

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## cmagazine

**GARETH LONG, *SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH***

**RYAN ENGLISH**

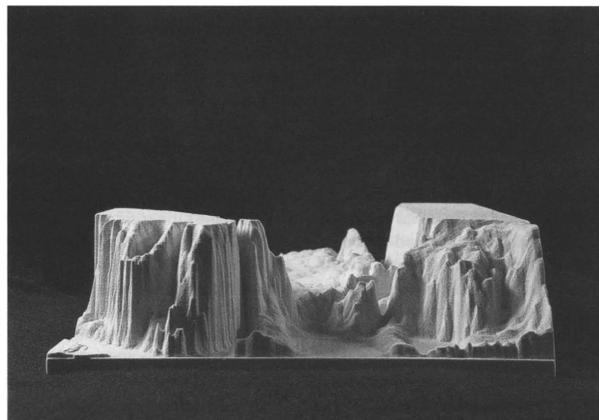
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In his academic work, his work with the now-defunct Toronto video collective 640 x 480 and in his recent solo exhibition, *Second, Third, Fourth* at Oakville Galleries, Gareth Long straddles contemporary notions of sculpture and literary traditions. The culmination of over five years of work, *Second, Third, Fourth* was shown in tandem with a retrospective of the work of the late Colin Campbell. It was an appropriate pairing, since Long worked intimately with the pioneering Canadian video artist while an undergraduate at the University of Toronto.

Long's work consisted of three installations—*Books (Untitled)* (2008), *And She Was* (2005) and *Video Solid* (2006)—accompanied by a catalogue designed by New York-based graphic designer Michael Gallagher, featuring texts by AA Bronson of General Idea and British artist Liam Gillick, as well as a foreword by Oakville Galleries Curator of Contemporary Art, Marie Fleming, with whom Long worked closely to prepare the show, and commentary from Alissa Firth-Eagland, Director/ Curator of Media Art at the Western Front in Vancouver.

In *Video Solid*, the artist uses a rapidprototyping 3D printer to process video images into three-dimensional objects. In each resulting form—the by-product of a series of technological translations—the darker shades from the video still are represented as valleys while the lighter shades have created peaks. The objects are displayed on several white plinths in a room adjacent to the video screens and printer. By virtue of their physicality, these tactile landscapes effect an ingenious synthesis that simultaneously refers to and undermines the medium of video from which they are born. The end result is a series of forms that are both natural and highly artificial, and which bear little resemblance to the original digital images.



Gareth Long, *Video Solid*, 2006, 3D prints: 5.75 x 20.25 x 20.25cm (height variable), installation with Z Corporation 3D printer, custom software. Photo by Gareth Long

Ultimately, the trajectory of the video image from printer to object is the work's subject. As the artist notes, "I tend to think of the entire thing, from the production line of videos and printers, to the 'solids' and plinths as one big installation. I don't really think about them as being separate pieces." Although the solids possess a certain autonomy, they also make visible the narrative of the art-making process. By combining video, machine performance and sculpture in this way, Long creates a unified artwork while not privileging any one medium involved in the process.

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In *Books (Untitled)*, Long creates a reading room within the gallery space that contains most notably numerous 1991 reprints of books by J.D. Salinger. The room also boasts a reading desk, *Bouvard and Pecuchet's Desk for Copying* (2007), based on and named after Flaubert's last unfinished novel, which he designed especially for the exhibition. Fusing two inverted "U" shapes, the desk embodies the idea of replication as a component of learning. However, Long shares his own view of the work in its description, which calls the work, "A modest monument to bourgeois cliché, friendship, amateurism and potential." In other words, the desk is intended as a monument to infinite regress, and, ultimately, to futility. Since the subject of Flaubert's book was the impossibility of attaining universal knowledge, *Bouvard and Pecuchet's Invented Desk for Copying* stands as the figural centre of the show: an emblem of its overall inaccessibility. In the *Books (Untitled)* installation, the idea of inaccessibility is reinforced by copies of Salinger classics *Franny and Zooey* (1961), *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and *Nine Stories* (1953) with their titles, the author's name and all other text sandpapered off the covers. By emphasizing the design features that can take precedence over a book's content in an art context, Long removes Salinger's novels-popular and known to every high school student-from an easy assumption of meaning, rendering them as ghostly apparitions of their former selves.

*And She Was* (2005) is comprised of four large-scale lenticular prints sourced from over an hour of video. The four panels show a couple arguing, making love or perhaps simply conversing-it isn't easy to tell. As the viewer moves past the panels, the lenticular format reveals a series of moments that shows the couple in various positions in a bedroom. The deliberate gaps in each lenticular print force the viewer's hand to compose the story; the work itself is non-committal about its own narrative. The artist is asking the viewer to discern a narrative that is entirely subjective.

What is made clear in *Second, Third, Fourth*, though, is Long's preoccupation with narrative and with the art-making process itself. By traversing numerous established art forms, the artist poses questions about the media he has employed, and their respective structures and limitations.

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