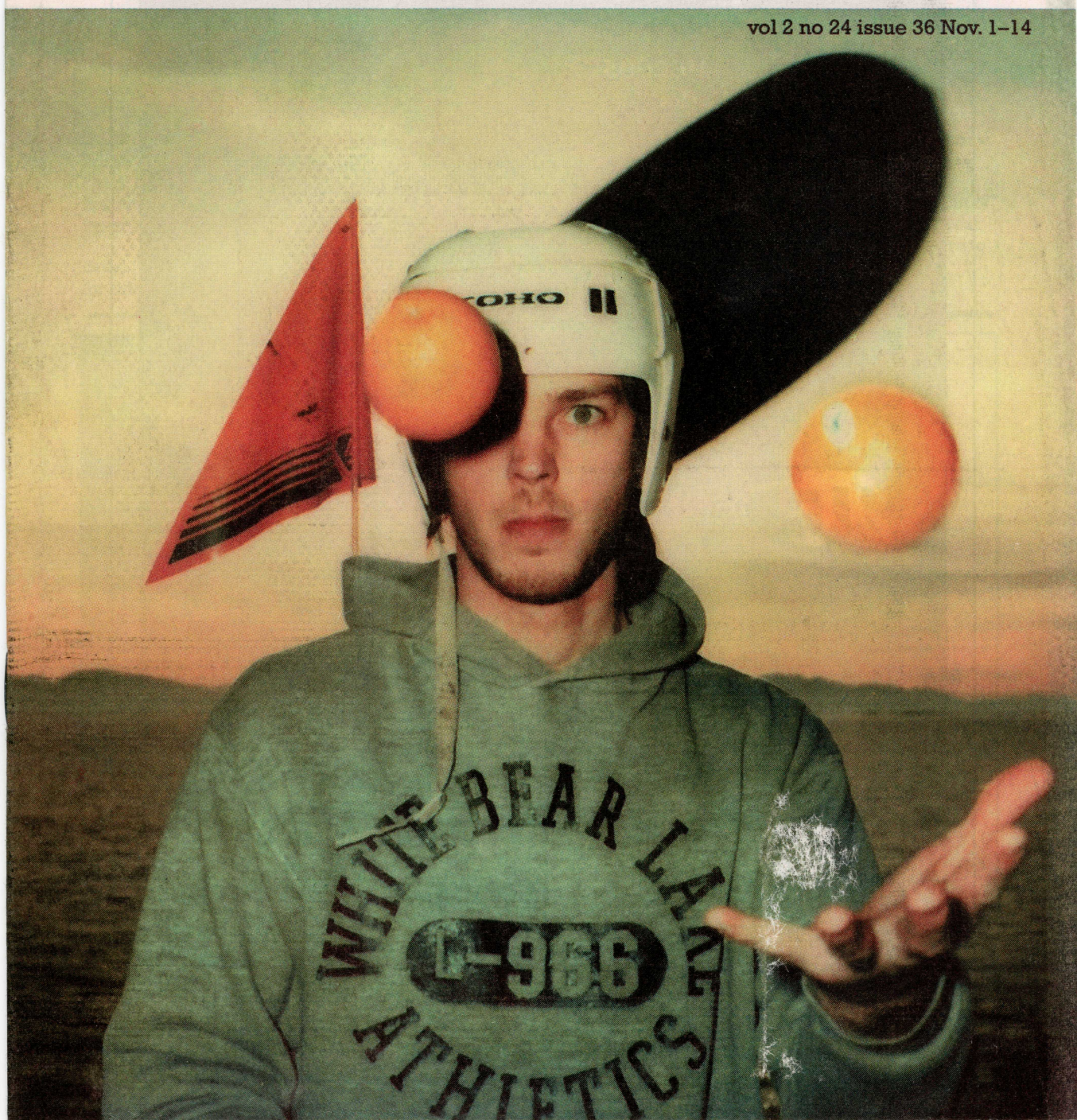


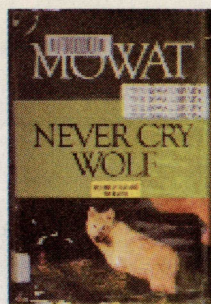
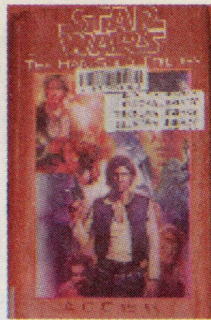
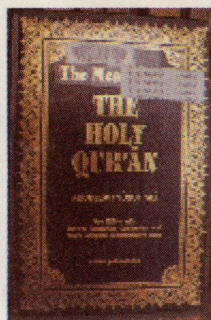
Only

