



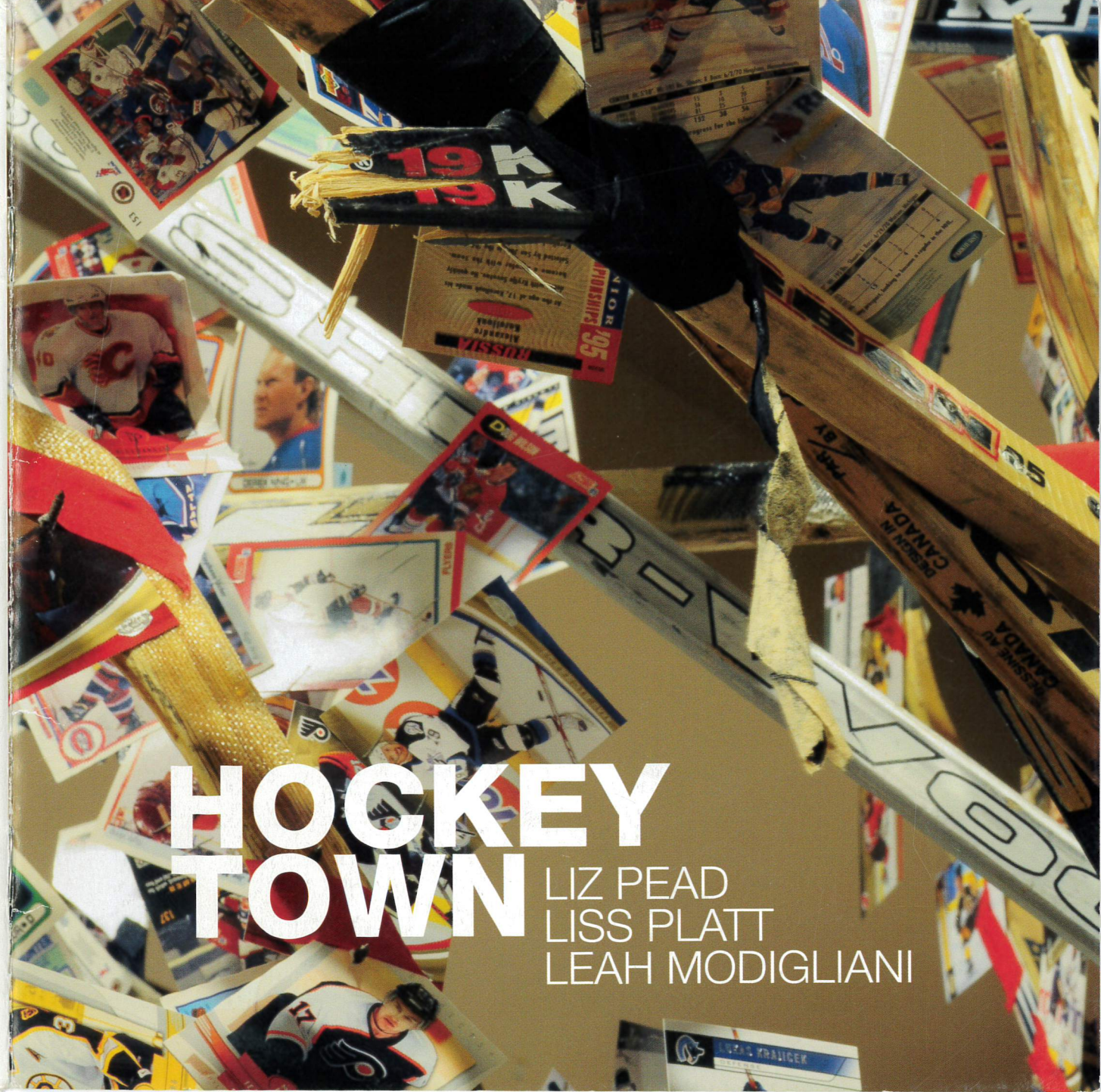
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HOCKEY TOWN

LIZ PEAD
LISS PLATT
LEAH MODIGLIANI

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Liz Pead, *Maple LEAF Tree*, 2008, recycled hockey sticks, hockey cards and pucks, 366 cm x 305 cm x 305 cm (front cover).
Installation detail, MacLaren Art Centre. Photo: Peter Harmathy (preceding page). Liz Pead, *Bayside Field, Facing St. Croix Island*
(detail), 2008, recycled hockey gear and oil paint on plywood, 366 cm x 305 cm. Photo: Lino Ragno (preceding page, inset left).
Liss Platt, *Puck Painting 68: Homage to Jagr* (detail), 2000, puck rubber and paint on wood, 122 cm x 183 cm. Photo: courtesy of
the artist (preceding page, inset centre). Leah Modigliani, *The Great One* (detail), 2005, 244 cm x 366 x 427 cm. Photo: St. Mary's
University Art Gallery (preceding page, inset right). Liz Pead, *Apple Island* (detail), 2006, mixed media on plywood, 244 cm x 244
cm. Photo: Lino Ragno (opposite page).





