

## About the Artists

In utilizing the mediums of performance, video and sculpture, Chicago artist **Benjamin Bellas** creates provocative relationships that explore issues of balance, of the power dynamics that exist between people, the struggles of growth, and the simply absurd workings of the human psyche through work that is both highly personal and weirdly socially relevant.

**Nate Larson** is a Chicago-based artist and photographer. His photographic work has been exhibited extensively across the US and has been featured internationally in shows in Canada, Greece, and the UK. His work has been written about in numerous publications, including the New York Times. His photoworks and artist books are included in the collections of the Center for Photography at Woodstock, the Banff Centre in Alberta, the Midwest Photographers Project Collection at the Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, and McHenry County College, among others. [www.natelarson.com](http://www.natelarson.com)

**Gordon Lebrecht** is an artist and writer living in Toronto. Past exhibitions have included *By the Numbers: painting)programme(photography*, a recent survey of works from the 1970s at Gallery One One One, School of Art, The University of Manitoba, (2005-06) and *Ten Points for YYZ—now | 1989–2004* at YYZ Artists Outlet (2005), Toronto.

**Daniel Olson** completed degrees in mathematics and architecture before obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1986 from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Halifax) and a Master of Fine Arts in 1995 from York University (Toronto). Olson's work has been exhibited widely, including shows at the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (Québec), Galerie Optica (Montréal), and the Canadian Cultural Centre (Paris). Since 2001 Olson has been living and working in Montreal.

**Mike Paget** is an artist, cook and video technician based out of Calgary. He has been creating game based art works since 2003. He has exhibited throughout Alberta as well as in group exhibitions in Chicago and Brisbane (Australia). He received a B.F.A. from the University of Calgary in 2002. [www.plague.ca](http://www.plague.ca)

**June Pak** is a visual artist who works closely with time-based and digital media. Her video installations have exhibited around Canada and Italy: *Untitled* (Milan, IT, 2005), *Aesthetics of Resistance* (Como, IT, 2005), *Khyber Centre for the Arts* (Halifax, CA, 2004), *Truck Gallery* (Calgary, CA, 2004), *Gallery 44* (Toronto, CA, 2002), *Media City 8* (Windsor, CA, 2002). She teaches Time-Based Media and Interdisciplinary Studio courses at the University of Western Ontario in London and Ontario College of Art & Design in Toronto.

**Anthony Schrag** was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in the Middle East, the UK and Canada. He studied at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver and the Glasgow School of Art, where he received his MFA. Schrag has exhibited/performed in Vancouver, Budapest, New York, Mexico City, Beijing, Norway as well as across the UK and Ireland and recently completed several Artist Residencies in Iceland. He is not interested in making art that doesn't make him laugh at least once.



*Marketa's Bed and Breakfast*



**Open Space**  
510 Fort Street  
Victoria, British Columbia  
Canada V8W 1E6  
v 250.383.8833  
e [openspace@openspace.ca](mailto:openspace@openspace.ca)  
w [www.openspace.ca](http://www.openspace.ca)

# Dowsing for Failure

**Ted Hiebert & Doug Jarvis, Curators**

*featuring works by*

**Benjamin Bellas (Chicago)**

**Nate Larson (Chicago)**

**Gordon Lebrecht (Toronto)**

**Daniel Olson (Montreal)**

**Mike Paget (Calgary)**

**June Pak (Toronto)**

**Anthony Schrag (Glasgow)**

**OPEN SPACE**  
VICTORIA, BC

NOVEMBER 24, 2006 – JANUARY 20, 2007

## DOWSING FOR FAILURE

Open Space Arts Society (Victoria, BC)  
November 24, 2006 - January 20, 2007

Ted Hiebert & Doug Jarvis, Curators

An international call for submissions was put forward requesting proposals for DOWSING FOR FAILURE. From over sixty submissions received, curators Jarvis and Hiebert composed a short-list of twelve proposals. These proposals were "dowsed" in order to determine the final line-up of artists to be exhibited.

What follows is a copy of the Call for Submissions which was sent out in summer 2006.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Open Space Arts Society is currently inviting submissions for DOWSING FOR FAILURE, a curated group exhibition slated to run from November 24, 2006 to January 20, 2007.

### Curatorial Statement

Failure – as something that cannot be wilfully coveted but must, in many ways, be "happened" upon accidentally and in most instances unintentionally – holds, from our perspective, many innovative and intriguing artistic and theoretical possibilities. In exact opposition to the philosophy of the "happy accident" that forms much of the romance of failure as a legitimate element of artistic discovery, DOWSING FOR FAILURE will seek specific artists that have encountered ways of not succumbing to the optimistic and opportunistic mobilization of failure in the name of success. Rather, our interest is in representing creative works in all disciplines that, through discourses of failure, open possibilities for informal discovery rather than mobilizing the proprietary claim to "originality." While highly political in the privileging of inquiry over declaration, the politics of DOWSING FOR FAILURE are more aptly contextualized as a by-product and side effect of the works to be exhibited rather than an accusation of more linear and calculated political curation.

