



Words from Editor

Je me sentais privilégiée de faire partie de ce voyage au cœur d'histoires précieuses, intimes et fragiles. Merci à tous les artistes qui ont généreusement raconté leur expérience de Montréalais affectés, touchés ou déplacés par le génocide, la guerre ou autres violations des droits humains.

Durant quatre soirs, j'ai pu constater à quel point la scène est un lieu d'accueil chaleureux. La vidéo, la danse, la musique, le chant, et le théâtre servaient de leurs plus beaux appareils les témoignages à leur juste valeur et même au-delà.

L'échange dans la rencontre était au centre des préoccupations des artistes, bien souvent même ils demandaient que la salle demeure éclairée pour voir et ainsi s'adresser directement aux spectateurs.

J'aurais bien aimé que plus de gens profite de cet événement si important. Mais je fais confiance que cette première édition de Untold Histories dans le cadre du projet Histoires des Montréalais prépare le terrain pour les autres belles années à venir et que les salles lors des éditions suivantes seront pleines à craquer!

— Mariève Bibeau

Untold histories

A word from Maya Dhawan, project coordinator:

"I believe the Untold Histories Public Presentations were a success in that they got the conversation started on this theme of displacement and on top of that it was a cross-cultural conversation. I was truly impressed at how talented and generous the presenters were. I also felt a very warm energy from the audience. I think this event was an important building block to future storytelling initiatives, whether they be interviews or artistic expression. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved in making this event come to life - it was truly a team effort!"



Métis artist Moe Clark performs spoken-word poetry at Untold Histories public presentation on March 26.
photo: Justin Bromberg

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OHP Upcoming Events

- * **Playback Workshop:** May 2nd, 13:00 - 17:00.
- * **OHP meeting:** April 29th, 17:00 - 19:00.
- * **La vie rêvée des gens – Mémoires de Montréalais:** every Friday, 13:00, CIBL 101,5 FM Radio-Montréal.

May 1st, at Le Social, 1445 Bishop, 5 à 7 Happy Hour for all CURA volunteers and interns!
Let's share our stories!



How Stories Find a Way to Heart

Return to China or stay in Canada? I had been engaged in such a Hamlet-like deliberation for months before volunteering in the Untold Histories event. It seldom occurred to me how lucky I was to be able to hesitate, to agonise, and finally, to decide between the two options. Some people simply have no choice: they are forced out of their homeland by war, genocide and human rights violations. If those people are called out of their mother countries to unknown territories by force majeure, I should admit that my coming and my going are always voluntary decisions of mine.

The stories told by artists from Armenian, Indian, Palestinian, Iranian and other backgrounds during the four nights of Untold Histories made me aware of the distinction between voluntary displacement and forced displacement. On another hand, viewing the brokenness, anguish and pain experienced by my fellow human beings turned out to be an emotional and difficult thing for me to go through. I still remember my sympathizing with Meena Murugesan when she repeated the line “Not Being Indian enough; not being white enough.” in her dance *Aval*. The word “Adjust” that she uttered with surprise,

anxiety and frustration also reminded me of the difficult integration process for thousands of immigrants, of whom I am an example. The “displacement” theme of *Aval* resounded in the physical theatre performance *A Hole in the Fence* by Carmen Ruiz, the life story read by Nellie Hogikyan, and many other performances presented during the four nights of the event.

There were moments that I was so deeply captured by the performances that I felt I was experiencing with the characters on stage the trauma caused by genocide, war and other reasons, the sense of brokenness after leaving the motherland, and the cry of the soul for healing. These were the moments that I felt myself to be not only a Chinese immigrant in Canada but also an Armenian, a Palestinian, an Iranian, an Indian, or an indigenous First Nations person... These were the moments that I was no longer an audience member, a reader or a listener. In other words, the stories in Untold Histories were eventually told, heard, and transformed to be a part of memory for all those who accessed to them.

Jun Luo

Un coup dans le cœur

Autant le film d'animation *Blue Like a Gunshot* que le moyen métrage *The Tree That Remembers* ont été pour moi un coup de cœur ou devrais-je plutôt dire : un coup dans le cœur.

