

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES EXHIBITION NO. 56

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The following selection includes editions by artists published by the San Francisco-based periodical, *THE THING Quarterly*, and by the following Toronto-based publishers, drawn from the Library and Archives collection: Art Metropole, Nothing Else Press, Paul + Wendy Projects and Slow Editions.

## CHECKLIST

- 1. LUCY PULLEN**, [Being/Event] *THE THING Quarterly* 5 (2008). One wood block object; one folded sheet; in box 24 × 13 × 10 cm.
- 2. JOHN BALDESSARI**, [Untitled] *THE THING Quarterly* 22 (2014). Two standard pillowcases, cotton sateen, silkscreened images; in box 28 × 35 × 4 cm.
- 3. DAVID KORTY**, [Untitled] *THE THING Quarterly* 23 (2014). Six handmade ceramic dice; one dice carrying bag; one folded sheet with instructions and information; in box 16 × 12 × 3 cm.
- 4. GABRIEL OROZCO**, "Black Feather," *THE THING Quarterly* 26 (2015). One boomerang, aircraft-grade birch; one folded sheet; in box 27 × 27 × 37 × 4 cm.
- 5. MICHELLE GRABNER**, [Untitled] *THE THING Quarterly* 27 (2015). One patterned soccer ball, leather; one folded sheet; in box 23 × 23 × 23 cm.

Michelle Grabner, born in 1962, lives and works in Oak Park, Illinois, and has contributed a gingham-patterned soccer ball for *The Thing*. Her recent paintings are modelled after textiles that consist of brightly coloured gingham patterns and were included in a survey exhibition of her art entitled *I Work from Home*, held in 2014 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland. In addition to her work as an artist, she operates a gallery from her home and is a published art critic, curator and Chair of the Painting and Drawing Department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Grabner's gingham-patterned ball is an actual soccer ball. Her piece was made in response to a condescending and sexist review of another exhibition of her work by *The New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson. His final sentence imagines the artist as "a middle-class tenured professor and soccer mom." The review generated a torrent of commentaries and letters to the editor. Grabner's soccer ball is held in place in a cardboard frame; emblazoned on one side of the frame are the directions: "For use in all situations at any time and any place." True to form, the artist and mom has kicked the ball back into her critic's end of the field!

- 6. KEN KAGAMI**, [Hidden Body Parts Bath Towel] *THE THING Quarterly* 31 (2016). One bath towel, one booklet; in box 38 × 21 × 10 cm.
- 7. GARRY NEILL KENNEDY**, *Garry Neill Kennedy: Drawings* (Vancouver: Emily Carr University Press and Publication Studio; Toronto: Art Metropole, 2015). Three vols. in slipcase, 29 × 22 × 10 cm.
- 8. GARRY NEILL KENNEDY**, *The Big Five*, Edition 48/50 (Toronto: Nothing Else Press, 2016). Five coasters in a printed sleeve; 13 × 13 cm.

**9. MICAH LEXIER**, *Stuffed Envelope*, Edition 19/50 (Toronto: Paul + Wendy Projects, 2015). One piece of printed cotton in an envelope; 10 × 17 cm.

**10. VANESSA MALTESE**, *Ornament Swatch* (Toronto: The Nothing Else Press, 2014), Edition 11/15. One wooden object, acrylic on wood, stainless steel hinges; one card; 19 × 6 × 4 cm.

**11. VANESSA MALTESE**, *Cold Read* (Toronto: Paul + Wendy Projects, 2015), Edition 9/50. One serigraph, 38 × 53 cm, folded to 38 × 27 cm.

**12. VANESSA MALTESE**, *Several Observations* (Toronto: Slow Editions, 2015), Edition 69/100.

**13. VANESSA MALTESE**, *Drawing, no. 23* (Toronto: C Magazine, 2015), (Posters for Toronto; 5), Edition 150. One risograph print, 38 × 26 cm.

Vanessa Maltese, born in 1988, lives and works in Toronto, and has had work published by Nothing Else Press, Paul + Wendy Projects and Slow Editions. She was the national winner of the 2012 Royal Bank of Canada Canadian Painting Competition. Maltese's works explore the meaning of a piece, as well as the materials used in painting: paint, canvas and stretcher. The artist constructs sets from pieces of patterned fabrics and small bits of discarded wood to serve as models for her paintings. The multiple layers, colours and patterns found within her sets are flattened in the process of painting, redefining the viewer's sense of scale, mass, and movement. Maltese's editions explore similar themes.

Maltese's painted sculpture, *Ornament Swatch*, is reminiscent of a child's toy. The size of the work, its hinges, the varied motifs and the bright primary colours allow you either to compare or to isolate the pieces of her design, as you would before deciding on the design of a room or a house. The surfaces of each element of the sculpture "collapse" into a painting when the motifs are brought together. As the title implies, we are free to experiment the various "swatches." *Cold Read* is a serigraph in which the artist has used one of paper's defining characteristics – it can be folded – to produce a palindromic image. Upon opening the page, flat images mirror each other, thereby transforming multiple shapes and colours, and alluding to another dimension. In her artist's book, *Several Observations*, Maltese reproduces a series of drawings of black-striped patterns in a variety of configurations: folded, crushed, punctured, cut out and scratched. There is even a profile of a flattened insect on the last page. The pages are mounted on boards and fore-edged in black, emphasizing the book's sculptural qualities. The book is, in fact, about a work in action.