From our perspective, failure is not something that can – properly speaking – be cultivated. Rather, to intend to fail is to make failure into the specter of its own success, a self-fulfilling prophecy that optimizes legitimate failure, candy-coating the disastrous with its own form of inverted and anesthetized sensitivity. This is not the "type" of failure in which we are interested. In other words, we are not interested in the vampiric "turning" of failure into success, preferring instead to acknowledge the profoundly traumatic experience of failure as a moment of existential futility in which worlds and selves collapse into nothingness, disavowed even by themselves, phoenixes that refuse to be reborn from the ashes of their own devastation.

In this spirit, DOWSING FOR FAILURE seeks precisely those moments in which failure is un-recuperable, irreducible or insurmountable. There is, obviously, a paradox involved in the *representation* of such moments, which is how DOWSING FOR FAILURE will avoid the strictly *therapeutic* connotations of failure in favour of its representative renderings. In other words, what we are interested in – in the context of this project – are precisely those moments in which failure cannot be salvaged, but can nevertheless be represented or invoked or suggested, such that the moment of artistic and creative intensity – the notion of art-making as *extreme sport* – fully congeals as *indifferent to its own success* as represented by an equal indifference to its *failure*. Here, the stakes of making art in a contemporary world fully materialize as a project not of making meaning, but rather as strategies for dealing with the fact that there is none. No merit in meaning. No merit in success. And consequently, no merit in failure proper, but rather in those methodologies invoked for mobilizing failure to some other end. And these are ends that (again) cannot be properly intended, but require rather a nuanced representational presence in order to tease out the latent possibilities of their inherently revolutionary form.

### Curatorial Method

Following the Call for Submissions for DOWSING FOR FAILURE, we will select a short-list of artists whose work offers possible strategies for the mobilization of failure. From this short list, the final artists to be exhibited will be chosen through a documented series of **dowsing** experiments in which dowsing rods will be used to divine the qualitative relationality of the proposal to the theme of failure. The process (obviously) is flawed, but necessary in order to ensure that the exhibition resists the calculated attempt to successfully *represent* failure, instead gravitating towards the circumstantial and contingent assessment of proposals as representative of a certain undefinable, yet nevertheless present, relationship to the theme.



**GORDON LEBREDT.** In addition to one ten-foot, six-inch high non-reflective black band that more or less encompasses the principal space of display: six + n exhibition elements also rendered a non-reflective black.

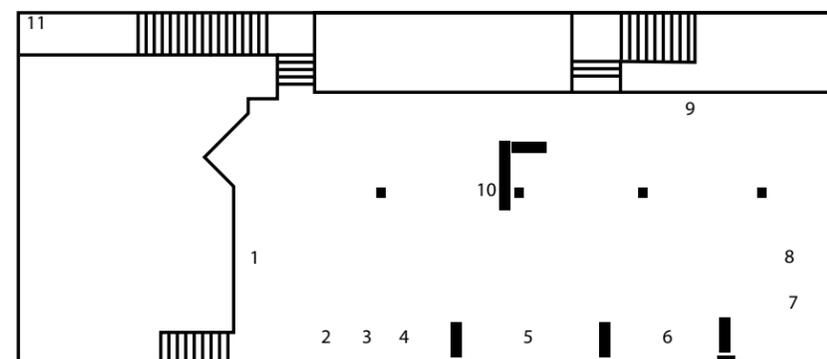
Consequently, DOWSING FOR FAILURE should be taken literally as a descriptive title and evocative declaration of the premise for the exhibit. We neither condone nor dismiss the potential of dowsing proper as an allowable or legitimate activity. Rather, here we are interested in methods for accumulating works of a certain sort that will fit within a certain parameter of meaning; one that might be seen as evocative rather than didactic, and which consequently requires an invocative method of selection rather than an explicit assessment of categorizable appearances.



**9) NATE LARSON.** Miracle Pennies



**1) ANTHONY SCHRAG.** Climbing to the Clouds



**7 & 8) MIKE PAGET.** Arcade



**2) BENJAMIN BELLAS.** I always wanted to communicate with you clearly, ... (see list of works for complete title)



**5) JUNE PAK.** Double



**6) DANIEL OLSON.** Immanence (Failed Attempt #3)