

# PARINADIMI



Artist Peter Kingstone

## Artist Interview: Peter Kingstone

*Trying to do Two Things at Once (Tale of the Minotaur)*

November 10 - December 22, 2017

**Tak Pham:** Since your last exhibition at [Pari Nadimi Gallery](#) (PNG) in 2013, which got quite a good reception, what has changed in your practice, or your approach to art? In this new exhibition, while your approach to using stories of others to talk about the complexity of identity remains the same, it appears that you are coming at the subject from a slightly different angle?

**Peter Kingstone:** I am still very much interested in production and storytelling. I often start projects with a goal of production: what do I want to accomplish? Before it was organic, and now it is more self-imposed in which I give myself a task to complete everyday - it is like a practice.

Having created a book project *Bedtime Stories* out of very short stories during the time I was starting out my current full-time job, I would write a story a day for a couple of months. Similarly, the drawings of bull for [Trying to Do Two Things at Once \(Tale of the Minotaur\)](#) were drawn one a day. The drawings were based on a bull I saw at a rodeo in a village in Mexico. I would then look at the cows at Anima Casa, the residency I was on for reference. This is also recalling one of my earliest creations One-A-Day that was at Prefix Gallery in 2004, where I challenged myself to create a work of art everyday for one year. At the end of the challenge, I produced over 1200 photographs, 80 videos, five super 8 films, a charcoal drawing, several narratives, a t-shirt and one business card. As for [Trying to Do Two Things at Once \(Tale of the Minotaur\)](#), that practice of repetition towards a goal of production is still there. Now I am more interested in exploring what it means to be a "working" artist.

TP: What inspired you to address the topic of "occupational/ professional hybridity"?

PK: Mostly it comes directly from my current experience. I also try to understand how artists live and work nowadays, and how they are seen in our society. Having a full-time job for the first time in a very long time makes spending all the time I want to spend on making art difficult. I want to make some works that make people feel like they can have a life beyond their working/ professional life that includes their artistic endeavours.

I feel that the society that we are in puts pressure on being special as a prerequisite of being an artist. It alludes to the ability to devote one's full life to making art as a talent, let alone being able to have a sustainable living. In "*Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*" (2002) author Hans Abbing asks why society doesn't hold up artists whose works reflect current social climate, and who is paying for art in the first-place: government, individuals, corporations? He also investigates whether artists make art out of urgency, be it political or personal, and not necessarily of commodity. He then proceeds to ask if there are too many artists; to which I say: there isn't, and everyone should be an artist.

I think we, as a society, should support everyone to be making art. Art is a necessity and less of a commodity. Addressing this issue through an exhibition in commercial gallery such as PNG, it pushes the boundary of what art commodity is. It also encourages commercial clients to be more generous with different forms of art practice, because private patronage is necessary to sustain an artistic career.

TP: In your 2004 exhibition at Prefix Gallery, you explored the existential question "what makes art artful" by collapsing the start and finish moments in an art making process. Then in your previous exhibitions at PNG, [Them!](#) (2009) and [Upright Stance](#) (2013), you seemed to have engaged with the questions via two distinct stages: art in life (the cohabitation between human-sized ants and humans) and life as art (your capture of boxers through sketches). In [Trying to Do Two Things at Once \(Tale of the Minotaur\)](#), both of these elements are predominantly present. So, do you feel you have successfully address the 2004 question with this exhibition?

[Them!](#) was about "otherness" and it asked how would we incorporate the complete other into our world? [Upright Stance](#) was my response to violence through an artistic medium "what can an artist do when threatened?" "How do we deal with otherness?" I revisited these same questions to try to understand the complete others in [Trying to Do Two Things at Once \(Tale of the Minotaur\)](#). I started with my personal conflict of dual, hybrid identity being a professional and an artist, and how I feel like society has violently pitch one against another.

I think this complex and awkward relationship of artists/ wage earner/ audience coalesces well in my interactive sculpture in the show *Pasiphae's Simple Machine* (2017). Through the love story between Pasiphae and the Cretan Bull, I want to put the audience in the mental space of an artist: awkward and exposed, and to break down the barrier that divides bull and human. When the audience climb on the machine, it puts them in an unconformable position of an artist: on a pedestal in a uncomfortable position. I hope they will leave reflecting how awkward the experience is, and realize that art is awkward.

This awkwardness is how I see society treats artists or creatives; we are like the Minotaur in the labyrinth. Hence, this exhibition reflects the reality rather than giving a resolution. The way I see it, each of my subsequent show questions the show before; and as it does, it is growing bigger signalling an urgency- an avalanche effect! There is always a need, a necessity, a thrust behind the work.

TP: *After the exhibition closes, do you have any plan or things want to do? It doesn't have to be art-related.*

PK: I'm finishing a collection of interwoven short stories about experiencing Havana as

an artist/tourist. More specifically, reflection on the experience being an unproductive artist in Havana and complaining about not making work, but at the same time being this stranger stumbling around the city while observing other people's desires. So, in a way, I once again carry this double identity in Havana: trying to integrate myself in with the locals, but simultaneously outing myself in the process.

I recently spent a week at a wearable technology art residency and would like to include that in my future work. I think wearable technology is very interesting art form. I'm interested in art that exists outside the gallery, and how art can be taken as a personal object, input that can be turned into any output. With this technology, I start to wonder: what question to be asked? What you want your audience to ask? And where am I pushing my audience to?

**TP:** *Is there any exciting artists/ art developments in Toronto/Ontario/Canada that you're following?*

**PK:** It is a tough question since there are so many of them! But personally exciting, I'm reading fictions by authors of colours. I want to learn perspectives, and hear from voices that I never experience before. I recognize a lack in my experience thus far, and I would like to fill that gap trying to understand life a little fuller. One book that I would recommend is a new fiction "*Scarborough*" (2017) by Catherine Hernandez. The story takes place in the Scarborough neighbourhood of Toronto's low-income east end. I think we should pay more attention to the stories from these communities, and see Toronto from their perspectives.

**Peter Kingstone** is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist whose work has been exhibited across Canada and internationally. His signature installation *100 Stories About My Grandmother* has been exhibited in Reframe Peterborough International Film Festival, Peterborough (2010), Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, New Brunswick (2009), Ace Art, Winnipeg, Manitoba (2009), Latitude 53, Edmonton, Alberta (2009), Eastern Edge, St. John's, Newfoundland (2009), Toronto at TPW (2008). He also has also had exhibitions at Claynton Staples Gallery, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas (2016), International Festival of Film on Art, Montreal, Quebec (2014), and in group exhibitions at McIntosh Gallery, Western University, London, Ontario (2012), IPCNY, New York, New York (2011). Kingstone recently self-published a book project *Bedtime Stories* (2015). Kingstone won the Untitled Artist Award in 2005 for his installation *The Strange Case of Peter K.* (1974-2004). Kingstone holds a Masters of Fine Arts from York University, Toronto (2004). For more information, please visit [www.parinadimigallery.com](http://www.parinadimigallery.com)

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