

Improve your swing

Henry Tsang

Choose a ball. It should be small and round, pockmarked with a rigid shiny exterior and an elastic core. It should bounce with authority and élan. Make a mental note of any logos or numbers stamped on the surface; this will prove vital if your ball finds itself in the company of other balls.

Choose a putter. It should be metal, although antique wood and bamboo shafts are acceptable, and could provide conversation fodder. If you are short and young, find one that is light, brightly coloured and plastic. The grip should be rubber or leather, providing a sense of stability and security when both your hands are firmly grasping it. The head of the putter may be any shape, but the striking surface must be flat and without blemishes or nicks. Test for its "sweet spot," the area that feels effortless when contacting the ball. Remember where it is, get to know your "sweet spot."

Place the ball on the synthetic grass. Stand to the side with your legs apart, bending over the ball. Hold the putter firmly with both hands, and with a smooth gentle motion, strike the ball towards the hole. But before you do this, first:

- Check that you are carrying your golf and country club membership
- Survey the approach and plan your shots accordingly
- Read (or have someone do this for you) the skill-testing question with multiple-choice answers at the tee-off marker, and pencil your selection in your score card
- Make sure you don't need to go to the restroom



*Mount Pleasant Golf & Country Club, 2000.
Artist Pat Beaton receives
Hole-in-One prize during
inaugural tournament.*

Putting is a fine art. It requires concentration and inner focus. It is much more than merely knocking a small ball into a small hole in the ground. There are hills and social ladders to climb, water features, sand traps and political landmines to be avoided, linguistic barriers and fear for personal safety to overcome.

Community public art is a tough game. Although it has been a growth industry in recent years from a funding perspective, few artists end up receiving reasonable remuneration by the time projects, with their exhaustive community development process, are finished. Liberal ideals still equate community activities with volunteerism while ideas of "contemporary art" relegate "community art" to amateurism. Far too many community groups and artists eager to find "accessible" art forms to interface with the public have, since the mid 90s in Vancouver, engaged in ubiquitous mural, banner, mosaic and bus shelter projects that do little to further contemporary discourse around art and the public. Questions regarding the role (and beloved autonomy) of the artist in relation to how a community is constituted and represented have often been addressed in uninspiring ways. Engagements with questions of the process versus product, and last but sometimes relegated to least,

the aesthetics of the whole complicated production of public art have failed to be provocative.

In turn, most "serious" artists have had few reasons to stir from their disinterest and even distaste for anything to do with "community art."

When I was asked to participate in collective echoes, however, my curiosity was piqued. Kristine Germann and M. Simon Levin were bringing together younger artists with more experienced artists who would mentor them in all aspects of a large-scale project. Utilizing strategies for both creating dialogue and education about public art, members of collective echoes would work with various “communities” to create artworks in their neighbourhoods. A collective model of public art production would be deployed, (collective echoes was aware of its challenges), committed to developing a non-hierarchical structure that would be inclusive and sensitive to issues of diversity. Significantly, members of collective echoes were devoted to producing contemporary art. Their idealism was up-front, unabashed, and offered a timely intervention into the discourse of “public art” and its relation to questions of “community.”

The challenge put forth by collective echoes lay in moving away from both the ideals of community as a manifestation of the common good and community public art as an alternative form of social work. Instead, the collective interrogated the social dynamics put into play by the production of so-called “public art.” In fact the group’s self-conscious production processes repeatedly asked how the artwork negotiated the identity of both “collective echoes” and the “community.”

That is, the group repeatedly asked from what socio-cultural collectivity was the artwork being produced and for what community was it intended. The answers to these questions were understood to be in flux and to constitute the social dynamic of “public art.”

A team of younger artists in their early 20s was chosen by collective echoes to work together in Mount Pleasant, a central Vancouver neighbourhood. I was given the opportunity to mentor them. It took me some time to determine what my role would be – whether I would be an on-call but distant advisor, or a hands-on collaborator. My preference from the beginning was to become engaged and involved, but much would depend on the conditions of the project and the dynamic of this newly formed group. I was determined *not* to be a teacher. My aim was, like everyone else, to learn from the other artists and the community public art process.

