

Electronic Media Coverage

WORLD TEA PARTY

CKNW Radio

Program: *The Bill Goode Show*

Interview by Bill Goode with Bryan Mulvihill

September 15, 1995

CBUF Radio, Vancouver

Program: *Vent d'Ouest*

Interview by Marc Carpentier with Daniel Dion

September 20, 1995

CBC Radio

Program: *The Vicky Gabereau Show*

Interview by Vicky Gabereau with Gwen Murchie
for the *World Tea Party*

October 3, 1995, 2 pm

Rogers Channel 4, Burnaby broadcasting

BCIT Magazine

Television footage of the *World Tea Party* installation and interview
by Elizabeth Goldestein with Bryan Mulvihill

Aired: Thursday, October 26th, 2 pm

Friday, October 27th, 3:30 pm

CKNW Radio

Program: *The Whitespot Community Cruiser* with Sarah Daniels

Lengthy mention of the *World Tea Party* exhibition

FANS AWARD NIGHT with the North Shore Arts Commission in the Gallery

Arts Alive program on Shaw Cable

Aired: Tuesday: October 24th, 3:00 pm, 6:30 pm, 8:30 pm, and 10:30 pm

Friday: October 27th, 6:30 pm

Saturday: October 28th, 10:30 am, 3:00 pm, 10:30 pm

Sunday: October 29th, 6:30 pm



UNITING: A Calcutta tea merchant, A Delhi chaiwalla, an Indian maiden and two night policemen: they all love a cup of tea

The World Tea Party

There's Unity In A Cup Of Tea!

BY SRIANTHI PERERA

What does the Maharani of Jind have in common with a Japanese hostess? What binds a *haba* owner in Punjab to an English earl? Or a Chinese peasant to a Native Indian chief? Tea drinking, of course!

Be it at an elegant party-like setting or in a casual setting at the roadside, tea drinking is commonly practiced by hundreds of cultures around the world. Tea is a venue for people meeting and coming together - whether in the roadside *chai-wallah's* boutique in Bombay or at a sophisticated tea party at the Tollygunge Club in Calcutta. This thread of unity that binds tea drinkers around the world is the basis of an art project that has been conceived by three Vancouver artists.

Brian Mulvihill, Daniel Dion and Su Schnee, the creators of the World Tea Party, believe that they have found a medium to unite cultures.

Blending art, technology and tradition, the World Tea Party is an event that transforms the venue into a tea salon. In a congenial ambience that has the world famous brew as its theme, tea is served, people are welcome to relax and talk, listen to music, read books etc. On display are objects such as tea services, paintings and works of art, blends of tea and more. Integrated in the salon, video images and sounds emerge of the picking of tea leaves in

lush gardens, simple gatherings of friends over a cup, tea ceremonies, both formal and eccentric and so on.

The World Tea Party is officially acknowledged by UNESCO's 50th anniversary of the U.N. The project was first held in Ottawa in 1993, then in Venice, Italy last month. In Vancouver the clatter of tea cups will be heard at Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver from September 17 to October 22.

During the gallery's opening hours, tea will be brewed in a friendly atmosphere and served to visitors who will trace how tea flowed in infinite ways through centuries around the world. South Asian tea-producing countries, of course, will provide lots of material for the event.

To examine the different tea rituals of various cultures, theme tea parties are being planned, says Karen Love, gallery director.

A traditional Japanese tea ceremony will be held on October 15; a First Nations tea party is slated for September 24 and an Indian tea party will be hosted on October 14.

On the day of the Indian tea party, the salon will have the ambience of a Tea House in New Delhi. "Tea houses in Delhi and Calcutta are often the meeting place for Indian literati who gather to read their poems or prose over a cup of tea," says Mulvihill.

So Indo-Canadians are invited to participate on that

day - whether to read poetry, discuss literature, hold a meeting or even just to browse around and enjoy a cup of tea. A *chai* maker will brew copious amounts of the brew that visitors will sip in



Artist Brian Mulvihill

tranquillity. Classical musicians performing soothing sitar music will add melody to the scene. Indo-Canadian poets will read aloud their works.

Among the participants at the Indian tea party is Zainub Verjee, a writer and artist who will exhibit her own work of art on the tea theme that was displayed at the WTP in Venice. She calls them her 'silent musical tea boxes' - a set of boxes containing tea cups and saucers, with each saucer containing a different cultural and social reference pertaining to tea. The viewer does not hear music, but associates music with the graphic display.