The Tree That Remembers. Massoud Raouf tisse ensemble avec finesse les histoires des Iraniens qu'il a interviewés et ceci leur donne toutes leur puissance. L'impossibilité de la liberté de parole, l'abus de pouvoir du gouvernement, la violence physique et psychologique, l'injustice et le recouvrement de leur liberté, comme une belle fin à l'histoire oui, peut-être, mais au dur prix de l'exil. Certains passages sont gravés dans ma tête,

par exemple, celui de cette jeune iranienne qui raconte son arrestation à dix-huit ans lors d'une manifestation: la police avait dit à ses parents qu'elle serait libérée le lendemain mais le lendemain s'est avéré être huit ans plus tard...

Blue Like a Gunshot. Magnifique et terrifiante poésie. Enchantement de l'animation et pouvoir de l'image. De simples traits de pinceau font la guerre. Ici la peinture remplace le faux sang des films d'horreur mais la puissance de l'évocation n'en est pas moins amoindrit, au contraire.

Mariève Bibeau

To the Heart of the Problem

The staged reading, *Stories Scorched from the Desert Sun*, by Hourig Attarian and directed by Rachel Van Fossen, speaks of the Armenian genocide. This play made me realize the effect that distance can have on an audience when we share personal stories.

The play unveiled past memories in a present new light and acted as a link between the past and the present. This made me feel that we weren't in a suspended time, but rather that this was very real and near. I felt like I was on a scale, from being a critical observer to a 'feeler' and these feelings created an impulse in me that shouted: I can do something about it!

Also, the informality greatly affected me as I was unable to let my feelings sweep me away completely. This distancing is what made me want to take action.

Additionally, comments within the script were a social commentary on the genocide. It mentioned that: when living, one must strive to survive and that there's no time to think of the horror because every dead body by the street becomes part of the normality of the time.

Mentioning this shared acceptance of genocide links to routinization (typically the mechanism by which governments enlist citizens to aid and abet programs of genocide. The Khmer Rouge from Cambodia recorded detailed lists of victims, and a clerk who recorded names said he did not realize what

he was doing then. This suggests how we can get used to anything when it has been made a habit).

Therefore, Hourig Attarian suggests a way to avoid this repetition in the future; if we know about it we can fight it. And she achieves this through distancing, because this allows the viewer to conceive a wider range of perspectives. This can encompass social, political and cultural ideas that aren't necessarily to be found if we sink into a focus that forgets the multiple layers of the subject. By bearing witness to these stories, we become responsible and after that it is up to us to decide what to do with this knowledge.

What happened then, and what can we do now?

Sarah Bilodeau



Around a Line

Every presentation was brilliant and all participants expressed themselves with openness and professionalism during the four nights of the Untold Histories Public Presentation, but Carmen Ruiz's performance is what affected me the most. She presented a dance composition called *A Hole in the Fence*. In the beginning of the dance she secured a ribbon between two posts, which established a so called line. This action was surprising and everyone looked forward to what would happen next. From first glance it was very obvious that this line would play a central role in her piece. This line prevented her from moving freely as it became an obstacle. She tried to express her negative feelings towards this line and I think she succeeded in passing these emotions to the audience. None could have left this performance behind.

For me this line could have many physical and symbolic representations; it could be a state border or a fence in a prison, it could divide people within societies

according to their gender, race, political opinion, religious affiliation, etc. However, Carmen's conclusion was – there is always “a hole in the fence”.

On April 5, I viewed a ballet piece of Les Grande Ballets Canadiens de Montreal called *The Rite of Spring*, presented by a choreographer called Stijn Celis. Surprisingly, I found this performance aligned with the performance of Carmen Ruiz as it continued the theme of “a line”. The choreographer explored the complexity of gender issues in which feminine and masculine natures played against each other as tensions built and were released. He expressed this with circular movements, spirals, and the formation of structures, shadow and light, protection and abandonment. In the end, all of the antagonism and reconciliation was enacted around this prominent line.

Elena Belenkova

Untold Histories on Camera



Photos are provided by Stephanie Lambert.

“The Legend of the Necklace”

Saturday May 2nd, 15h-17h

Restaurant OM

4382 Blvd. St-Laurent

RSVP by May 1st

514-523-1047

15\$

<http://www.dung-dkar.org>

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Topics for Next Issue



Playback Theatre