

ART

As you read this article, only one thing is required of you—that you think of socks: Are your feet bare or are they clad in sports socks, toe socks, trouser socks or glittery hose? Are all of your socks happily coupled or is there a bag of widowed socks in your closet, interned there by your vain hope that their mates will return?

Toronto-based artist **SANDY PLOTNIKOFF** could probably deliver a partner for each of those socks, should he be so inclined. Great mounds of socks insulate his room; the sofa is nearly obscured by piles of them. "You might want to move those out of the way," he says as I eye the sofa, wondering where to sit.

These—er—*foot sheaths* have a range of purposes; though the most compelling is starring in videos. Plotnikoff pulls sock after sock onto his feet until the layers become serpentine deformities. It's a funny, but unsettling process that, when inverted, becomes an intimate revelation: the colourful snakes shedding to reveal a shockingly bare and vulnerable foot.

"No, I don't have a foot fetish," says Plotnikoff, wearied by a question that wasn't yet asked. True enough, his interests extend above the ankle. One series features hats festooned with snaps and then joined as streamers; another work is a series of photographs of Plotnikoff wearing hoodie sweatshirts, set against complementary or discordantly coloured elements in the background.

Why clothes? Perhaps Plotnikoff's drawn by the intimacy of the materials; perhaps he uses socks simply because nearly everyone has bags of widowed ones to donate.

"I don't often steal them," offers a grinning Plotnikoff. "But I have been caught with some I



don't have permission to take." Ever the gentleman, Plotnikoff even leaves an explanatory booklet in exchange for the socks he takes. "Really, though, people usually just hand them to me."

Then, from an overflowing closet, Plotnikoff withdraws an envelope that's packed with—wait for it—socks. From deep in the bag he retrieves a note caught in the jumble, the word "enjoy," scrawled across the jagged scrap of paper. "See," he says, as if defending his grand collection, "people like to give me their socks. They really do." To find out about upcoming shows, or donate socks, send an email to sandy-plot@yahoo.com —Buffy Childerhose

MEDIA

Vancouver, home to Greenpeace, grow-ops and Wreck Beach, is a world of its own. Glorifying this "otherness" is the scrappy, lefty, fortnightly indie newspaper **THE REPUBLIC OF EAST VANCOUVER**.

East Van is the only area in British Columbia that consistently elects NDP members, federally and provincially and the Republic reflects that in its coverage and editorial stance.

While occasionally alarmist (witness the headline "Rolling Black-Outs for BC by August?") and fond of picking easy targets (Conrad Black's attempt at Barony, Stockwell Day), the *Republic* is strong, smart and filled with actual news and opinions, instead of condo and beer ads. Recent issues have reported on everything from the continuing leaky condo fiasco, to how NAFTA might affect B.C. Hydro, to the cultural stagnation caused by the Beatles.



Given that the city's tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum dailies are (or were) both owned by Southam, and alt-weekly fixture the *Georgia Straight* continues to accept Hollywood press junkets, the need for tough-questions journalism has never been more pressing. The power of the press belongs to those who own one, wrote A.J. Liebling—and *The Republic* clearly belongs to the community that inspired it. For subscription information email magpie@lynx.bc.ca or phone (604) 253-6413. —Ryan Bigge

PERFORMANCE

When the first performance artists hit the streets of urban Italy a century ago, a pissed-off public, alarmed by the "revolutionary" antics, threw fruits and veggies grabbed off nearby market stalls. These days, small-scale stagings generally attract only the most worshipping, but once in a while, performance artists try to win over a wider audience. This fall, for example, marks the return of the **LIVE BIENNIAL OF PERFORMANCE ART**, a joint effort by 14 of Vancouver's arts organizations. That's LIVE as in rhymes-with-hive, as in art that walks, talks and even hangs from a fire escape.

Though this is only the biennial's second incarnation, Van Groovy's love affair with performance art dates back to the 1960s, when the first batch of risqué work was unleashed. "The reason Vancouver does the festival," says Grunt



Gallery's Glenn Alteen, "is because the galleries recognize a certain performative tradition that exists here." Artist Vincent Trasov, for one, ran Mr. Peanut as a mayoral candidate in 1974. The city's First Nations community has spawned a fair share of performers, too. Alteen also points to performative elements in the work of photo-based artists Jeff Wall and Stan Douglas, two of Vancouver's hottest exports.

Continuing the tradition at LIVE are more than 20 local and international artists, includ-

ing Rebecca Belmore (Canada), Alvin Tolerino (Canada), Victoria Stanton (Canada), Robert Ashley (U.S.) and Lorena Wolffer (Mexico).

Wolffer will work a double-shift at this year's LIVE. The cultural activist and artist is curating a performance art fashion show at Western Front (a veteran supporter of live art) and staging her own piece, a critique of the North American Free Trade Agreement's effect on Mexican women. Other much-hyped pieces include Lisa Deanne Smith's white-on-white *Bliss* and Radix Theatre's *Sniffy the Rat 10th Anniversary Bus Tour*. Something about a rodent-rescue scandal. You'll have to figure it out yourself.

LIVE launches October 13. Participating organizations include Western Front, Video In, Art-speak, Or Gallery, and the Helen Pitt Gallery. For more information, contact Grunt Gallery at 604-875-9616 or www.grunt.bc.ca. —Janina Fogels