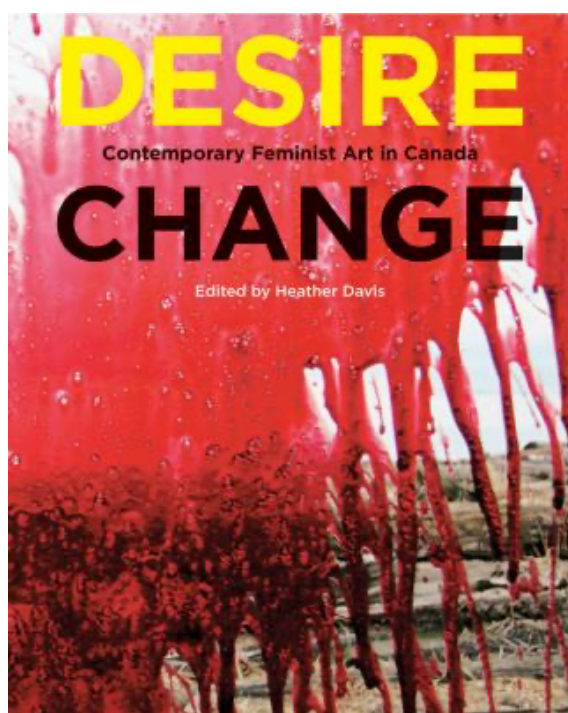


Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada

by Heather Davis. McGill-Queen's University Press, June 2017. 328 p. ill. ISBN 9780773549371 (h/c), \$49.95.

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The crowdsourced and grant-funded anthology, *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada*, is the first of its kind, evidenced by the specificity of its subtitle and by the inclusion of multiple media.

Editor Heather Davis frames feminist art not as a reductive style but as a political stance. This decidedly aligned position manifests in myriad rebellious forms given due justice through color reproductions where possible. The book captures multicolored anonymous yarnbombing in Montreal; the neon green face of Alvis Choi as a genderqueer alien engaging visitors in a Toronto Value Village store in 2014; and Camille Turner's vivid red dress worn in Ottawa in 2002 on Canada Day to announce the self-designated role of the African Canadian artist as Miss Canada. Some works are so chilling that their concept alone suffices in the absence of images,

like Anishinaabe artist, Rebecca Belmore, asphyxiating herself while singing the national anthem in English and French.

The eighteen primary contributors are female and most have hybrid roles combining artist, curator, writer, editor, publisher, and/or scholar. The fourteen essays and timeline showing developments in Canadian feminist art and related social context feature accomplishments of women and men, reflective of a broader mandate than that of the book's co-publisher, Winnipeg artist-run center Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA). After the first essay contextualizes contemporary Canadian feminist art by examining the challenges during the Second Wave—such as the marginalization of women even with the introduction of alternative

galleries and publications—essays are categorized by intersectionality, decolonization, and institutional critique and feminist praxis. Every author or co-author employs the first person point of view, adding a subjective tone to an otherwise scholarly publication, befitting of a discipline that demands empathy.

Gina Badger's timeline from the early 1960s concludes the book. Based on survey results from reputable contributors to feminist cultural production, as well as her own inclusions, it is, in her words, messy. Some tidying seems easily attainable, though. For example, the timeline could be fully indexed instead of partly indexed. Also, related entries could be grouped rather than separated, as in the case of the establishment of, and inaugural exhibition of member works for, MAWA in 1984, and the anniversary and related celebrations for the same organization thirty years later. Even so, kudos to Badger for regularly underscoring the indigenous territory on which institutions have been built—reflective of the nation's reconciliation mindset.

Deserving of consideration for this year's ARLIS/NA Melba J. Dwyer award (which recognizes outstanding reference or research tools pertaining to Canadian art and architecture), *Desire Change* is well-researched, thought provoking, and wide-ranging—in spite of its acknowledged bias towards western, central, and southern Canada and the prominence of cisgender voices in art history.