



**Antoni Abad**  
*Minor Measures (detail)* 1994  
 Video projection, text, light box  
 Photo: Cheryl O'Brien  
 Courtesy: Agnes Etherington Art Centre

## Full Count

For the past few years, artist Gwen MacGregor has spent hours scavenging, or “mudlarking,” old coins, clay pipes and dressmaker’s pins from the muddy banks of the Thames, then using these materials in various works of art. In *Not Here Not Now*—which appeared in the group show *Of Mudlarkers and Measurers*, at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston—clear, vacuum-formed trays cradle clay casts of found buttons. The buttons appear like rows of pastel-coloured candy. These were housed within an elegant box akin to a magician’s disappearing cabinet. Each day throughout the winter exhibition, some of the cast buttons were emptied into a container of water. The buttons dissolved, forming different strata of coloured clay. By the end, these layers of sediment recalled the muck



**Gwen MacGregor**  
*Not Here Not Now* 1996  
 Wood, vacuum-formed plastic, clay, pigment  
 121.9 x 91.4 x 61 cm  
 Photo: Cheryl O'Brien  
 Courtesy: Agnes Etherington Art Centre

of the Thames and the buttons that still lie buried in it.

The exhibition, organized by artist and curator Sarindar Dhaliwal, features the works of five artists. It’s held together by their intersecting interests in scavenging and collecting, counting and measuring. Brazilian artist Regina Silveira strives, like MacGregor, to address the historical or social subtext of a site, in this instance an open-office plan. The flattened perspectives of her skinny drawings on vinyl speak of the suffocating banality which lies within its design.

Much of the work in *Mudlarkers* locates itself in the gap between cultures. *Nuevas Voces*, by Colombian artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso, takes something common and utilitarian in one country, in this case corn, and converts it into a validated artwork in another. Lyndal Osborne makes sculpture that bridges her native Australian landscape with her adopted home, Alberta. For Osborne, the harvesting and collecting of organic material, like birds’ nests, sunflower heads and grapefruit halves, marks her walks across fields and along creeks, the passage of time and relationships with others.

Distanced by language and culture, Spanish artist Antoni Abad felt like a stranger in his own skin when he was a resident at the Banff Centre for Arts a few years ago. Standing in front of his installation, *Minor Measures*, in a darkened room in Kingston, I found myself thinking of my own experiences as a foreign student at the University of Bologna. Far from home, my purpose for being there evaporated when the university was closed by a strike: police had shot a student. I spent days walking the miles of arcades, window-shopping, sitting in cafés, trying to fill the endless hours. Alone and anonymous, each day became a tally of tastes, human contact, experiences and movement.

In Abad’s video projection, an enormous hand stretches to its full width. The hand opens, contracts, then opens, moving across the wall, again and again, endlessly spanning and measuring. In the catalogue essay, Dhaliwal describes the action as “the interminability of being.” Blue text on a small lightbox recounts infinite minutiae of the artist’s day: from the first coffee to reading Vasari in bed to turning out the light. Six aluminum casts of the same veined, all-too-human hand hang on the gallery wall—fixed, made static, no longer tallying, no longer measuring. ■

by JENNIFER RUDDER