

Come With Me

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October 28th 2008 Toronto

Text/ Elaine Wong



This afternoon **Sakiko Yamaoka** led a small group of adventurers through the financial district of Toronto in search for 'The Best Place to Sleep,' a piece whose name changes to 'Come With Me' when performed with participants.

Yamaoka led us through a series of banks where as a group, we lay down to sleep in hallways, in front of ATMs, and near information desks. The actions became, for me at least, a tense experience of anticipation -- how long until someone would come to chase us away? The contrast of responses that we encountered was surprising. In some places, security guards ushered us out the doors almost immediately, while in a large TD, we slept beside the benches and potted plants and weren't disturbed at all. In an RBC along the PATH concourse, we attracted a flock of security



guards who were on the verge of calling in the troops, while in a BMO, it was an employee going out on his lunch break that asked us to leave. The performance was actually cut short after an action the artist did herself in a CIBC, when a security guard followed her for some distance out of the building, asking her for contact information as other staff stood by with medical kits. Unsure of whether this was out of concern or suspicion, Yamaoka felt it was prudent to end the excursion.

In contrast to our guerrilla-style actions was our second action of the day, in a bank where we asked permission to perform. This action ended up being a lot longer, nearly five minutes, and I was inundated with the sounds

of typing, talking and footsteps echoing down marble hallways. The beeping of the ATMs and even the sound of receipts being ripped up became unmistakably loud. The most surreal part of this particular action was when customers needing to use the ATMs were asking Shannon Cochrane, a festival-leader who was documenting the action, for permission to step around our sleeping bodies to access the machines.

Yamaoka has performed this piece in different contexts around the world -- in banks, museums, train stations and even lying in the streets at pedestrian crosswalks. She explained to me that the motivation for this piece was several. Physically, she is very interested in finding small breaks in space and time that she can fill, using actions that take up short moments of people's lives and fit into differently-sized spaces. In addition to this, she related a rather self-deprecating explanation of how she has given up hopes of achieving a lifestyle of luxury, believing that her art will never be part of the elite, institutional Japanese art market. As such, she seeks a way to access and impact the lives of the rich, even if it is just peripherally; she wants to force interactions with them to see what their lives are like.