With support from the collective’s administrative team, the emerging artists began organizing community consultations consisting of a reverse scavenger hunt, public meetings and youth workshops. I began to play a more active role in facilitating brainstorming sessions when the desires and concerns of community stakeholders had been articulated and the team began to conceptualize what an artwork in general might be or look like. I became further enticed when the team started describing public art as a game. I was hooked when the idea was proposed to create a golf course that “linked” the different communities and histories of Mount Pleasant. It had become just too exciting a project and far too ambitious in scope and logistics to simply sit back and provide armchair encouragement and advice.

A new challenge arose as my role shifted from mentor-as-facilitator to mentor-as-collaborator: power imbalance. My concern grew as the others increasingly looked to me for direction and I feared that the project would reflect my sense of process, aesthetics, strategies and values. To an extent, this did happen but I would maintain that the project also reflected



*Mount Pleasant Golf & Country Club, 2000.
Holes 13 - 18.*

the other team members as well. Each of the ideas came out of group discussions and decisions were always made in consultation between different team members.



*Mount Pleasant Golf & Country Club,
2000. Holes 13 - 18.*

The learning curve for the emerging artists was steep. None of the group members had ever worked collaboratively and only one had experience with site-specific projects. To top it off, none of us had designed a golf course and only half of the group had ever swung a golf club! So we engaged in numerous discussions about what constitutes an artwork, how a “public” and a “community” are imagined, and ways to engage with these nebulous topics without necessarily using such loaded terms. The first goal was to develop a shared sense within the group of the different ways that “public art” could be constituted. Then we would direct our energies towards developing a sense of the “general public.”

In order to understand the specifics of space and place, I urged the younger artists to spend time in Mount Pleasant. I emphasized that they should pay attention to details and how they change over the course of a day and over a season. One must observe how the body operates, feels, is perceived, imagined and impacted by different influences, investments, and claims by individuals and groups within the various sites of the neighbourhood. Our project also involved a considerable amount of research concerning the history of miniature and regular golf, how different courses were designed, their rules and their etiquette. We were also interested in who played each type of golf, the target audiences for their respective brochures, magazines and their iconography. As part of our research, we took field trips to golf courses and to trade shows.

With the general concept of a miniature golf course in hand, we began a consultation process with various concerned parties. The goal of consultation was to further develop the project but the process of submitting our ideas to the interrogation of so many others, with so many different stakes, was sometimes overwhelmingly intense. Access to many of the area’s communities was gained through representatives of non-profit service organizations, support groups, schools and business associations. As well, our group posted public notices and distributed flyers inviting the public to participate in meetings. It became clear that those who showed up and gave input, and in some cases, opposition, to our ideas were those already experienced with public meetings and political advocacy. We consciously attempted to work with more than the usual spokespeople for Mount Pleasant, who were predominantly white and middle-class. Instead, we targeted especially youths and seniors from the wide range of ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the neighbourhood.

One of the many funders of the project was the City of Vancouver, which over the past decade has developed increasingly specific guidelines for community-based public art projects. The City was concerned that our project was too “conceptual,” perhaps meaning that the public wouldn’t understand how it was art, or that it would be perceived simply as miniature golf and nothing else. Frankly, we anticipated the response to our proposal to be mixed and so we were pleasantly surprised by how many of the community stakeholders immediately understood the differently layered intentions of the project. What dismayed us was the City’s withdrawing of support. They proved to be inflexible in interpreting their own guidelines, maintaining our process did not

fulfill their expectation that community art should be physically “made” by the community. We never did receive all of the money that was promised to us.

Our process engaged hundreds of individuals for design ideas and to identify local issues. Then we synthesized what was offered, came up with final plans, and built the course. The work was completed when the public came out to play the game. We did not employ the “traditional” model of community art wherein community members could proudly show to their friends and neighbours which part of the whole that they had painted, carved or sewn. Rather, we created an event that was performed as players moved through the space of the holes located in diverse areas of the neighbourhood. The centre of the course was Kingsgate Mall, a place of commerce and service organizations. Players would then move to the east side’s Pioneer Junction, a site of drive-by shootings, drug dealers and single-family housing (near where I lived). Finally, players would crossover to the west side’s community centre, with its adjacent strata-titled condominiums, blocks from City Hall.