Verjee, who is currently studying the migration of Gujaratis from India to Africa and the western world with the aid of a grant from the Canada Council, says her project, about communication, fits right in with the World Tea Party, which is all about communication between cultures.

Mulvihill has gathered a host of images from India - from tea merchants in Calcutta to tea pickers in Darjeeling, from Delhi's famous Tea Houses to tea factory owners in Assam.

"Although the history of tea drinking started in 8th century China, over thousands of years it has migrated to different countries and cultures. India probably has the most tea drinkers in the world, even more than China," says Mulvihill.

Closer to home, the artists have scoured British Columbia for tea objects and have loaned a good collection from museums all over the province.

Mulvihill has many a tea time story to tell. His research comes from far and wide - he has been entertained to tea by the vivacious Maharani of Jind who he describes as having an extraordinary sense of humour.

The Maharani spoke of the late afternoon tea parties she held in her palace during the days of yore when the household gathered over a tea table and recounted the stories of the day. Sadly, the Maha-

rani does not own a palace now, and is now residing in Delhi, where Mulvihill met her.

The artist has hobnobbed with Nepali peasants with whom he drank block tea, a strong brew from a piece of tea molded into a block and dried. Then, he has tasted tea made the Tibetan way, which has yak butter added to it.

"In northern China they pronounce tea as 'tay' or 'ta' while in the south it is 'chai' or 'cha'. What's amazing is that tea is either 'chai' or 'cha'; or 'the' or 'ta' in almost all the languages of the world," says Brian. "Tea cuts across cultures to be a universal word."

Needless to say, events like these are important in a multicultural society like Canada's where ghettoization is the norm.

So Vancouverites, get ready for the World Tea Party. Whether you drink tea or not, this is sure to be your cup of tea!

The World Tea Party at Presentation House Gallery - 333 Chesterfield Ave., North Vancouver - from September 17 to October 22.

Indian Tea Party on October 14. Indo-Canadians who have a special tea story to tell or tea-related family heirlooms they are willing to loan for the event are asked to contact the Gallery at 986-1351.

VISUAL ARTS

World Tea Party — celebrating connectedness

By ROBIN LAURENCE

A "transformative meeting space" — that's how the World Tea Party at Presentation House Gallery is being billed.

Certainly the opening was transformative. Hundreds of people — art patrons, tea patrons, artists and tea-ists — swarmed the normally quiet photographic galleries and involved themselves in the thousands of components of the exhibition.

Subtitled *An Interactive Transcultural Art Tea Salon*, the show comprises installation, video, sound, performance and participatory elements.

In what must have resembled a '60s happening, artists and viewers peered into cabinets filled with teaware from around the world and across history, consumed various fragrant teas and tiny tea foods and displayed a rustling rainbow of tea frocks, tea suits and tea hats.

The hats were an important part of the event: some resembled limp poodle pelts. (The latter seemed to provoke a condition of body-quivering anxiety in a tiny, live poodle, attending the event on the arm of a very tall man.)

A trio arrived dressed as the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse, as if they'd sprung, rudely three-dimensional, from the pages of *Alice in Wonderland*.

One prize-winning little girl, who bore an incidental resemblance to Alice, came dressed as a tea table, with a big felt tea pot wrapped around her blond head.

Conceived and executed by media and visual artists Daniel Dion, Su Schneec and Bryan Mulvihill, with sound contributions by composer March Patch, *World Tea Party* uses tea as a means of celebrating both cultural difference and human connectedness.

"The diversity of the teaware functions as a symbol of the diversity of human culture," Mulvihill says, "yet the shared ritual and pleasure of tea drinking is also a metaphor for values and experiences that are transcultural."

The forms and ceremonies around drinking tea can be seen as highly refined social and aesthetic expressions within individual cultures, and as a means of establishing a dialogue across borders and beyond nationalities.

Tea is, after water, the most commonly consumed beverage in the world, Mulvihill says. The words for tea, he adds, are derived from the Chinese and sound much like "te" or "chai" wherever tea is infused and consumed on this planet. (Initially developed in China, tea is seen by some as the cultural manifestation of the East mostly fully accepted into the colonial West.)

