wayne Yung's work similarly debates strict standards in sexual longing and its representation. *1000 Cumshots* is just that, a thousand images of muscular, white gay men cumming. They all look the same; the same skin; the same abs; the same peccs; the same cocks. Desire is limited through these limitations in representation. These men are standards to be held against. As Yung's disturbing inset text states, "Welcome to the White Party / No Fats, Fems, or Asians." He further inserts an image of his own Asian body, coloured as white, masturbating atop these image ideals. Here, we are witness to pornography's own taboo on 'otherness.' But when his text and body are superimposed on these ideal bodies and onto the meaning they connote, this representation stops the deferral of the 'other.'

As I have explored, in *Snip Snip* a disavowal of the literal meaning of the anxiety that mediates censorship occurs. In anxiety's place, "the cut" as fetish, gains representation—"the cut" has form. We see it on the blade edge of Mary's scissors. Like Boschman, Glenda, Camille, and Yung, Campbell and Werden succeed in representing disgust. Here, censorship is conflated by metaphor and ironic reversal. The ironic disavowal and twist is that, what gains representation, the disgust or taboo that we are finally permitted to see, is "the cut." And now that we can see it, we can choose whether or not to close our eyes to it.

Notes on Glad Day by Sholem Krishtalka

1. Once it dawned on me that I had a sexuality at all, I made my way towards the realization of my homosexuality slowly, tangentially. Although, ask anyone who knew me during my high school years, and they might tell a different tale, of a boy so flaming, his closet burned down around him. Nevertheless, what was apparent to all was not apparent to me, and so my sexual self-discovery was halting and slow, until dark clouds parted, heavenly choirs sang, and warm rays of beneficent (pink) light bathed me in epiphany.

I wish I could say that reading played a part in this. Alas, I had not yet discovered the joys of reading for its own sake (I was a comic-book kind of kid). But the dawning of my gaiety and my appreciation for literature dovetailed nicely, and I, like so many others, started looking for forebears and precedent in books (I am, after all, the son of a librarian and a historian). I discovered Tennessee Williams, Oscar Wilde, Plato's *Symposium*, a bright pink hardcover volume entitled *Becoming Visible*, and, lest you think that my tastes in literature were in any way high-brow, Anne Rice (confession: at 17, I enjoyed Anne Rice the most). The search continued.

Another memory of books and self-discovery: not being able to muster up the courage to actually walk into L'Androgyne, my native Montreal's (now defunct) gay bookstore. Instead I furtively cruised the aisles of the "Cultural Studies" section of the downtown Chapters. For titillation-still too shy for porn-I bided my time in the art book section of Renaud-Bray, enticed by conveniently displayed browsing copies of Pierre et Gilles and Tom of Finland monographs, and the well-thumbed, encyclopedic Taschen tome entitled *The Male Nude*.

2. Tempus fugit. I found myself newly installed in Toronto, and working at Glad Day Bookshop. I was hired shortly after the legal debacle arising from the charges over the porn video *Descent*. I had never really paid attention to queer civic battles in Canada, but nevertheless, I knew of Glad Day as a fighter in said battles. This, combined with the circumstances preceding my hire, gave my otherwise mundane, bookish job an air of danger and suspense (I could be jailed at any moment!). It also awakened my inner activist, and, though I no longer work at Glad Day, I cherish it for being (among other things) the midwife to this realization.

3. The tables had turned: when I started at Glad Day, I was 24, secure in my blazing camp faggotry, still wanting, but no longer needing, to discover parentage and precedent. Now, from the elevated dais of the cash area, I watched the insecure young boys (16, 15, sometimes

even younger) take their first tentative steps into Glad Day, either on their own, or pushed (or dragged) by their wee fag hags, or their pedagogically-minded lesbian aunts.

Their progress through the store tended to be the same from person to person: initially, they sought titillation (and, more importantly, a reflection of their desire) in the hard-bound volumes of soft-core porn (still too shy for hard-core), and then, slowly, they would make their way over to the 'Coming Out' section. And inevitably, they would turn towards the cash and each ask the same timorous question: was there a book they could give their parents to help them understand?

My inner Jewish mother screamed with *naches*.

