

A photograph capturing a dramatic moment at a formal event. In the foreground, a woman in a dark blue, short-sleeved dress lies on her back on a polished wooden floor. Her legs are extended, and she is wearing light blue tights and black high-heeled shoes. A black clutch bag lies on the floor near her head. In the background, several people in formal attire are standing. A woman in a bright pink dress and black lace tights is prominent, along with a woman in a black off-the-shoulder dress. The scene is lit with indoor event lighting, creating a high-contrast and somewhat somber atmosphere.

Diane Borsato

The Knowing of Diane Borsato

Philip Monk – Director of the AGYU

Our four writers have surrounded Diane Borsato, as if from all sides, each separately taking her as a partner in the collective dance of a quadrille. But if rather in the trick-taking card game of the same name, each also attempts, on the one hand, to touch the artist intimately or, on the other hand, to prod her humourously. Needless to say, Diane has brought this on herself.

To touch and prod, of course, are two degrees of intimacy, though the former might be more welcomed than the latter. Nevertheless, prodding is its own form of inquisitiveness ... and Diane's work is all about knowing, after all, however unconventionally it may proceed to acquire its knowledge. In the wanting to know of our authors, intimacy seeks to merge; prodding wants to play along.

So perhaps it is no surprise in reading the four essays that follow that none is a conventional enquiry into an artist's work. But it is curious, however, that the authors have taken *sides* in *knowing* Diane Borsato—knowing the work from the outside or the inside, so to speak. This is no judgement, only an observation I make following Scott Watson's perhaps tongue-in-cheek statement that "knowing is basically taxonomic—looking and naming." For it is Stephanie Springgay and Darren O'Donnell who are advocates for the intimacy of touch and who, at the same time, as an academic or an artist, advocate on Diane's part for the "politics" of her work. Meanwhile, Emelie Chhangur and Scott Watson engage in a participatory mimetics that occasionally finds humour in the situation, partly by slyly poking fun at the artist. Yet, these two, curators both, show themselves in earnest by assuming in their writing a genre form that adequately reflects their serious participation in Diane's projects. Each "side" has chosen to accompany Diane in their own way, an allowance the artist permits.

Since 1999, Diane Borsato has been active, exhibiting widely in Canada and internationally. She might alternately be described as a performance artist, an interventionist, or a relational aesthetician. None of these, though, adequately express the subtlety, intimacy, and, often, wry absurdity of her work. The artist proposes alternate forms of knowledge and processes of learning that are eccentric—yet mundane—researches into the forms of experience and boundaries of everyday life. Her art is a permission to experience differently, generously including the viewer in its delicate persuasions. If we think that we have captured Diane Borsato in our writerly quadrille, we'd be wrong. There is always room for other dancers.

The Art Gallery of York University is pleased to present Diane Borsato's first survey in a public gallery and to be the publisher of the first monograph on her work.