The golf course itself was a device that created an opportunity for people, whether they were kids, merchants or junkies, to engage in a communal activity. The intention was to seduce participants with fun and the opportunity to play for free, while nonetheless creating an air of exclusivity. This was a “members only” club, with locals (hopefully) wielding privileged knowledge when answering skill-testing questions posted at each hole. The question at the first hole asked, “Mount Pleasant: Who or what is Mount Pleasant named after? a) Mrs. Pleasant; b) Mr. Pleasant; c) Mrs. Edmond’s Irish birthplace; d) the view.” The questions incorporated the players within the playfulness and competition inherent in any act of “community.” (By the way, the answer is “c.”) Of course we considered the 18 holes as a series of aesthetic objects, but they were not intended to function as sculptures. The course was an interactive game reconfigured as a commentary on social and political distinctions within the area identified as Mount Pleasant. And for myself, I considered it an intervention within the practice of community public art in particular and its relationship to contemporary art in general.



Mount Pleasant Golf & Country Club, 2000. David Ham plays Hole 6.

Golf is not fine art. Even though the Tiger Woods phenomenon has diversified the market somewhat, it is still a sport for the privileged. Perhaps that’s why the handful of players who showed up with loaded golf bags and spiked shoes on the inaugural Tournament Day wore disappointment on their faces. The other 600 players happily competed for prizes, or they just wanted to have fun. Some answered the questions at each of the 18 holes that tested both their knowledge of the neighbourhood and golf, as well as their sense of humour. Others just wanted to play mini-golf. Some understood the references to community issues imbedded into the course design. Others were happy just knocking the ball towards the hole.

The project has been over for some time but vestiges remain. Local merchants want to organize a “mini mini-golf tournament” over the six golf holes at Pioneer Junction. Vancouver’s weekly entertainment paper, *The Georgia Straight*, voted the project “Best New Golf Course of 2000.” More recently, golfer dudes were asking at the community centre when the golf course was due to open. They were late by a year. *The Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club* lives on, if only in acclaim, rumours and possibilities. Those free memberships we issued were for a lifetime, after all.

collective echoes: projects for public space

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collective echoes

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*Left and right: Cedar Cottage community development process with
the Reverse Scavenger Hunt umbrellas, Trout Lake, 1999.*





MOUNT PLEASANT GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

IN THE 1920s, a proposal was put forward to develop a golf course in the Mount Pleasant area. In the year 2000, that earlier dream became a reality with the *Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club*, taking the form of an 18-hole miniature golf course on three sites. By employing the metaphor of game, this interactive artwork invited the local community to play in a popular family-oriented activity and to move through the inner-city neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant with putter and ball in hand. A glossy corporate-style brochure included a map of the sites with a scorecard that doubled as a quiz testing one's knowledge of golf and Mount Pleasant. Lifetime memberships, green fees, and putter rentals were all free. ►

WELCOME

How do you greet others?

- a) Klahowya!
- b) Have you eaten yet?
- c) Ola!
- d) can't read this



WHERE MEMBERSHIP IS A LIFESTYLE



FROM LEFT: Players lining up for Hole 5; community members and their winning entry in the "What is Mount Pleasant?" contest.

EACH OF THE 18 holes was a unique design and addressed issues and conditions specific to Mount Pleasant and the game of golf. History, geography, safety, rapid transit expansion, class disparity, gentrification and cultural diversity were interwoven with golfing iconography such as the hole-in-one, sand traps, water features, the loop-de-loop and the stereotypical mini-golf windmill.

Community stakeholders identified potential sites for the artwork. From this list, three were chosen as symbols of community meeting places or where areas of influences converge. They ranged from the commercial to the communal to the political, and included both east and west side Vancouver. The three sites were Kingsgate Mall (Broadway & Kingsway), Pioneer Junction (Kingsway & Fraser) and the Mount Pleasant Community Centre wading pool (16th Avenue & Ontario).

EACH SITE had a distinct design style. The holes at Kingsgate Mall were situated both inside and outside the shopping centre, with the inside holes made of live turf set in plexiglas boxes, and the outside holes being artificial turf inserted within grassy areas. Pioneer Junction took classic mini-golf symbols (windmill, loop-de-loop, tunnel, water feature) and flattened them into two-dimensional shapes. And at the community centre wading pool was a construction of "Mount Pleasant" on a 720 square foot deck surrounded by seven tons of sand trap. Each hole had a plaque with a title and a question about the neighbourhood, a local issue, or the game of golf, and four multiple choice answers to be marked on the brochure/scorecard.