**PETER TREPANIER**  
Head, Reader Services (retired)

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES EXHIBITION

## NO. 56

## 4 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER 2017

# THE THING QUARTERLY AND A FEW OTHER THINGS

**Artists' multiples and books endorse the manufactured product as a form of art. They are usually three-dimensional objects produced in "unlimited" quantities, using techniques associated with industrial reproduction and distribution. In the spirit of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, the multiple became a subversive art form. The hand is withdrawn completely from the creation of a multiple, and the object's very multiplicity undermines the making of unique works of art. No single copy takes precedence over another, nor is it more desirable or more valuable than another.**

In this way, a work of art is made more affordable for more collectors and can be disseminated and experienced simultaneously by many people in various locations. At first glance, the artwork mimics the look of an ordinary mass-produced object. Cheaper to acquire than a unique object and defying the culture of exclusivity, artist-generated multiples often comment on or resemble objects found in our consumer-oriented world. The Library and Archives collection includes approximately 1,600 books and 1,500 multiples by artists, some of whom are also represented in the Gallery's permanent collection.

*THE THING Quarterly*, founded in 2007, edited by Jonn Herschend and Will Rogan, and published in San Francisco, is a periodical in the form of a "useful" object created by an artist. Each number is mailed in a customized, brown cardboard box and is clearly identified on the outside by the journal's title, issue and name(s) of the artist(s) contributor(s). Each issue is focused on creating a work of art, rather than documenting or chronicling an artist's work. A brief descriptive or contextual text accompanying the work is also included.

Contributors range from emerging artists, such as Lucy Pullen (Issue 5), to more established, internationally known artists, such as John Baldessari (Issue 22). Objects encompass a wide variety of items: a pair of pillowcases (Issue 22); ceramic dice (Issue 23); a boomerang (Issue 26); a bath towel (Issue 28); and even subscription renewal notices, which include a pencil that is inscribed with a reminder to renew, a map and a calendar.

Many of the examples of artists' multiples and books in the Library and Archives' collection owe their existence to conceptual

art and the legacy of works found within its Art Metropole Collection. Art Metropole is an artist-run centre founded in 1974 by the artists' group General Idea (1968–1994). One of the first artist-run centres in Canada, Art Metropole is part of the international network of parallel galleries committed to conceptual art. The artwork (artists' books, audio tapes, videotapes, and multiples) produced and documentation about the movement were collected, catalogued and preserved by Art Metropole. The work was exhibited there, lent for exhibition to other organizations, and made available to researchers. Art Metropole's other activities include a publication program that concentrates on producing works that relate to the material it collects and exhibits. It also operates a distribution program that sells in its bookstore, its own publications as well as those by other artists (including books, catalogues, special editions and videotapes). In 1996, Art Metropole ceased its collecting activities in order to focus on its exhibition, publication and distribution programs. In 1999, the art work, documentation and archives collected and preserved by Art Metropole were donated to the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives by Jay A. Smith of Toronto. In 2006, the National Gallery of Canada celebrated the occasion by mounting an exhibition entitled *Art Metropole: The Top 100* and publishing an accompanying catalogue. The exhibition showcased 100 items selected from nearly 13,000 objects in the Art Metropole Collection, introducing the work to a broader audience.

In addition to Art Metropole, there are now several publishers of artists' multiples and books located in Toronto. Many of these publishers have parallel and crossover interests, each having selected several of

the same artists, as in the case of Toronto-based artist Vanessa Maltese. Paul + Wendy Projects' editions comprise works by Canadian artists, including Michael Dumontier, Dave Dymont, Micah Lexier, Vanessa Maltese, Roula Partheniou and Derek Sullivan, as well as pieces by internationally based artists. The editions have been shown at the Burnaby Art Gallery, British Columbia (2014), and in the exhibition of the 2014 Sobey Art Award finalists (Winnipeg, Manitoba). Founded by the artists Dave Dymont and Roula Partheniou in 2006, the Nothing Else Press is also dedicated to the publication of artists' books and multiples. Its name was inspired by the Something Else Press, the 1960s publisher of artists' books and multiples based in New York City and established by the artist Dick Higgins, who is affiliated with the Fluxus group. The Nothing Else Press is committed to showcasing both celebrated international artists (David Shrigley, Jonathan Monk, Cary Leibowitz) and Canadian artists, varying from emerging artists (Vanessa Maltese [10–13]) to established figures in the national contemporary art community. Garry Neill Kennedy [7–8] and Micah Lexier [9], both winners of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts, are two of Canada's more prolific producers of printed matter. Exhibitions of their printed work have been featured in National Gallery of Canada Library exhibitions. In addition, both artists have catalogues of printed matter. The Nothing Else Press invites artists to collaborate on various projects, with the aim of producing work that is affordable and accessible. Eunice Luk, the artist and publisher of Slow Editions, publishes books under her imprint, choosing work sympathetic to her own art. Her books bring attention to form, design, and material in a simple and skilful way.