The *World Tea Party* was first mounted at the National Gallery in Ottawa in 1993, as part of a solo show by Dion. Since then, it has had greater and lesser incarnations at the Mohile-Parikh Centre for the Visual Arts in Bombay and the Transcultural Pavilion in Venice during the recent Biennale.

The Presentation House installation (333 Chesterfield, North Vancouver, to Oct. 22), coordinated by Karen Love, acknowledges its setting by incorporating dozens of artworks by West Coast artists and hundreds of artifacts (furniture, teaware, archival photographs) from public and private collections in Vancouver and Victoria.



IAN LINDSAY/Vancouver Sun

BRYAN MULVIHILL, one of four collaborators in the *World Tea Party* installation at Presentation House in North Vancouver, pours from a '70s-era tea service.

mance art might be too arcane, too theoretically exclusive for them, will be happily surprised by the accessibility of *World Tea Party*. The visual elements here are easy and engaging, the transcultural and participatory messages are clear, and the environment is warmly welcoming. Tea is "synonymous with socialization," Mulvihill says.

So's the show.

Also recommended:

Carel Moiseiwitsch: show and sale of drawings, watercolors, editorial illustrations and cartooning one of Vancouver's most creative and hard-hitting artists. At the 3rd I, 3rd floor, 422 Richards St., to Sept. 30.

Shawn Westlaken: In Tension: neo-pop hybrids of painting and sculpture — would you call them painture? — challenge visual perceptions and connections. At the Sarah Dobbs Gallery, 1767 W. 3rd Ave., through October. ♦

The examples of teaware range across time and space, from fifth century B.C. to the present-day. They include wooden teacups from Bhutan, a silver tea cannister from Burma, a brass teapot from Indonesia, a moulded tea brick from China, a bronze bowl from Tibet, a porcelain samovar from Russia, a Wedgwood teapot from Britain, hand-painted teacups from the former Czechoslovakia, terracotta *ollas* from Mexico, and tea tins from Canada and the U.S. — all mounted in antique and modern cabinets from East and West.

Antique and modern chairs and tables are grouped throughout the show's three galleries, for comfortable tea consumption and tea show contemplation. Tea will be served each afternoon by "tea butler" Mulvihill and a special "World Tea Party" blend has been created by Murchie's for the occasion.

A small Japanese tea room is also part of the show, installed here by the Vancouver branch of the Urasenke Foundation. (A series of special events will take place throughout the run of the show, including a First Nations tea party, a Sufi tea circle, a Japanese tea ceremony, and an Indian tea and poetry reading. Pick up a schedule at Presentation House, or phone 986-1351 for details.)

The many contemporary artists represented include Gathie Falk, Jill P. Weaving, Jeffrey Birkin,

Christos Dikeakos, Zainub Verjee and Susan Edelstein, and their works range through paintings, drawings, photographs, text — and a sound sculpture with piano, tea leaves and engraved teapoons.

One of the contemporary standouts is a leopard-patterned tea set, a collaboration between ceramicist Gillian McMillan and Western Front-er Eric Metcalfe, a.k.a., Dr. Brute (here billed as Dr. Brutea), for whom leopard spots are a diagnostic motif.

The core of the show, common to all its installations, is a high-tech, interactive video installation.

Its complex elements — including found tea footage from movies and television, original videos of tea vending, tea serving and tea consuming activities around the world and a sound collage of tea being poured, teatable conversation, the clinking of tea cups and saucers, and tea-tempered new and world music — are directed by a computer program that responds to numbers and movements of viewers in the room.

Its ceiling-mounted cameras also continuously add elements of the local installation and the comings and goings of local viewers to the mix — indicating, Mulvihill says, that "art is a process."

Viewers who fear that contemporary installation, video and perfor-

WHATZIT?

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

ECIN NIAGA

SOLE PUN.

Turned our nice again

TEA OFF A roving "installation/event" on the theme of tea and transculturalism, *World Tea Party*, most recently encamped at Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver. The opening reception was a kind of '60s happening with Fluxus-like social components woven into a merry web of tea serving, tea consuming, tea-tree planting and tea-costume flaunting. Cucumber sandwiches were munched amongst cabinets of ancient, antique and modern teawares; tea hats bobbed before displays of tea art by local, national and international artists; and tea chat took place in the company of a high-tech video installation composed of thousands of global tea sights and sounds.