THE COMMUNITY

consultation process began with a reverse scavenger hunt where sixty children, youth, adults and seniors participated in a search for sites, symbols and issues for the community as well as exploring possibilities for public art. A series of public meetings and youth cartooning workshops was developed to articulate desires and envision possible conceptual approaches. An advisory circle comprised of youth and adult community members was established to consult on the development of the project.

Stakeholders voiced that the artwork should be accessible to adults, children and seniors, including both on- and off-street communities. They wanted more than one site to be incorporated and that these sites be interconnected to address the diversity of the Mount Pleasant community. They expressed their desire for an interactive and safe artwork that could educate in a non-alienating way some ideals of contemporary public art. With these requirements in mind, we conceived of an artwork that would function as an interactive game linking together many places in the area. The *Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club* would celebrate Mount Pleasant as a place to live, work and especially play, as well as highlighting specific social concerns in the neighbourhood.

MORE ACTIVITIES

were developed to promote and provide involvement in the project using the "mountain" in Mount Pleasant as the symbol of the community (there is no mountain). T-shirt painting, golf course design and obstacle construction workshops with youth and seniors were conducted at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Broadway Youth Resources Centre, KiVan and KiMount Boys and Girls Clubs, Mount Pleasant Community Centre and Kingsgate Mall. A contest calling for representations of the non-existent "mountain" was won by a kids' group at the Neighbourhood House. Membership sign-up booths were set up at community events, and a sneak preview mini-golf course was constructed at the Celebrate Mount Pleasant festival. A promotional campaign employed flyers, billboards, advertisements in community papers and articles in newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

On September 16, 2000, The *Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club* was officially launched with a Grand Opening and Tournament at Kingsgate Mall. Approximately 600 players participated. The artwork was open for free play until November 2000 at Kingsgate Mall, until August 2001 at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre and until August 2002 at Pioneer Junction. ↗

FROM LEFT: Youth signing up for free lifetime membership; Holes 13 - 18 at Mount Pleasant Community Centre; Holes 1 - 4 in Kingsgate Mall; community development meeting; Holes 7 - 9 at Pioneer Junction.

A GOLF EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER

17 Plateau Where is the seat of power? a) City Hall b) Welfare Office c) Police Station d) Mount Pleasant Golf & Country Club





collective echoes

projects for public space



THE CHALLENGE AWAITS

GRAND OPENING AND TOURNAMENT

Everyone is invited to the launch of the *Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club*. Join the celebration, and compete in the Tournament for prizes and fun!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2000

2:00 to 5:00 PM

Kingsgate Mall

Broadway and Kingsway

POST-TOURNAMENT PARTY

AT THE 19TH HOLE

6:00 to 10:00 PM

The Whip Gallery Café

209 E. 6TH Avenue

The Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club is a community public artwork by *collective echoes*, a collective of both youth and established artists based in Vancouver. Design team: Nicole Engelnmann, Kristine Germann, Jenny Ham, M. Simon Levin, David Parfitt, Sakun Samarakoon, Henry Tsang and the Mount Pleasant community. Support team: Dean Bennett, David Ham, Leo Quan, Mireille Rosner, Romina Sengara, Jason Da Silva. Community workshops and support: Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Kingsgate Mall, KiVan and KiMount Boys and Girls Clubs and Broadway Youth Resource Centre.

Sponsors of this project include: The Canada Council for the Arts – Millennium Arts Fund, Youth Options, BC 2000 Millennium Arts and Heritage Fund, Millennium Bureau of Canada, Telus, Vancouver Parks Board – Neighbourhood Matching Fund, Alliance for Arts and Culture, City of Vancouver, Office of Cultural Affairs, Vancouver Foundation and John Hardie Mitchell family foundation. Donations were generously provided by Benwell Atkin Printers, Opus Framing and Art Supplies, Q Graphics Screenprinting, Commercial Plastics, The Whip Gallery Café, the Burnaby Art Gallery and Pitt Meadows Golf Club. Special thanks to all those who contributed their time, labour, ideas, and interest in making this project possible.



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If you have comments you would like to share with us, please leave a message at 578-7255.



