

1. I am a multi-disciplinary artist and writer. A short biography is attached.
  
2. I purchased my present studio / residence at 1088 Queen Street West four years ago. One reason I chose this location is that it is right across the street from the Great Hall, a space in which I did a major work back in 1989. Having found what I thought was my ideal combination of live/work space, being in proximity to such an important location for me personally, and for the arts community it has served so well over the years, gave this studio its credentials.
  
3. This area has a real facility for accommodating artists. It is an area of mixed uses and has a large quotient of artists working and living here, making it attractive for even more artists to locate here. This attractiveness has existed at least since 1989. At that point the Great Hall building also included the YYZ Gallery and the Music Gallery. These important venues were quite west of the existing artistic centre, at the time closer to Spadina Avenue but every area needs its pioneers. Today the area has a wide array of artistic disciplines — painters, writers, people involved in the media, film. Some live here, some work here, some do both. Long before I moved here, a friend had started the Parkdale walk-in legal clinic, considered exemplary then and since, and that along with the neighbourhood medical centre seemed to address some important necessities of life.
  
3. Like other areas infused with artists this part of Queen Street was colonized under the awareness radar of other city constituents such as the politicians, bureaucrats and developers. My experience is that when an area like this comes

into focus for these other actors, most often they miss the point, and the changes they make drain the cultural life from the community, from the very features that attracted them in the first place, chasing only what might benefit them directly. The artists are a magnet to other players, and this attraction often leads to attracting those who provoke the collapse of a vibrant cultural life. This has occurred in other neighbourhoods such as Yorkville and the Queen/Spadina area, where people working in the arts were forced out by changing uses and higher prices. Even tourism has been a casualty since these neighbourhoods have lost their distinctiveness and creative energy.

4. Yorkville in its heyday was feisty and active and full of questions about the direction of the city and Toronto society as a whole. It was extremely valuable as an economic and cultural draw. The Queen/Spadina area was the same. Both have now become caricatures of the kind of cultural area that should exist and thrive in the city, giving a city its highest, best and longest-lasting identity. We can't afford to make the same mistake again.

5. Thinking about what the cultural sector adds economically to the city, we know that the economic return on artistic work is thought to be a multiple of ten to the amount invested. Thus if \$25,000 is put into cultural activities the amount of economic activity generated is in the realm of \$250,000. The return of investments into light industry or heavy industry by contrast, is much less, in the order of a multiple of two or three. The modest financial expectations of most of those working on cultural matters surely plays a large part in the healthy return for investments in culture. Culture provides an enormous bang for the buck to the city which makes it so important for the tourism industry.

6. The area around the Queen West Triangle and the Triangle itself is now something of a mecca for the cultural world. Many artists like me live and work in the area and there is a wide range of exhibition and performance spaces. We cross paths, exchange information, value and encourage each others' work in a truly remarkable community. This flowering has happened relatively quickly but it can also be squeezed out just as quickly by forces that come in and take away the modest but immensely fruitful opportunities that artists have been able to realize. We've made this happen and we're proud of what we've been able to do for the city.

7. I do not believe that those who would create new condominium clusters understand or care either about the community or culture. I've witnessed the kinds of initiatives that destroy the kind of milieu that we've created, and I fear they will destroy it as they have done in other parts of the city. That is why we need the City to take strong action to protect cultural interests and the economic synergy that these create. From the point of view of an artist, educator and consultant I believe the city should be taking the following kinds of actions:

8. First, as many existing buildings as possible should be retained and put to good use. They are affordable and filled with artistic activity – 48 Abell is a good example. It would be unfortunate to turn artists out of existing buildings in favour of condominiums. There are also empty buildings in the area which could easily be used by artists.

Second, the city should be encouraging infill buildings on empty land or where a building can't be readily used.

Third, the scale of new buildings should be modest as defined by the existing protocol, recognizing the importance of the fine grain of structures now on Queen Street that have embraced artists and small businesses with living space, exhibition space, and work space. Large scale buildings will not protect artists unless a substantial amount of space in them, both residential and non-residential, is devoted to artists.