Liss Platt, *Puck Painting IXX: Toronto/Sky Blue*, 2002, puck rubber and paint on wood, 122 cm x 183 cm. Photo: Peter Harmathy

HOCKEY TOWN

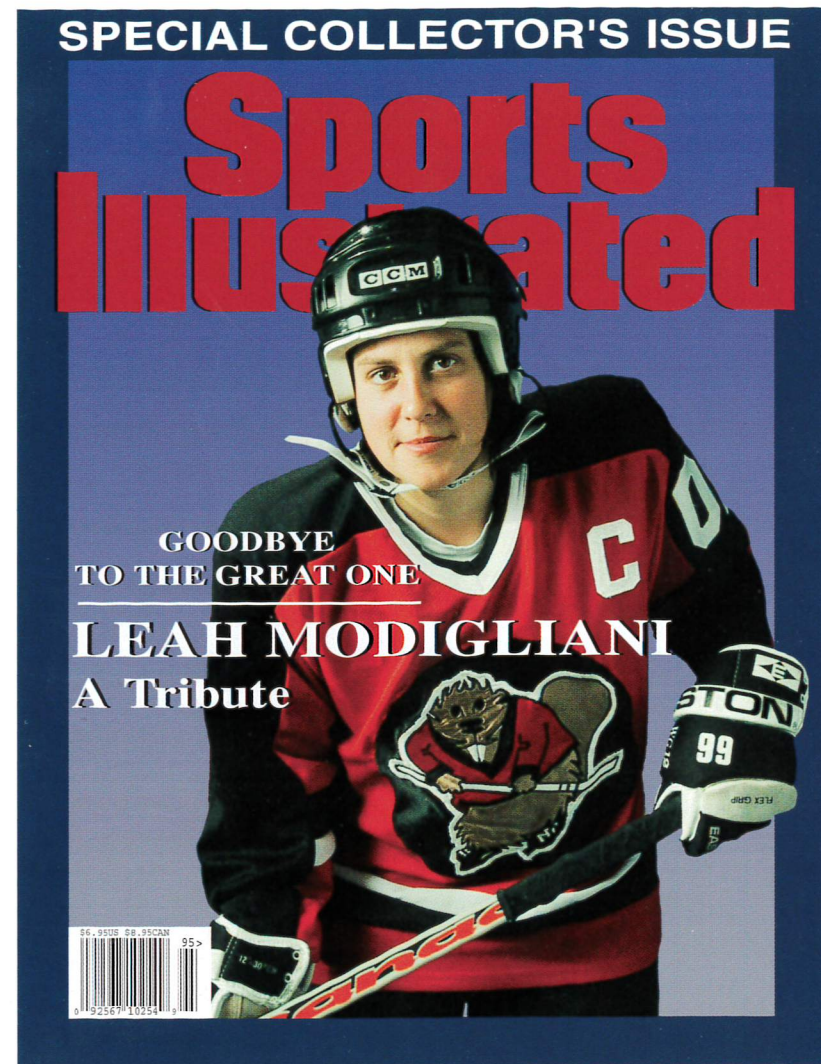
Sandra Fraser

Since Canada's early days, ice hockey has been closely tied to ideas about our national identity, and it continues to be an important forum for community spirit. In much the same way that hockey creates a sense of unity in communities across the country, the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson sought to express our diverse nation by painting the wilderness. Artists and athletes embody a lifestyle that revolves around play, passion and an innate gift, or even genius. They represent dreams of greatness in our society, and as such can reveal expectations for individual achievement and the power of collective identity. In this exhibition, three artists combine their passion for hockey with their passion for making art. Each artist sets up a tension between the viewer's assumptions and the discovery that things are not as they seem, accentuating the stereotypes that surround gender, pleasure, class, sport and culture.

Liz Pead, who shares Tom Thomson's affinity for the wilderness, has re-interpreted the landscape with discarded hockey equipment. White hockey helmets and shin guards form clouds; red, orange or green jerseys form the foliage; broken hockey sticks and skates are re-born as trees. The artist "paints" the landscape of New Brunswick with a gestural assemblage of fabric, wood, metal and plastic. At once a romantic longing for a more unmediated relationship with nature, Pead also muses on the environmental impact of the sport as her material is gathered from the trash bins at ice rinks and curbsides around Toronto. Well-worn clothing (and its accompanying scent) evokes the struggles and triumphs of many games.

