

press release



Private Investigations

February 26 - April 10, 2000

The exhibition *Private Investigations* plays on the idea of the "private eye" who watches secretly, looking for incriminating evidence. In the public domain we are continually under surveillance: by institutional cameras in banks or malls, by tourists or the casual watcher. In this exhibition it is the artists who are looking, documenting places where the public and private realms intersect in the urban environment: windows, dressing rooms, the street. Though there is something clandestine about their looking, their subjects remain banal, tending to frustrate desire.

MERRY ALPERN carries a hidden video camera in a specially adapted purse. She is interested in the phenomenon of shopping as a pastime in the city, particularly for women. Recognizing in herself this desire to peruse objects and people, she has made it the subject of this work, capturing fleeting glimpses of this self-absorbed practice and printing them in glossy cibachromes which reflect the shiny surfaces of the commercial environment. JENNIFER BOLANDE'S surfaces on the other hand are almost absorbant. She photographs the city at night, focussing on architectural detail which is surrounded by a dense luxurious black which cloaks the surroundings. The photographs capture a kind of "live calm" which, while mostly uninhabited, is saturated with past activities and impending movement, like the smoking ashtray in a murder mystery. ALLYSON CLAY uses a hand-held video camera to "watch" the activities in distant buildings. The moving images are projected onto glass, and details, or "portraits", are isolated into tiny still photos. The closer you get the more you realize that the images fail to reveal the details you are searching for. They remain "degraded" and cohere just enough to provoke an interest.

As an adjunct to the exhibition there will be a computer on site showing the web site of jennicam.org. Jennifer Ringley is a computer programmer in Washington, D.C. who has installed cameras in her home. Images are downloaded onto the web every 4-5 minutes and people can look in at any time of night or day. Our expectations of privacy seem to be changing. Everything in public space is potential evidence: of a crime, of indiscretion, of life. The photograph, the television screen, the computer are all progressive states of separation from and objectification of the social. Surveillance has become a normalized anti-social condition of urban culture. The artists in *Private Investigations* participate in this growing phenomenon and provoke a discussion of living in the camera's view.

**Artist Allyson Clay will talk about her work, with an introduction to the exhibition by curator Karen Henry, on Thursday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m.
This event is free and open to everyone.**

Organized by Adjunct Curator Karen Henry and supported by the Canada Council for the Arts.
Gallery Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 12 to 5 pm; Thursday, 12 – 9 pm.
Media Contact: Diane Evans, 986-1351

PRESENTATION HOUSE GALLERY

333 Chesterfield Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C. V7M 3G9
Phone (604) 986-1351; Fax: (604) 986-5380; website: www.presentationhousegall.com
Photo above by Merry Alpern, still from *Shopping*