Fourth, it is very important that the uses be mixed, from the hardware store to the local family-run bar and grill, so that residents and their visitors feel comfortable and at home – a mix of uses between different buildings and even within them.

10. I want to be able to continue to live in this area for the foreseeable future. That will only be possible for me if policies are put in place that respond to artists' needs as a primary concern. If this is not done then this area which is now vibrant and alive with cultural activity will be swamped in the same way that Yorkville and Queen/Spadina have been swamped, and the loss will be to the GTA as a whole.

11. Because so much is going on now in the Queen Street Triangle area, from film festivals to book launches, performances to lecture series, the streets have become a lot safer at night, encouraging artists, writers, film-makers and media workers to settle in with their families. The current quality of street life in the area is unique in Toronto and should be cherished and protected.

12. To destroy a successful urban ecology by appropriating its charm in order to sell hundreds of condominium units is not only destructive of what's there now

but also, in the long run, destructive of the asset it could become if designed properly. No one objects to constructive, visionary development that grows organically from existing strengths. What's objectionable is ill-considered, hit-and-run opportunism. Having lived and worked in many cities, including Paris, Vienna, Stockholm and London, and in many parts of Toronto, I can attest to the fact that nothing has equalled the quality of life I'm able to enjoy and contribute to in the Queen Street West neighbourhood where I now live. From that perspective, I find the proposed projects inappropriate and unsatisfactory and I hope decision-makers have the wisdom to foresee a more constructive future for this important neighbourhood, a potential jewel-in-the crown for Toronto and the whole country.

Vera Frenkel.

July 25, 2006.

Rooted in an interrogation of the abuses of power and their consequences, projects by multidisciplinary artist Vera Frenkel have been seen at **documenta IX**, Kassel; the **Offenes Kulturhaus**, Linz; the **Setagaya Museum**, Tokyo; the **National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa; the **Museum of Modern Art**, New York, and the **Biennale di Venezia** (*Club Media*, 1997; *Head Start*, 2001) among other important venues.

Frenkel's videotapes, drawings, audio works, installations, photographs, writings and new media projects explore the forces at work in human migration, experiences of displacement and deracination, the learning and unlearning of cultural memory that results, and the increasing bureaucratization of everyday life.

One of the most influential and respected artists in the country, Frenkel is recipient of some of Canada's major prizes awarded to a living artist. These include the **Canada Council Molson Prize**, 1989; the **Toronto Arts Foundation Visual Arts Award**, 1994; the **Gershon Iskowitz Prize**, 1995; and the **Bell Canada Award for Video Art**, 2001. She holds honorary doctorates from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (1996) and the Emily Carr Institute (2004), and is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. The CCCA (Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art) 'Untitled' Art Award for 'Best Exhibition or Project in Virtual Space' was presented to Frenkel at a gala ceremony in Toronto in March, 2005, and the artist has just been nominated for the prestigious 2006 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts.

Solo exhibitions at the **Goethe-Institute**, Toronto, 2000; the **Canadian Cultural Centre**, Paris, 2001; the **Georg Kargl Gallery**, Vienna, 2002, and the **Freud Museum**, London, 2003 among others, were followed by the touring exhibition during 2004-5 of *The Institute™: Or What We Do for Love*, Frenkel's current project on the inner life of a dysfunctional cultural institution.

While maintaining the continuing on-line presence of *The Institute™* web site ([www.the-national-institute.org](http://www.the-national-institute.org)) for which a German version is now in production, the artist is preparing a new travelling version of the project for the next phase of its tour. A Senior Canada Council Media Arts Award in 2002 made possible the programming for and multi-museum installation of this prizewinning work.

Solo exhibitions also include major installations at **Video Art Plastique**, Centre d'Art Contemporain Basse-Normandie, 1998; the **Riksställningar** tour of the artist's work through Scandinavia and Poland, 1997-98; the **National Gallery of Canada**, 1996; and, in the same year, exhibitions and international conferences on her work at the **Offenes Kulturhaus**, Linz, and the **Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst** (GAK) Bremen.

