

Editors' Note

The idea for this issue of *The Capilano Review* sprang from an exhibition at Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver that ran from June 14 – July 26, 2015. Entitled *Eye to Eye*, the exhibition featured historical and contemporary artists and material ranging from iconic vintage prints and photography books to recent photographic and moving-image works. Its many provocations cried out for a sustained response.

Chosen for the rich diversity of their approaches to the possibilities of portraiture, the works in *Eye to Eye* were selected from the personal collection of Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft. Beck and Gruft purchased their first photographs in 1975, and the following year opened the legendary Nova Gallery, Vancouver's first commercial gallery dedicated to photography, helping to spur on many renowned Vancouver artists who had begun working with cameras. While Beck and Gruft recently donated the majority of their photographs to the Vancouver Art Gallery, they continue to acquire new works, many of which were included in the exhibition.

Eye to Eye pried open fundamental questions about the evocative power of photography that seemed at one time to have been laid to rest, proving such debates are as fresh and resistant to resolution as ever. It seemed natural for us, therefore, to engage with these questions in the pages of this magazine. Presentation House Gallery and *The Capilano Review* have collaborated in the past, and we quickly agreed to pool resources in order to share the exhibition and collection with a wider audience. In this moment of image saturation, we were interested in bringing writers, artists, historians, and critics together to reflect on current strands of cultural discourse by offering the opportunity for each author to focus on one of the individual photographs.

Writers were solicited by both organizations and asked to choose a photograph from an edited selection of the exhibition. "You are free to play the part of the dramaturge, the essayist, the poet, the historian, the critic, the jester," we told them. "We are writing to you because we believe that you'll know how to proceed." The result is in your hands: forty-six essays, poems, and texts-in-between that, in a close reading of a single image, provide an occasion to ask not only *what if* these photographs demanded we speak, but also *what if these photographs are already speaking?* Unsurprisingly, the responses reflect on how photography and its social functions have evolved since its beginnings, engaging with the troubled histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which continue to cast their long shadows over the present. May we begin together to renew the potential of this often conflicted "democratic" art form as we move ever deeper into the twenty-first century.