The opening of this "interactive transcultural art tea salon" thronged with people in elegant and egregious tea frocks, tea suits and tea hats, the latter ranging in appearance from leopard-skin soufflés and crushed meringues to crocheted tea cosies and limp poodle pelts. The participatory element was so successfully integrated into the event that it was difficult to tell who were the performance artists on hire and who were the viewers taking part on whim.

Conceived and produced by Daniel Dion, Su Schnee and Bryan Mulvihill, with sound components by composer Marc Patch, *World Tea Party* was first mounted at the National Gallery in Ottawa in 1993, then restaged at the Transcultural Pavilion during the 1995 Venice Biennale. Those who had seen the Venetian and the Vancouver incarnation of *World Tea Party* preferred the latter, finding it both more complex and more intimate. Local museums, antique dealers and private collectors loaned an astounding number of artifacts to the exhibition ranging from the fifth century BC to the present-day, including wooden teacups from Bhutan, a silver tea canister from Burma, a brass teapot from Indonesia, a molded tea brick from China, a bronze tea bowl from Tibet, a porcelain samovar from Russia, a wedgewood teacup from Great Britain, hand-painted teacups from the former Czechoslovakia, terracotta *ollas* from Mexico and a CPR tea service. Local artists like Gathie Falk, jill p. weaving, Jeffrey Birkin, Robin Deyo and Christos Dikeakos contributed paintings, drawings, photos, text and sculpture to the Presentation House installation. These were created explicitly for *World Tea Party*, and made manifest each artist's idiosyncratic take on tea. Eric Metcalfe, aka Dr. Brute (here billed as Dr. Brutea), designed a tea service made in collaboration with ceramicist Gillian McMillan and which bore, of course, Dr. Brute's diagnostic leopard spots. Susan Edelstein and Zainub Verjee restaged *Tea for Three*, consisting of a computerized piano playing a composition by Verjee and Robert Cartwright and surmounted by wooden boxes. The boxes contained porcelain plates with text and engraved silver teacups on beds of fragrant tea leaves, and addressed a poetic

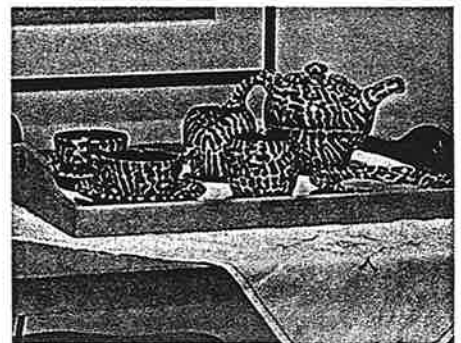


Venice World Tea Party, "Transculture," Venice Biennale, 1995. Photograph: Bryan Mulvihill.



World Tea Party, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver, 1995, installation. Photographs: Presentation House.

Eric Metcalfe,
Dr. Brutea Tea
Party Service,
1995, ceramic.



REVIEWS BORDER VIEWS

cluster of social issues. (The music was difficult and a bit discordant and at one point during the opening party, a young man sat down at the piano, switched off the program and began playing and singing Elton John songs. This occurrence was completely spontaneous, as was the gathering of an enthusiastic crowd around him, pitching in requests and singing along. Ain't culture grand?)

The thousands of components of *World Tea Party* contribute to its all-embracing effect, as do the special events scheduled throughout the run of the show. These latter include a Japanese tea ceremony, a First Nations tea party, a Sufi tea circle, an Indian tea and poetry reading, and various talks on tea by local tea historians and celebrities.

In a short interview before the opening tea party, Mulvihill (dressed as a tea butler) told us that, "tea is synonymous with socialization—meeting around a shared hot beverage is fundamental to the human condition."

Naturally, we'll drink to that.

Make ours Lapsang Suchong, with an Orange Pekoe chaser.
ROBIN LAURENCE





LILIGET

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WORLD TEA PARTY MENU

September 24, 1995 at 333 Chesterfield Avenue

N. Vancouver

2-5 p.m.

TEA

Saskatoon Berry

Cranberry & Apple

Pine Needle

SANDWICHES

Smoked Salmon w/cream cheese

Vegetarian

DESSERT

Fresh Blueberry Tarts

Liliget Indian Wedding Cake

\$5.00