



### Words from Editors

Welcome to the very first issue of *Dit-elle?*, a newsletter **that is** released by the Oral Histories and Performance communication team, Elena, Jun, Sarah and Mariève.

Why *Dit-elle?* Mostly for the combination of the words *dit* and *tell*. Also when saying the word out loud in English you can understand *detail*, like going into detail as we consider ourselves like “investigators!!” And a little bit because the team is all feminine!

As interns and volunteers for the CURA project, we would be more than happy to own your stories and help with whatever needs you may have.

The objective of this newsletter is to provide updated information regarding the diverse OHP projects and to create a platform for exchanging and sharing project-related experiences between the OHP groups and the ensemble of CURA people.

We also hope to receive some of your thoughts on the different subjects and to create dialogue with you. We encourage you to email to [ditelle2009@hotmail.com](mailto:ditelle2009@hotmail.com).

Enjoy!

## Take the Ticket and Dive In!

**D**it-elle? is very happy to present to our readers a newsletter that will discuss our experiences with the people and topics involved in the CURA project. But how are we to rightly maneuver the pen on paper when writing on sensitive topics? That is one thing we're less certain of. Is there a limit when expressing our opinion as newcomers on the subject coming from the outside? Because our voices are given the opportunity to be heard through this newsletter, it raises a lot of questions for us. And after many discussions, we decided that we should take the ticket and dive in deeply. So we did and what follows is a mini version of facts and the outcome of our perceptions.

Three interns in our group, Mariève, Jun and Elena, each assisted in videotaping an interview for the artist's interview project during the week of

12<sup>th</sup>. Read page 2 for reports from Mariève, Elena and Jun.

As for myself, I assisted to the *Festival des films sur les droits de la personne* on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>. In a discussion held after the showing of a documentary presented by the CURA project on violence of children, it was mentioned that a young boy who was left in an orphanage because of genocide was adopted by parents who were involved in community development. Today, the child himself has started a NGO. The impact that others' words, actions and experiences can have is immeasurable. What can be done for people to know about these situations? Education could be a way. It is an act of doing just like planting seeds. And art, as we all agreed, can be used as a wonderful tool for education. See Mariève's report on the Rwanda Workshop on page 2.

Sarah Bilodeau

### Other Investigations

On March 8, 2009 in Montreal women of diverse origins gathered together to celebrate the International Women's Day... Read Elena Belenkova's full report on page 3.

### Topics for Next Issue

- \* Review on Untold Histories
- \* What is Playback Theatre?

### OHP Upcoming Events

- \* Deadline for Artists in Residency Phase 1 Application: April 6.
- \* OHP meeting: to be announced.
- \* La vie rêvée des gens –Mémoires de Montréalais: every Friday, 13:00, CIBL 101,5 FM Radio-Montréal.

## My First Interview

Le jour de l'entrevue, j'ai téléphoné à Kamala pour confirmer notre rendez-vous. À 10h45, je la réveillais! Elle me raconte que c'est parce que la veille elle a passée trois heures dehors, debout, au froid, à s'occuper d'une collecte de dons de toute sorte pour envoyer à la communauté Tamoul au Sri Lanka et qu'elle a terriblement mal aux jambes. Je lui propose de se reposer et de reporter notre rendez-vous. « Non, non, non! » dit-elle, « je veux faire l'entrevue, c'est mon devoir! » Et après notre entrevue, son engagement n'était pas terminé, elle se rendait à la réunion du comité d'organisation de son association Tamoul de l'âge d'or...

— Mariève Bibeau

While working as a videographer during the OHP's interview with Janet Lumb, a musician and an activist of Asian origin, I not only listened to the fascinating life story of the artist, but also became aware of the role that art can play in motivating individuals and in changing the society as a whole. Janet recalled the years when her mother led the Chinese community in Toronto to fight for social justice, and she kept saying: "My mother has always been a source of inspiration and energy for me". Janet wrote music for dozens of documentaries and movies, among which many are about Chinese culture, Head Tax issue and etc. Art has been something more than a career for Janet. In fact, she uses art as an effective tool to communicate, to influence people and to serve diverse community-based initiatives.

— Jun Luo

I recently conducted interviews with an artist, Hourig Attarian, a grand-daughter of survivors of Armenian genocide. Hourig was born and lived in Lebanon and survived a 15-year war. She told us about her families and friends as well as how she spent her childhood in fighting Beirut. Her story is very interesting and informative on one side and sad and heartrending on the other.

I am very glad that I can participate in such a wonderful project. Sharing horrific life experiences of crimes against humanity with others is not only an astonishing opportunity to preserve memories of people displaced by mass violence but also give an idea of commonality to survivors. These people faced traumatic episodes in their lives that separated them from the rest of a community. It is not easy to tell painful stories to anyone. Quiet often survivors experience difficulties to express some hurting events to others. In many cases people prefer to be silent rather than to express their feelings. People fled persecution and sought refuge in a new country, however they rarely share their traumatic experience. No one except their lawyers during their refugee process, if there are some, know their life stories. In this respect I think it is very important to identify these people and give them opportunity to share their life experience with other and art could play an important role to help these people reveal their stories.