Leah Modigliani looks pointedly at the commodification of the body—the marketing of the star athlete and the cult of celebrity that surrounds professional sports. Modigliani's installation consists of a basement rec-room set in the midst of the gallery space. The room is filled with hockey memorabilia for the fictitious women's hockey team, the Windsor Beavers. The gallery visitor is invited to sit in comfort and watch television, on which the artist delivers Wayne Gretzky's famous retirement speech. Modigliani takes on numerous personae in this installation: the star athlete, the fanatical fan who collects absolutely everything, and the artist herself. Each position opens a space for critique around gender stereotypes and how we identify ourselves with greatness.

Liss Platt literally takes shots at her work. Smooth white surfaces carry the traces of hockey pucks whose delicate marks deny the powerful slap shots that made them. Platt references action painting,



Leah Modigliani, *The Great One* (detail), 2005, 244 cm x 366 x 427 cm. Photo: courtesy of the artist

ME AND YOU AND HOCKEY AND YOUR ASS

Dave Bidini

My wife has played hockey for the last three years. A beginner. In 1999, I travelled to China, Transylvania and the Middle East to play and research my book, *Tropic of Hockey*, and Janet simply tagged along. She did not play. She watched from cold booths and dark arena coffee stands. Then, she started playing herself. Now, she cannot stop. Wendel, Jacques Plante, Steve Larmer be damned. My wife is my favourite hockey player.

Most women are resigned to being hockey moms. But to be a hockey mom is to be an equipment sherpa, fundraising den mother, cement rail team booster. Everything but a hockey player. Hockey moms don't play: they cheer, they rally, they support. Skating, spearing, scraping, shooting is not part of the job description.

My wife, Janet, is five foot something. Smaller than Wes Walz or little Theo. Her wrist shot is as whippy as a long thin branch, and her stride reminds one of a small animal hurrying from a predator. If she has an angry hockeyface, I have not seen it. Instead, she lines up beside her opponent and greets them with pleasantries, suffusing the battleground with a wink and a nod, disarming players with wit and vinegar. Most players—all of them almost always larger, and almost always male—are forced to grin and giggle, then tap her affectionately on the pads. In the playground of the badly-behaving-man, she is post-modern Ken Dryden hockey, playing for the sake of playing, hockeying for the sake of liberty and escape.

This is not to say that she does not compete. The first time we played together competitively was on a rink in Central Park, during a CanAm's musicians' hockey tournament. Our last game started at around 5 pm, just as the lights of the city were coming into full view. The backdrop was elegant and grand, and as we lined up on the north rink—at the bottom of Harlem—the scene nearly equalled what I'd seen in Dubai or Harbin. Only this time, Janet was out there playing, too. She'd been supplanted in the stands by my friend, the writer Jeff Z Klein, who waved an Avangard Omsk scarf, and hollered encouragement. I made a note to try and bring him down for subsequent tournaments. Not playing is a conscious choice, not unlike veganism or quitting smoking. Playing hockey is fun and anyone can do it.

After the puck dropped, there was a scramble in front of the net, and my wife found herself lost in the depths of the slot. She'd been well-versed in positional hockey, having been taught the strategic basics at the Sparkles Academy for Ladies and Proper Gentleman, a weekly clinic run out of McCormick Arena, our home pad, in Parkdale, a hardscrabble neighbourhood in Toronto's west end. The clinic was run by Sean Markle, who'd also helped organize a tournament for one of Janet's women's teams—the Blackhearts—near his home of Mildmay, two hours north of Toronto. There, my wife experienced her first hockey road trip. She swore and drank and someone saw one of the referees naked in the arena's boiler room.

It was at Sparkles where she learned to play head's-up hockey. One day, she told me, "Because I started late, I'll never be the best passer, shooter or skater. But, at forty-three, I can be the smartest player out there. You've gotta have a reasonable goal." After a few months at the clinic, she came home one evening and did what I'd done after returning to the game back in the mid-80s, standing with her back to me in our bedroom as I punched her in the bum. "It's what hockey does to your ass," she said. "Everyone should know about this. If anyone needs an excuse to start skating again, this is it."

At the Central Park rink, the puck skipped towards her. As she attempted to collect it on her stickblade, one of the other teams defenders—a 6-foot-4 lawyer in a green sweater—moved to dispossess her of the puck. As he did, he lunged and fell, toppling into the elfin winger with the fullness of his body weight, a limestone slab collapsing on a field mouse. He lay on top of her for a moment before rising apologetically. My wife remembers checking for body parts before picking herself up from the ice and looking gamely for the puck, which had sailed up the ice.

Janet doesn't score much. But when she does, it counts for something. Her most famous—or at least notorious—goal happened during a recent hockey tournament shootout. Accidentally or otherwise, she moved in on the goalie, juked one way, feinted another, and slipped the puck under him. Her most recent goal came during one of her women's teams' playoffs, which they ended up losing. But nonetheless, that night she laid in bed, and every now and then punched the silence: "I scored a goal. Five hole."