Group and two-person exhibitions featuring Vera Frenkel works include the current **Telling Stories, Secret Lives** exhibition, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston; **This Must Be the Place**, InterAccess, Toronto, 2005; **My Generation**, LEA, London, 2001; **Not On Any Map: Travel and Identities of Displacement**, The Film Center, Art Institute of Chicago, 1999; **Fragile Electrons**, National Gallery of Canada, 1998 & ongoing; **Deep Storage**, Haus der Kunst, Munich,

& tour, 1997–1999; *Virtualität des Verschwindens*, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, 1997; and *Andere Körper*, Offenes Kulturhaus, Linz, 1994.

Frenkel's video-photo-web project on art theft as cultural policy, *Body Missing*, installed most recently at the **Freud Museum**, London, 2003, was the focus of *From Theft to Virtuality*, an international conference on the artist's work organized at the **Institute of Contemporary Art**, London, by art historian, Griselda Pollock. The conference papers, edited by Pollock, will form the basis for the first published anthology on Vera Frenkel's work.

A mid-career survey of Frenkel's video works, the Spotlight Programme of the *Images Festival of Film, Video and New Media*, curated by Dot Tuer, provided the core selection to which new material was added for *Of Memory and Displacement / Vera Frenkel: Collected Works*, a four-disc DVD/CD-ROM boxed set, launched in April 2005.

Until her 1995 decision to focus fully on her practice, Vera Frenkel was professor in the Interdisciplinary Studio Programme which she helped to establish at the Faculty of Fine Arts, York University, Toronto.

Much in demand as visiting professor and artist-in-residence, Frenkel has been the Barker Fairley Distinguished Visitor, University College, University of Toronto, 1994-95, and the Leverhulme Professor at the School of Fine Arts, Leeds University, 2003-4, among others. In February 2006, she was the Michael and Sonja Koerner Artist Resident artist at Queen's University, Kingston.

Artist-in-residence invitations have also taken Vera Frenkel to the Slade School of Art, London; the School of the Chicago Art Institute; the Akademie der Bildende Künste, Vienna; the McLuhan Programme in Culture and Technology, Toronto; the Royal University, Stockholm; the University of British Columbia and the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (CentreCATH) at the University of Leeds, among others.

The artist has also lectured and screened work at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montréal, the OK Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz; the Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm; and at symposia such as *Konfigurationen - Zwischen Kunst und Media*, Kassel, 1998, *Museums after Modernism*, Toronto (2002) and *Urban Interventions*, Toronto (2005). During her centrepiece exhibition at *Videoculture 2000*, Detroit, Frenkel was one of two artists invited to speak at the related symposium, and one of three international presenters at the 2001 *World Wide Video and New Media Festival*, Amsterdam.

Frenkel's writings have been anthologized in several key publications including *Archive et Mémoire* (Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal, 2000); *Capital Culture* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); and *Penser l'indiscipline: Interdisciplinary Practices in Canadian Art* (Concordia/Optica, Montreal 2001). Her image-text work 'Strands from the Archive-Rhizome' appeared in *Alphabet City's* "Lost in the Archives" issue, Fall, 2003. With permission of the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna, her catalogue text, 'A Narrative of Absence and Return', was published in the first issue of *Zaesuren/césures/incisions*, the international journal of cultural theory and politics. Current and forthcoming articles include: "A Place for Uncertainty: Towards a

New Kind of Museum” in *Museums after Modernism*, (Ed. Griselda Pollock), and “Metropolitan Chords and Discords”, in the arts and activism journal, *Public: The Visible Cities Issue* (Ed. Janine Marchessault). The next issue of the interdisciplinary journal, *Intermédialités*, on the theme of ‘Rémédiation’ will feature a 36-page dossier on Vera Frenkel’s work.

The artist’s presentations during the Queen’s University Koerner Foundation residency coincided with the installation at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, of “*Her Room in Paris*”, a key work, now in the AE collection, on the life, work and fate of the brilliant artist in exile, Cornelia Lumsden.

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<http://www.yorku.ca/mam> [Museums after Modernism: Strategies of Engagement]