— Elena Belenkova

## When Art and Education Become Storytellers

— Report on Rwanda Workshop

Wednesday March 11th – Rwanda Workshop: learning about Rwanda Genocide through Rupert Bazambanza's graphic novel.

The workshop was really interesting but not how I intended it to be. I thought I was going to learn about a new way to use art in education. Instead the discussion developed around the challenges Paul Rombough encounters on how to use the graphic novel in the structure of his pedagogical program.

This interesting exchange made me realize once more about the pertinence of collaboration between art and education! I interviewed Sarah Bilodeau, volunteer for

Montreal Stories project and member of the newsletter *Dit-elle?* Sarah is facilitating theatre workshops in a high school with teens having learning disabilities or behavioural difficulties. See page 3 to read the interview.

Another excellent example of collaboration between art and education is developed from a group of the performance cluster: the Human Relations and Performance courses that will be starting next fall at Concordia University. For more information, please email Dit-elle? at ditelle2009@hotmail.com.

Mariève Bibeau

## A Yearly Event of Joining Hands

On March 8, in Montreal women of diverse origins gathered together to celebrate the International Women's Day (IWD). This occasion is rooted in the struggle to change society and started in 1857 at a textile factory in New York when women went on strike. Women workers marched to demand eight hour work day. In 1908 they demanded an end to child labor. In the 1970's and 80's, women in Canada marched for abortion rights and against violent and rape in the Take Back the Night event. The demonstration also became a priority to mark solidarity for women marching all over the world.

The first event in Montreal was organized in the multi-ethnic neighborhood of Côte-des-Neiges in 2001 under the name of the March 8 Coordination and Action Committee of Women of Diverse Origins. This is a grouping of progressive anti-imperialist women that have been creating a new tradition of militant feminism in Montreal on IWD.

This year the committee organized two events. The first one took place at Université de Montreal and it was an all day events with speakers, workshops, displays and a film screenings. Participants such as Tamil Women's Association, Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, Barriere Lake Community, Immigrant Workers' Centre, Urgence Palestine, International Migrants' Alliance, etc. gathered together to discuss about important issues.

The second event was a march which took place at Atwater neighborhood. This year the committee encouraged people to wear masks to protest the proposed municipal by-law criminalizing those who cover their faces at demonstrations. This was done in order to show solidarity with those who are forced to conceal their identity to voice their dissent: the non-status people who are nabbed by border agents when they speak

out against deportations and detentions: the women who are afraid of protesting against gender violence for fear of being targeted by their abusive partners, the Indigenous communities defending their lands, the youth who wear masks to avoid more police brutality and racial profiling, communities constantly harassed and targeted by the state under the pretence of "national security," those who face political repression, and people all around the world who continue to fight for justice.



Elena Belenkova

### Entrevue avec Sarah Bilodeau

**M:** *Est-ce que tu penses que l'art est un bon moyen à utiliser dans un cadre scolaire pour transmettre un enseignement?*

**S:** Oui! Je crois que l'on devrait mettre autant d'emphase sur les arts que sur les mathématiques! L'art est un moyen qui rejoint d'autres façons d'apprendre. C'est un espace où les jeunes découvre d'autres aspects de leurs personnalités. Il y a tellement d'aptitudes différentes au niveau du raisonnement. Certains d'entre eux vont avoir beaucoup plus de facilité à apprendre d'une tel manière comme d'autres sont plus habile d'une autre façon mais si l'on ne diversifie pas les méthodes, ils n'auront pas l'occasion de le découvrir. Et pour moi les activités artistiques englobent énormément d'aspects tant sur le plan de la transmission de matière éducative que sur le développement personnel. Le travail d'équipe permet de travailler sur les relations interpersonnelle, la créativité permet l'estime de soi, etc.

**M:** *Qu'est-ce que tu penses que Paul Rombugh devrait faire pour arriver à intégrer la bande-dessinée dans son programme? Toi comment t'y prends-tu dans tes ateliers?*

**S:** Il y a plusieurs façons d'y arriver je crois. C'est

une question d'essais-erreurs! Tout d'abord de déterminer avec précision l'objectif précis de l'atelier : qu'est-ce que je veux que les jeunes retiennent au bout du compte? Les ateliers peuvent être simplifiés et les étapes de travail divisées en plusieurs équipe pour le faire avancer plus rapidement. Par exemple : une équipe d'écriture, une équipe de dessinateurs, une équipe de dramaturges, etc. L'important dans l'atelier c'est que les jeunes ressentent une responsabilité et un désir de s'impliquer. De cette manière ils deviendront engagés dans un processus créatif qui aura pour résultat d'être éducatif. Les différentes tâches peuvent ainsi être adaptées selon les talents de chacun, cela renforcera l'expérience individuelle positivement et évitera les sentiments d'échec qui ne sont pas propices à l'apprentissage. Dans le cadre de son atelier, il pourrait aussi penser à engager des stagiaires de différentes disciplines reliées à la bande-dessinée, auteurs, dessinateurs, graphistes, etc. De par leurs expertises artistiques, ces personnes pourraient combler les manques de connaissances et contribuer à trouver des solutions pour développer son programme.

Mariève Bibeau