I haven't played hockey abroad since my days touring the globe in search of faraway rinks. Instead, this obligation has fallen to Janet. Two years ago, she flew to Washington to attend a Weekend Warriors hockey camp. There, she skated on Alexander Ovechkin's Verizon Arena ice



with a few dozen international hockey seekers. One of the persons she met, and bonded with, was a former Iraqi soldier who'd played the game as a teenager and young adult, but who'd been driven from the sport by abusive coaches. For him, attending camp meant a reprieve from the responsibilities of raising a family on a soldier's wages. One night in the bar, he discovered that Janet had only just started playing, and the soldier was startled to find out that hockey had found her in her early forties. Rather dubiously, he commented on her fitness, before adding: "I hope you don't mind me saying this, but for a forty-three year old hockey player, you're a smoking hot piece of ass." Janet wondered if I'd be upset that he'd said this. But I wasn't. A forty-three year old woman who plays hockey is smoking-hot in itself.

Liz Pead, *Grand Lake*, 2007, mixed media on plywood, 244 cm x 366 cm. Photo: Lino Ragno



Liss Platt, *Puck Painting VII: I Heart Rangers* (detail), 2000, puck rubber and paint on wood, 122 cm x 183 cm. Photo: courtesy of the artist



Liz Pead, *Bayside Field, Facing St. Croix Island* (detail), 2008, recycled hockey gear and oil paint on plywood, 366 cm x 305 cm. Photo: Lino Ragno



Leah Modigliani, *The Great One* (detail), 2005, 244 cm x 366 x 427 cm. Photo: courtesy of the artist

About the contributors

Dave Bidini is the author of eight books, including *Tropic of Hockey*, named one of the top 100 Canadian books of the century. He has made two hockumentaries, including the award-winning *Hockey Nomad*. He is the co-founder of the acclaimed Canadian band, Rheostatics, and is the leader of his current project, Bidiniband. He has written two plays, including the nationally-toured *Five: Erotic Hockey Stories*, and writes a column every Saturday for the Weekend Post in the *National Post*, as well as a quarterly essay for *Maisonneuve* magazine. Bidini curated a hockey exhibition, *Blueblood*, with Andrew Hunter at the Harbourfront Gallery, Toronto in 2008. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.

Sandra Fraser is Curator at the MacLaren Art Centre, where she oversees the exhibition programme. She has curated over a dozen exhibitions and contributed several essays for exhibition publications. Fraser has a Masters in Art History from York University, a certificate of Museum Management and Curatorship from Sir Sandford Fleming College, and a BA specializing in Art History from the University of Toronto. She taught Art History and Gallery Studies at Georgian College for six years, and previously worked as Assistant Curator and Registrar at the MacLaren in addition to serving as the Programme Officer at Ontario Association of Art Galleries for two years.

Liz Pead works in painting and mixed media sculptures. Pead holds two diplomas in Textile Design from the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, and has a background in theatre. Since moving to Toronto from New Brunswick, she completed her BFA at OCAD in 2007, graduating with Distinction Honours and the Medal in Drawing and Painting. Pead shows her work at Lonsdale Gallery, Toronto, where her work was recently featured in their *Nuit Blanche* project *Lonsdale 25 Redux*. The landscape and the environment play a significant role in Pead's work, which combines high and low culture as a way of expressing and constructing Canadian identities. Her studio is located in the Queen St. West Art+Design district in Toronto, Ontario.

Liss Platt is a multimedia artist who works in video, film, photography, installation, performance, web art, artist's books, and any combination thereof. Her work has been screened and exhibited throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, at such venues as The Museum of Modern Art and The Whitney Museum in New York, Akademie der Künste in Berlin, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center in Buffalo, Gallerie SAW Gallery in Ottawa, and YYZ Artist Outlet in Toronto. She is also a member of the artist collective Shake-n-Make, which explores the '70s through re-articulated crafts. Liss Platt and Shake-n-Make are represented by MKG127 in Toronto. She resides in Hamilton, Ontario, where she is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia at McMaster University.

Leah Modigliani is an artist and writer living in Brooklyn, New York. After completing a BFA degree from Concordia University, she earned her MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, and is currently completing a PhD degree in Art History and Criticism at Stony Brook University. Her visual work has been exhibited at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art in Toronto, and the Moore Space in Miami, amongst other places. Her writing can be found online, in academic journals and contemporary art magazines such as *Art Criticism* and *cmagazine*. In general her visual and written work is marked by an interest in critiquing the institutional context of art within contemporary economics and politics.

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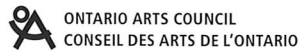
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Liss Platt, *Puck Painting IXX: Toronto/Sky Blue* (detail), 2002, puck rubber and paint on wood, 122 cm x 183 cm. Photo: courtesy of the artist

