

# One River (*running*)

October 22 – December 18, 2005

Artists: Aleksandra Dulic, Kenneth Newby, Martin Gotfrit and Dinka Pignon

With: Alex Mateesco, Phil Thomson, Milena Droumeva, So-Young Park, Layda Gongora, and Derek Robinson



*One River (running) is an image of community, both social and ecological, and is centred around a metaphor of river and flow. The river forms the backbone of the Fraser Valley from which a rich and complex ecology is nourished and provides the gateway for the great salmon runs that are increasingly imperiled in this region.*

*The river also defines territory of the St:olo nation — the original “people of the river”. From this beginning of the social world there is the ever-intensifying river of people, cultures and languages that have flowed through this region from all parts of the planet over the past century.*

*The creation of this work involved a simple documentary process in which a team of recordists went out into the Surrey community for several days and captured a series of reflections about this place by members of the community. The voices are of those who desired to be heard in this context: families, individuals, members of the community — from home owners to the homeless — people with an interest in this place.*

*The creative problem confronting the artists in the face of the large amount of material gathered was one of selecting what would be heard in the final artwork. The impulse to editorialize and emphasize every voice that had contributed to the “river”. The decision was then made to allow all of the voices to sound — forming the river of reflections on place that flow through the community. Individual voices regularly emerge from the river and combine with both previous voices and those not yet heard in a complex web of associations that begin to form a kind of conversation.*

— Kenneth Newby

One River (*running*) is an interactive, immersive media environment – a kind of participatory cinema. Its complex system of moving sound and images echo the river’s undulating geographic form. As a metaphor of culture and history, it is designed to reflect the contemporary Canadian multi-cultural community that is Surrey.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors face 32 ceiling hung, oval screens reflecting video images of speaking lips. Or visitors may see, projected on these screens and the four walls of the gallery, moving images from the natural environment. Small speakers, hidden in the ceiling, broadcast a symphony of voices and other sounds. Discretely placed under the carpet are pressure sensors. A web cam is barely visible, mounted in the ceiling. As visitors move through the gallery they influence their visual and sonic experience. For example, as visitors approach the screens their position may affect one of many simultaneous stories being spoken – it may become louder than the others.

The talking voices narrate stories about Surrey – its past, present and imagined future. Projected images of people’s mouths speak these words. Although the stories are mostly told in English, one may also hear many of the languages spoken by Surrey’s citizens. Stories may be told from various cultural perspectives and spoken by children or elders.

Other sounds in the exhibit include a multi-speaker broadcast of recordings from Surrey’s natural environment – frogs, birds, a mosquito, water, as well as sounds of the urban environment – the Skytrain, traffic, children playing, the sounds of construction or a shopping mall. Visitors can explore the interactive aspects of the sound as they walk through the exhibit.

The artwork’s images originate from digital photographs of the mouths of people that were interviewed by the team. These still images were then computer animated – programmed to become a kind of puppet. The mouths recognize the voices, and speak the words they “hear”. This is achieved by a voice recognition software program created by the artists. This synchronization is occurring in real time – the video is “listening” and responding to the audio.

## About the artists:

**Aleksandra Dulic** is a media artist, researcher and experimental film director. Her research centres on algorithmic cinema and animation, software art, the ontology of the open work, and multi-modal scenography for theatre. Aleksandra has participated in a number of exhibitions with her interactive and mixed media installations. She has done public artwork, and directed documentary films, short videos and animations produced for television broadcast and film festival screenings in Europe and Canada.

As a composer **Martin Gotfrit's** work includes electroacoustic and acoustic scores for feature and documentary film, video, theatre, dance and the concert stage. As a sound designer he has worked as a practitioner, consultant and teacher. He has been on faculty at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University since 1981 where he currently holds the position of Director.

**Kenneth Newby** is a media artist and an assistant professor in the School for Interactive Art and Technology at Simon Fraser University. His media art consists of works for responsive kinetic materials, sound sculpture, interactive audiovisual performance works, compact disc editions of music and spoken word, and DVD editions of music and experimental animation.

**Dinka Pignon** is an interdisciplinary artist working in video installation and performance art. Dealing with 'mixed realities', her work is characterized by a strong affinity for the phenomenal, conceptual and liminal. She has shown throughout Europe, in the U.S.A., Canada and Asia.



Dinka Pignon working with a volunteer contributor

## Acknowledgements:

The team would like to thank the many volunteers who contributed their voices to this project including:

Mark Carvery  
Veenoo Dewan  
Vineel Dewan  
Joanie Doyle  
Alex Frech  
Zahra Gawhari  
Eric Kailly  
Daniel Kailly  
Aylson Kailly  
Julia Kailly  
Linda Kailly  
Sebnem Koyuncu  
Lyn Lay  
Elizabeth Lay  
Rebekah Lay  
Sarah Lay  
Heather McDermid  
Joanne MacLennan  
Ian McKinnon  
Donna Lee Rubletz  
Anne Savenye  
Tara Isabel Savoie  
Shawna Savoie  
Ling D Savoie  
Gilbert J. Savoie  
Ali Shafaat  
Carol Williams

The artists would also like to acknowledge:

**Alex Mateesco:** sound recording and editing

**Phil Thomson:** sound editing and design

**Milena Droumeva:** sound recording

**So-Young Park:** animation

**Layda Gongora:** animation assistance

**Derek Robinson:** physical interaction design

**One River (running)** is a production of the Computational Poetics Research Group and is made possible by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

## Surrey Seen

In 2005, the Surrey Art Gallery celebrates 30 years of exhibitions and education in contemporary art. To recognize the ongoing support of the citizens of Surrey, the Gallery is presenting a series of projects that consider the complexities and characteristics of Surrey. One River (running) is one of these exhibitions.