MAGAZINE

Cow Does the Doers · Nova Library · Civic Breakdown

vol 2 no 24 issue 36 Nov. 1-14





RELATIONAL ART AT THE VPL

HANS WINKLER'S NOVA LIBRARY

BY MARTIN THACKER

Those to whom We have given the Book rejoice at what hath been revealed unto thee: but there are among the clans those who reject. (Surah 13 Al Rad) (The Holy Qur'an)

LAST WEEK MARKED THE OPENING of the *Nova Library* at the VPL. The *Nova* is a library within a library, a reading room comprised of books recommended by the drug-addicted community of East Vancouver. The *Nova Library* is also a new site-specific project by conceptual artist Hans Winkler. Based alternately out of Berlin and New York, Winkler has been making art within the public sphere for over twenty years. Last weekend, while in New York, Winkler generously participated in a lengthy conversation with the *Only* over our high-tech VoIP line and revealed some of his motivations and concerns with his recent project in Vancouver.

The beginnings of the project go back two years ago when Glen Alteen of the Grunt Gallery invited Hans Winkler to do a project here. Being immediately drawn to the East Side for its contradictory nature, he spent time walking around and speaking to people from VANDU and other organizations. The idea to do a library came from noticing a lot of people in the community liked to read and that junkies spend a lot of time at the public library. So with the help of Glen Alteen and Chris Livingston, Winkler asked a large sampling of the addict community to recommend up to three books to be included in the *Nova* collection.

The collection now comprises an eclectic set of over five hundred books and is collaged together in odd arrangements. For example, one can find the *Qur'an* next to Ken Kesey. The dominant themes of the collection seem to be the hippy and beat writers, native spirituality, various self-help manuals, and a lot of fantasy and science fiction (running the gamut from Aldous Huxley to Conan books). No one was too

surprised, that after all the data was tallied, Hunter S. Thompson walked away with the honour of most popular writer, nudging out some of the other icons of the 60's and 70's like Ginsburg and Burroughs (whose book *Nova Express* is the text the Library takes its name from).

Winkler sees the books as a sort of collage of ideas, bringing together the structures of different worlds. Books and other cultural products function as signs for ideas and ideology and in recent years we have been forming online communities based on lists of favourite music, movies and books, reading into the personalities of strangers based on their preference in cultural products. This cultural logic has also been adapted by a number of artists working in various media. Art made through the sampling and collage of existing cultural works has drawn critical attention and been theorized under the rubric of "Relational Aesthetics" and "Post Production," most notably by the French critic Nicolas Bourriard.

In the case of Winkler's *Nova Library*, he can be said to create an aesthetic through the collage of not only the texts, but also through playing with the structures of the larger communities and institutions involved in the project. The addiction haunting the DTES runs parallel to the addiction that often haunts writers everywhere, and is one of the main structural components of this relational aesthetic engaged by Winkler. In Berlin a lot of the writers are on drugs, he says, and the connection between writing and drug addiction does seem to claim a universality spanning cultures and time. Like Li Po, my favourite ancient Chinese poet, who writes incredibly nuanced accounts of his various drunken states.

For the next four weeks, the *Nova Library* can be found on the main level of the VPL in the 'recreational reading area' where it has displaced the Western genre fiction.

Dream (311 W. Cordova) is opening a show of new works by Colleen Baran entitled *Clouds* (pictured) on Thursday, Nov 3rd at 7:00. Then there will be lots to do on Friday the 4th, International writer and curator Jens Hoffman will be speaking at Emily Carr (Granville Island). At Access Artist Run Centre, Peter Conlin opens his show *Between All and Nothing*. Later at 10pm, the members of *Book of Lists* will be showing art and performing some music at Anti Social.

And at The Helen Pitt backroom gallery, Terry Ray Brown has a solo show.

