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# ON BRIDGE

*An essay by Nathalie Bachand*

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### Gallery Hours

Tues - Sat 11-6  
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Admission is always free

InterAccess is an art gallery,  
educational facility and production  
studio dedicated to the creative use  
of technology, electronic art and  
new media culture.



## BRIDGE

Naomi Dodds

January 11 - February 4, 2017

A bridge is an artwork. An engineered artwork. The kind of artwork that rises way beyond mere artistic ambitions. Ambitions that bear a bridge are somehow proportional to its resistance and reach. Since its invention – from a narrow rope passageway to a wood construction, and eventually a steel structure as we know it today – the bridge always followed ways opened by technological advancement in order to overtake nature. It is what modernity realized in general: overtaking nature on every level – and a bridge is a powerful symbol of modernity, as it allows humanity a passage from sedentary economy to nomad capitalism. By saying it this way, it is the expression of a very elliptic movement of thought, but this shortcut is as effective as the way a bridge fills a gap between two points, and somehow creates the immediate possibility of something. Could the higher state of modernity be an attainment of immediacy, of simultaneity?

Dodds' precedent-setting artworks reveal a recurrent preoccupation with the image and its condition of appearance. I'm especially thinking of the artwork *Viewfinder* (2015), which is a machine – made of carbon steel, as is *Bridge* – that reveals different points of view following its mechanical movement: where the machine looks, an image appears. While some other earlier artworks were more about the movement-image, *Viewfinder* tells us about the simultaneity and the performativity of the machine-image relation. *Bridge* brings us slightly closer to this relation by being itself, a performative machine that is also an image in movement. Because it is a drawbridge that alternatively rises and falls, *Bridge* somehow embodies this relation: the

movement that is the image, at the exact same moment – the simultaneity of several states. But is not the performativity of the machine one of the founding principles of capitalism?

Dodds proposes a counter effective machine. When standing at the end of the bridge, where one may contemplate the possibility to pass over, it then opens and prevents us from it. Though this is not a real drawbridge which one can cross, its mechanism is programmed to signify this control capacity. That control which starts with the mere crossing of a territory, and extends to complex economic exchanges, is made of the same will of power over capital everywhere in the world. But there is another perspective to embrace. A perspective where we may see a will for freedom instead of control. Dodds' *Bridge* is this two-way structure placed before us. In this round trip movement, between the idea of capital control and resource sharing, there is something that stands in the middle which we might call labour. Might labour be something else than work?

There is the obvious labour that brings capital at arm's length, but also the one that has no other purpose than its immediate connection between the gesture and its meaning. Thanks to labour, goods are produced, bridges are built and artworks are created. Whether labour is a discipline or an indiscipline it pushes us to make. A discipline to do things in a certain circumscribed rigor, and an indiscipline to do them by crossing the boundaries. To cross boundaries may have, amongst others, the meaning, to go beyond oneself as an individual but also going towards others.

And there are bridges again that allow us to cross lands, real and symbolic ones – lands of cultural bias, of social inequality, of economic disparity. Lands where time is different, extended or shortened – where time is sometimes the only wealth. Is a bridge not a structure that links and transforms time and space?

Bridges are built – but may be deconstructed and again, rebuilt. Dodds provides us with a sort of rebuilding guide, an Instruction Manual made of technically detailed drawings, which is a key element of the exhibition. It suggests that the bridge is a portable one, which we may see under different lights depending on where we rebuild it. Does this lighting make it a different one? The technological integrity of the bridge may stay the same – as it appears in the drawings –, but the ground, light from the sky, and the people around always change. If we see the bridge as being different each time, it is mainly because it adapts itself to different kinds of boundaries to cross and gaps to fill – it is a technology that must adapt itself to the world by making it a meeting point. Should that not be the case of any technology?

[Naomi Dodds](#) is a Toronto-based new media artist whose work explores visual language through the material and immaterial by questioning the role of the machine and image. Dodds earned a BFA in Integrated Media from OCAD University, where she received the 2016 InterAccess Media Arts Award for her interactive installation, *BRIDGE*. Her work has been exhibited in both Canada and England.

[Nathalie Bachand](#) is a Montreal-based art writer and curator. Actively involved in the cultural milieu, she's currently in charge of development for Eastern Bloc and curator for the Accès culture network's exhibitions for the 375th anniversary of Montreal in 2017.