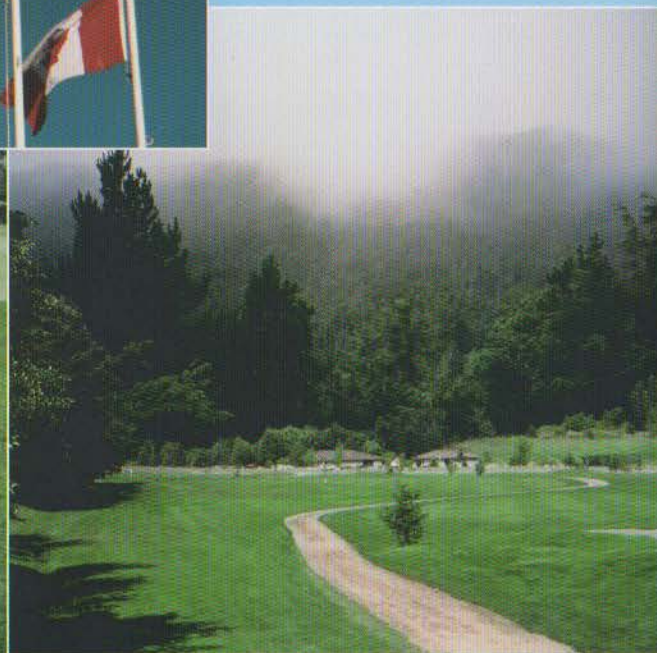
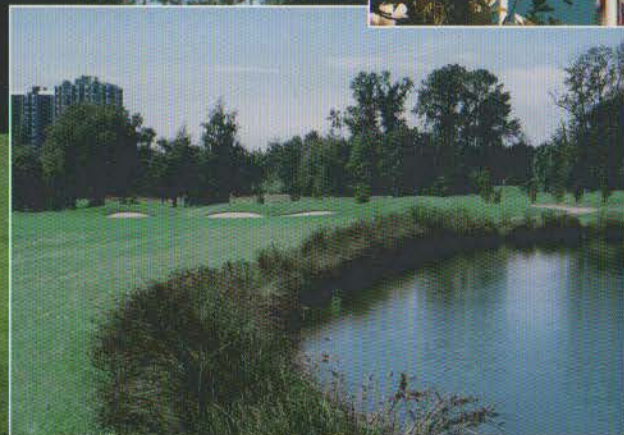
MOUNT PLEASANT

Golf and Country Club

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA



WHERE MEMBERSHIP
IS A LIFESTYLE



CALLING ALL SWINGERS

The Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club presents a limited-time offer to invest in a lifetime membership for absolutely free! Join now to take advantage of the special rewards that only exclusive members can access.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS REWARDS

The Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club provides an unforgettable miniature golfing experience deep in the heart of Vancouver. The 18 holes on three sites will take you through sand traps, shopping districts, water features, rugged hills and major intersections, traversing the diversity that is the community of Mount Pleasant.

A GOLF EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER

Our designer course promises challenge after challenge for both novice and pro alike. For those without their own putter or ball, we even offer free equipment rental. Begin your adventure now!

LOCATIONS



- ▲ HOLE 1 TO 6: KINGSGATE MALL
Broadway and Kingsway
- ▲ HOLE 7 TO 12: PIONEER JUNCTION
Kingsway and Fraser
- ▲ HOLE 13 TO 18: MT. PLEASANT
COMMUNITY CENTRE WADING POOL
16th Ave. and Ontario

Hole	Par	Score	A	B	C	D
1	2					
2	3					
3	4					
4	3					
5	3					
6	4					
7	2					
8	3					
9	3					
10	4					
11	3					
12	3					
13	2					
14	2					
15	4					
16	3					
17	4					
18	5					
TOTAL	57					

RULES OF PLAY

OUT OF BOUNDS
always play in full view
of Mount Pleasant

WATER HAZARD
boil water before
drinking

SAND TRAP
if caught, yell! (average
response time: 45 min.)

DRESS CODE
no clothing required

REST ROOMS
located to the left of
the cart path, between
the 4th green and
the 5th tee

GROUND UNDER REPAIR
as defined by gentri-
fication zoning and
Translink transportation
improvement projects

TEA TIME 4:00 PM

TEE-OFF TIMES

September 16 to October 29, 2000
Dawn to dusk or during mall hours

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

Golf putters and balls are available for free to use on the Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club at the following locations. Just flash your membership card or sign up on the spot, then leave your ID or something valuable as a deposit while you play. Children under 10 must be registered by an older individual.

KINGSGATE MALL: Dollar Land
PIONEER JUNCTION: The Lion's Den, 651 E. 15th Ave.
MT. PLEASANT COMMUNITY CENTRE:
12 to 4:30 PM, Thursday to Sunday

Subject to availability and operating hours
for each rental location.