

Ms Roadie



It doesn't take too much rummaging around in the attic of Canadian culture to discover that "goin' down the road" is one of our central imaginative metaphors. The idea comes from Don Shabib's 1970 classic film about a pair of Maritimers who head for the big city of Toronto in search of work and happiness. From Jack Chamber's luminous painting *401 Towards London*, 1968, to Ken Mitchell's *Cruel Tears*, 1975, the country music opera that adapted the story of *Othello*, to a community of long-haul truck drivers in the prairies, to the dark comedy of Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*, 1991, the temptation of the open road has been irresistible. The length of the trips our artists have taken has been variable, but their setting out has been unwavering.

Now **Risa Horowitz**, a Toronto-based photographer, has joined the mobile brigade, and she has set a new standard for time and distance. In 1992, Iain and Louise Baxter called the edited version of the 100 hours of videotape they took as they travelled from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, *One Canada Video*. But in "Blurry Canada," Horowitz, accompanied by only three cameras, took 175 hours of continuous video and snapped 20,000 images in her Trans-Canada trip across the country. A small portion of the documentation of that 16,500 km journey has been curated by Jeff Nye and is on exhibition at the Dunlop's Sherwood Village Gallery in Regina. The selection of images and their overall installation manages to combine space and time in ways that turn the work of travelling into the art of looking. "Blurry Canada" includes 75 chromogenic prints (as well as all 175 hours of videotape on a 13-day loop).

Horowitz viewed the trip as a series of contradictions: she was on holiday but she had to work to archive her daily harvest of images; she is a professionally trained



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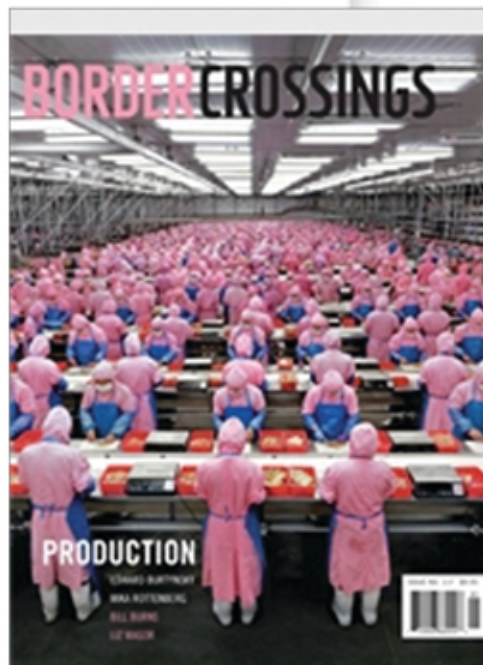
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photographer but she was pointing a hand-held camera at overpasses and guardrails with no attention to composition. "I liked the way that accidentally being able to take beautiful pictures subverted the notion of artistic genius." The prints are beautiful; everything from rain and reflection on the windshield to the line formed by a car window left open, or a fragment of a side-door mirror, plays into the out-of-focus mystery of the images. Even the splattering of bug guts becomes an elegant line of colour on the surface of the print. Horowitz recognizes that these were unplanned, but what makes this exhibition so compelling is that the accidents of image gathering get focused in the conscious application of image selection.

Horowitz is satisfied with the product of her leisurely labour. "I have to acknowledge that my motivation in doing the trip is existential," she says. "It's about feeling free as an artist and about the myth of freedom that the road gives. It's something I'm exploring. I'm not preoccupied with questions of identity but with being in this place called Canada and trying to figure out what it is that I love so much about it." ■

1. Risa Horowitz, Installation view of "Blurry Canada" at the Dunlop Art Gallery Sherwood Village in Regina, 2011. Courtesy the artist.

2, 3, 4, & 5. Risa Horowitz, *Blurry Canada*, 2010, chromogenic photographs. Courtesy the artist.



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