

# BIA GAYOTTO



**BIA GAYOTTO** is a Los Angeles-based artist and educator whose interdisciplinary approach combines elements of performance, documentation, and ethnography, and involves a profound engagement with collaboration and

chance operations. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in exhibitions, including the Orange County Museum of Art (Newport Beach, 2008); LA Freewaves' 11th Festival of New Media Arts (Los Angeles, 2008); Torrance Art Museum (Torrance, 2008); Asian Pacific American Institute (NYU, 2007); Paço das Artes (São Paulo, 2007); and 4-F Gallery (Los Angeles, 2006). Gayotto earned an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1996 and is the recipient of a 2008-09 City of Los Angeles (C.O.L.A) Fellowship and the Individual Artist Grant from the City of Pasadena Cultural Affairs Division. Currently, she serves as adjunct faculty at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.

## Why did you decide to participate in the MAIV residency at Banff?

I felt that my methodology had a lot in common with the MAIV residency program. My work is process-oriented and incorporates elements of chance, seriality, repetition, performance, documentation and collaboration. At that time, I started using the travelogue as a new approach to embrace chance and unpredictability, and wanted to produce work that would result from my experience living in a foreign country.

## Do you have a definition of artistic research?

To me artistic research is a form of exploration, a strategy for making art ranging from an idea to its completion. For example, the idea for "Wild Hearts" (the video that I produced during the MAIV residency) emerged from a trip I did to the Whyte Museum Archive in Banff where I found out about the rich history of early women explorers in the Canadian Rockies. Then my research was extended to the local community through an open call where I invited all women explorers (walkers, hikers, climbers, runners, kayakers, mountaineers, adventurers) to participate in my project. The research also included interviews with each participant to map their physical and mental journeys through the landscape.

## What was your notion or understanding of artistic research prior to the residency?

Research has always played an important role in my artistic practice including the choice of subject matter, location and presentation. My work has a conceptual nature: I usually start out with an idea, set up an event and document its outcome. While the artwork is based on research it also has a formal and minimal aesthetic. Although it often reveals an interaction with the subject, it does not necessarily show the steps that lead to it.

## Did your understanding or interaction with artistic research change during the course of the experience? In what ways?

It made me reflect on the possibility of including the steps that lead to the final piece. In addition to the video, I made one photograph composed by a series of stills of Cascade Mountain that are part of the split-screen video (taken at the same time during 24 consecutive days) suggesting the relationship between still and moving images, time, weather and change (image 1). I also made a diagram that illustrates my art making process (image 2). But the most important change is that I started using interviews for the first time. The voice-over adds a human scale to the piece, addressing how our own personal trajectories frame the landscape.

## ON ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

**Is artistic research something you've always defined for yourself? At what point in your creative life did defining and documenting your artistic practice or engaging in artistic research seem relevant or viable?**

My background in science has definitely shaped my artistic practice from the beginning. Also my use of collaboration, structure and chance, choice of subject matter, the way that I set up an event and document its outcome are all elements of the same equation, a form of inquiry.

**Are artistic research and artistic practice inextricably linked? If not, how different is your artistic process when you are engaged in artistic research versus projects or artistic explorations that do not call on you to respond or interact with the notion of artistic research? In other words: How does artistic research or artistic inquiry impact your artistic practice?**

Yes, definitely. My work is like an experiment, an investigation. It starts out with a question and instead of a single answer it reveals possibilities in a moment at a certain place and time. The use of collaboration



image 1

breaks with notions of authorship conveying multiple points of views for a single theme.

## What are the opportunities for you as an artist if you choose to participate in artistic research?

It provides multiple ways in which the work can be seen ranging from aesthetic to conceptual levels.

## What are the drawbacks?

Sometimes the gap between research, intention and result is stretched out too far and the work doesn't appeal visually to the viewer.

## RECONSIDERING THE MAIV RESIDENCY

**If research, traditionally defined, promises the creation of new knowledge, what kind of knowledge does artistic inquiry produce?**

I believe in the power of art for positive change, in the way that it affects people's lives by making them aware of the world around them differently. The difference between art and science is based on notions of truth. An artist does not necessarily have to be accountable for presenting accurate data but nonetheless art is still a form of cultural knowledge.

## What are the implications of making knowledge claims for artistic creation?

Because of its interdisciplinary nature, the artistic practice may engage with different types of knowledge including physical, technical, sensorial, historical, for-

mal, social, biographical, etc.

**How does the increasing academic and institutional recognition of artistic research affect the artistic community?** It is difficult to quantify in a city like Los Angeles.

## How does the practice of artistic research affect academic culture?

As a part-time instructor it is hard to answer this question accurately.

**How does the practice of making art in the public realm affect the community's capacity for research?**

Although I collaborate with the community, I am not a public artist. But perhaps this is also answered below.

**What can non-artists and communities learn from artist-researchers—in terms of developing alternative research methodologies, attitudes, and patterns of inquiry?**

Throughout my collaborative projects with members of diverse communities living in the US, Canada, Portugal and Brazil, I have found out that my artwork is capable of generating a feeling of empowerment to the participants and viewers alike. I believe that art can have a positive impact on a community by bringing people together, by increasing self-esteem and by also changing the way in which they understand artistic practice and perceive the world around differently.



1 Sarah Fuller



2 Brenda Williams



3 Marty Avery



4 Ursula Wolf



**Wild Hearts: Women Explorers, 2008**

HD 2-Channel Video Installation with Sound

TRT 22 minutes

**Sound Editor:** Jane McKewer

**Participants** (in order of appearance): Sarah Fuller, Shelley Nairn, Scott Parent, Jesse Novak, Brenda Williams, Marty Avery, Ursula Wolf, Bonnie Hamilton, Corri Gallicano, Meghan Ward, Nagede Luquet, Heather Armitage, Dee Anderson, Alexandra Kobalenko, Debra Hornsby, Jennifer Bowes and Julia Lynx.

**Wild Hearts: Women Explorers** is a video-collaboration with 12 women adventurers, climbers, hikers, runners and kayakers living in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Inspired by the work of 19th-century explorers Mary Vaux and Mary Schaefer, this two-screen video installation juxtaposes timed-shots of the Cascade Mountain with documentary footage of the women traversing different landscapes. The voice-over of the participants reveals their relationship to the mountains from physical, emotional and professional perspectives.

The resulting video recalls the style of early travelogues, featuring short shots with formal compositions and minimal camera movement. Through a combination of repetitive shots of the mountain, ephemeral body movements and atmospheric variations *Wild Hearts* evoke the contrast between stillness and motion, permanence and transience. The voice-over suggests that individual perception of landscape is a cultural construct often mediated by our own physical and mental journeys through it.

5 Bonnie Hamilton



9 Alexandra Kobalenko



6 Corri Gallicano



10 Debra Hornsby



7 Meghan Ward



11 Jennifer Bowes



8 Nadege Luquet



12 Julia Lynx