4. My discourse overruneth with nostalgia. This is dangerous; nostalgia is dangerous. It has its uses, but nostalgia acts like an over-exposed photograph, creating a flat image, seductive in its brightness, obliterating the darker features, limiting the comprehension of a fuller picture. There is a peculiar kind of nostalgia endemic amongst my generation of young gay men, peculiar because it is felt for a period during which we weren't yet alive. Generally, there is a nostalgia for pre-AIDS queer sexuality. It's easy to find evidence of this: in a resurgence of interest in late 70s and early 80s porn, for example. I think I can safely make the generalization that my generation

grew up in the shadow of AIDS (when that infamous, ominous *New York Times* byline about 'Gay Cancer' was published, I was two). By the time we reached puberty, the fury of ACT-UP had either faded to an exhausted ember, or had dissipated completely. Sex could be fatal, we were told. The only queers I remember seeing in the media were on talk shows, fragile gaunt men who told the history of their illness, rather than their lives. And now, we find ourselves living in the age of drug cocktails, of *Will & Grace* and *Queer as Folk*, and the issue of marriage overshadowing any other queer legal issue. So this nostalgia is understandable: it is a longing for a time when marginality meant exclusivity, when there was something unignorable to be furious about, when sex was largely unencumbered by mortal fear, when queer pornography and literature were partners in licentiousness, when the issue of precedent and pedagogy was a tool of cultural survival, where, amid the photographs of an elephantine-membered centrefold of "In Touch" magazine, there were articles on Edmund White and an interview with Al Pacino about *Cruising*.

5. This might seem like rampant boosterism, but I am adamant in the belief that Glad Day Bookshop embodies the best parts of this nostalgia. It (and its employees) face constant reminders of the still-present institutional oppression of queers, now hidden under the smiling veneer of a tolerance grudgingly necessitated by our viability as a niche market; the *Descent* business is the

most recent and most famous example, but there are scores of others, some that preceded my tenure there (does anyone remember *The Joy of Gay Sex* scandal?), and some that I had to deal with myself: shipments of queer books are still vandalized, rendered un-sellable, by customs officials (in my particular case, a huge shipment of soft-core erotica from Germany had been doused in cooking oil, staining the pages and dissolving the printer's ink). Shipments of other books and magazines must be done clandestinely, as our government and our courts have deemed that certain acts performed between consenting adults cannot be shown, that our desires and fantasies must still be policed.

It is common for customers to come to the cash with a curious mixture of products: porn mags and (non-erotic) books and poppers; where else in this city can you get, in the same shopping trip, in the same store, a copy of *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* and "Latin Inches"? Where else can you get a remaindered copy of Gore Vidal's 1000-some-odd page tome *United States: Essays 1952-1992* and a 1972 issue of "ManDate"? Or a monograph of portraits by David Hockney, a DVD of *Paris is Burning* and Jack Morin's *Anal Pleasure and Health*? In this, Glad Day embodies the belief that we cannot separate our literature from our pornography, our stories and our histories from our desires and lusts; Glad Day knows (and has paid the legal and financial price for this knowledge) that if the social and political majorities had their way, these would all be contraband substances.

6. Glad Day Bookshop is necessary, and, despite the current faddish obsession with declaring all things exclusively queer dead and buried, despite the legal imbroglios, despite the scores of homosexuals who, for one reason or another, do their book shopping at Indigo or at Amazon.com, Glad Day Bookshop, embattled shell of its former self, still exists. It is a storehouse of our histories (our forebears, our precedents) and our stories (our reflections, our contemporaries) and our desires ("Cocksucker's Double Dose!").

Glad Day exists for the curious, the highbrow, the lowbrow, the art-fags, the pornhounds, the sexually virtuosic, the sexually naïve, the lesbian mystery fiend, the Jewish FTM rabbi erotica aficionado, the two baby-dykes out there somewhere who haven't yet read Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, the nascent tranny in search of grooming tips, the vintage collector; for queers of all colours, sizes, and predilections. And, most importantly, Glad Day exists for the young, the closeted, the curious.

7. Since the *raison d'être* for this benefit is Glad Day Bookshop's legal battle, which itself has been the result of what, in the days of yore, would have been called a "morals charge," I think it's appropriate to end by asserting the morality of Glad Day, and the morals of this essay:

- The "Cultural Studies" section of Chapters is a terrible substitute for a queer bookstore.
- Identity craves parentage.

- Parentage is no less valid if it happens to be found in a surreal porno psychodrama starring a sultry, taciturn hunk named Aiden Shaw.
- Accessorize any 'highbrow' literary purchase with smut.
- Shopping at Glad Day is an act of resistance: against corporate culture, against censorship, against assimilation, against the erasure of our history.
- Shopping at Glad Day is good for the soul.

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