

In this issue:

- **Beauty Strikes Back**
- **AGYU. Out? Where?**

Beauty Strikes Back –An Open Letter to President Shoukri

Dear Esteemed Leader,

As artists we are writing to commend your efforts to preserve the beauty of our campus during the current labour disruption. As you know, a strike creates a terrible visual blight. As the recent letter signed by YUFA members opposed to the strike demonstrates,¹ the aesthetic experts on our fair campus in the Department of Visual Arts share your determination to end the grotesque sight of shabbily dressed TAs, GAs, RAs and contract faculty tramping around at all the university entrances at all hours of the day and night. But their dismal fashion sense is not to be outmatched by the accessories they bring to the picket lines. We refer to their extruded plastic porta potties and huge orange pylons. It is disgusting that such eyesores should continue unchecked against the backdrop of our highly-prized deserted glass and concrete monuments.

We fully support the more aggressive measures your office has taken this week to restore beauty. Three have come to our attention. The first is the inauguration of the Let Them Eat Cake Award, which we are sure will become as coveted as reduced teaching loads for the YUFA signees of the aforementioned anti-strike letter. While we understand that this will be an ongoing award, and that there are many deserving candidates, we heartily approve of the first recipient, a former UNIT 2 member, converted to fulltime visual arts faculty. Aside from her condemnation of the strike, she is known for her quick wit. When asked for comment on what her former Unit 2 colleagues might think of her honour, she reportedly said "let them it cake."

We are also heartened by your determination to cut the crap and restore beauty on campus by refusing to authorize porta potties at the CUPE 3903 picket lines.² And finally, we must admit that we breathed a collective sigh of relief when we heard that this past Friday afternoon at Glendon campus, a white Land Rover charged through two pylons at full speed and successfully carried off one of the offensive pylons struck to its front, never to be seen again.³ We can only say, good work Sir! Keep it up!

As the labour dispute drags on, your beautification campaign has bolstered our spirits enormously. It makes us proud to have a president with such refined sensibilities and the courage to act on them.

Sincerely yours,

York Is Us

1. YUFA anti-strike letter, circulated Dec. 8, 2008
2. YUFA Communique: Stop Disputing Portable Toilets, circulated Dec. 7, 2008
3. CUPE Incident Report + Disruption of Lorna's Party, Dec. 7, 2008





AGYU. Out? Where?

Last week, our intrepid arts observer, who uses the alias M&M, reported that there was dirty business going on at the AGYU (Art Gallery of York University). Here is what M&M writes from the intersection of fine arts and labour relations:

"In an email invitation dated December 1st, AGYU asked people to come to the university and cross the picket lines to see the 'no. it is opposition' exhibition by Carla Zaccagnini. AGYU's invitation even provided instructions on how to do it. It is clear that the AGYU saw its objectives as opposite to the strikers' as it stated in its message that 'Even though the strike of CUPE continues apace [...] if you haven't seen [no. it is opposition.] yet, you haven't taken the right fork in the path.' AGYU's stated mandate of 'creating and transcending contexts,' could well stand as the mandate of the university of which it is only one part along with all the departments where CUPE members provide well over 50% of the teaching labour.

"CUPE 3903's strike is an effort to transcend the current context of corporatized higher education and create conditions that are more supportive of the work of teaching and the enterprise of learning. This is necessary because under the present conditions, without job security and livable wages, CUPE 3903 members have to subordinate their research, teaching and artistic work to the whims of university bureaucrats, department heads and/or funders. This is the context in which private interests set the agenda for the work of the university and create a false competition amongst its various parts. The most sinister form of control occurs at the subterranean level where departments and individuals lose sight of this broader context and not only accept the competition but take to heart the principles imposed by this context. We thus survive and advance the science and the arts, but in a stifled way: only in as much as we solve the problems that this context that they control provides us. The result is that the people who control the university are able to expand it along the according to their unchallenged agenda towards privatization as we are witnessing.

"AGYU's choice to ask its audiences to cross picket lines is part of this context, cynically justified by an alleged fork, where CUPE's strike and AGYU's exhibition are two opposing sides of the competition for funding and resources. It is therefore clear that, far from providing a new context, AGYU hampers its emergence by aligning itself with the private interests that control this university, thus also signaling its willingness to accept the privatization of the arts. Being a well-funded gallery with several well-paid full-time staff and close connections and access to resources outside York, AGYU could have taken a more creative path. It might have taken the exhibit outside York or to the picket lines, or brought the picket lines to the gallery. Such collaborative efforts could really transcend existing contexts and create new ones. In other words, to go 'out there'."

Following M&M's report, we attempted several times to reach the AGYU but our requests for comments were left unheeded. Our undercover sources report that AGYU officials have been busy building a bunker under the gallery where they can take shelter against an expected reenactment by the famous performance activist collective, the Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG) who are rumoured to be reuniting to do a special demonstration performance against the art gallery. The anti-Vietnam War group were known for their messy guerilla performances against the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Shock performances included bursting sacks of ox blood and throwing food before being hauled off by the police. The Brazil-based Argentine artist, Zaccagnini, could not be reached for comments, but our sources report that she did not cross the picket lines to attend her show's closing.

York Is Us endeavours to redefine York University's identity for the university community and the outside world.

We are currently calling for your modest submissions for "York's 50th: A Rumpus." Send us your small creative reflections that ransack the last 50 years at York. Submissions should not be larger than a hairless Chihuahua and be digitally transportable. Submissions might be a personalized visual timeline, testimonies, critical fictions, photographs, memorabilia or graphic texts that showcase the university's great history and your part in it, labour relations throughout the decades, important moments and more. Submissions will be selectively showcased in upcoming XFile.

http://yorkisus.org/xfile/pdf/XFile3_11dec2008.pdf
<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1631242187>

YORK is 
UNIVERSITE
UNIVERSITY
defyingTHEIMPOSSIBLE
HTTP://YORKISUS.ORG
YORKISUS@GMAIL.COM

