



FAUXREEL

Dan Bergeron, otherwise known as FAUXREEL, is an artist from Toronto who works in photography and photo-based mixed-media, installation, painting, and sculpture. He refers to himself as a "public artist," as his work attempts to examine and re-imagine the public landscape. As his work generally resides in public space and his interest lies in documenting people, his work tends to reflect issues of personal identity, social relationships, advertising culture, and the history and uses of location.

"I look at working as a street artist or a public artist as a role in which I need to be an agitator, one who needs to spread ideas that, love it or hate it, make you think about what you are looking at. Public space is a communal living room, where the art needs to spark debate, cause laughter, question authority or make the viewer rethink their physical environment. As such, the messages I examine in my work are meant to be discussed by the viewers who share the public space where the work resides."

According to Bergeron, his routine pretty much comes down to work and family time. He lives with his partner, Tara, their almost-three-year old son, Lucian, and a soon-to-be baby boy who's

getting ready to make his grand entrance. He usually has three or four projects that he works on simultaneously, noting that these days they're more long-term, affording him time to work intensely on a single project for weeks at a time, while the other projects are brewing or developing. Of late, a typical day starts with some quality kiddo time before grabbing a bite to eat, answering e-mails, and heading to the studio to work on whatever the current project is. For the better part of this year, the main project has been *Faces of Regent Park*, a permanent public art installation in Regent Park for the City of Toronto.

"I love Toronto and I got to grow up there during a time when it was still wide open. And what I mean by that is that from the mid eighties to like, 2008, Toronto was still the new kid on the block in a global sense – it still is – and there was not nearly as much commercial land development. There was a lot of room to think, and lots of abandoned spaces to explore. It was a big city that felt like a small city. And from when I was about 12 years old, I got to experience this wide open Toronto through skateboarding around the city. Those days skateboarding with my friends are really what influenced me the most in terms of how I view public space and see it for



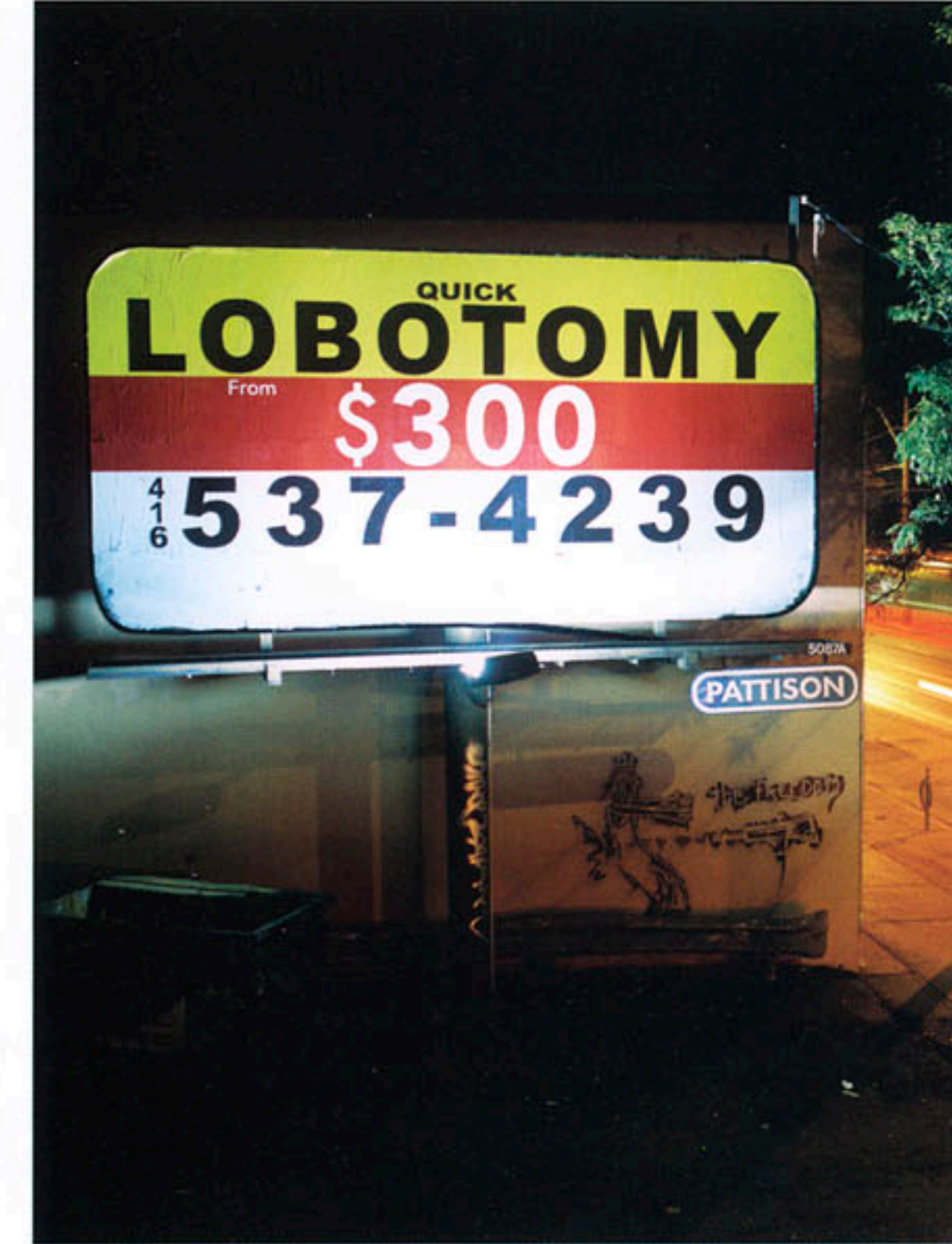
"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH FEAR BECAUSE IT KEEPS YOU IN CHECK."



its endless possibilities. Plus, because Toronto was a pretty laid back place when I first began to create work for the streets, I was able to complete some pretty big installs in broad daylight and no one seemed to care."

While there wasn't anyone in Toronto doing similar work to what Bergeron was creating when he started out, he was influenced by some of the city's graffiti writers – notably Kane and Recka, whom he knew through skateboarding, Ren, whose tags he saw frequently yet whom he didn't get to know until he was in his twenties, and Junction Joe and Kwest. "Their styles are completely different, as are their approaches to graffiti, but what got me so stoked was their passion and enjoyment, and their super positive attitudes. Those guys rule, and by watching them have so much fun doing what they do, they led the way for me to throw my rope in the ring."

Over the years, Bergeron has developed a long list of milestone moments in his career. Seeing people climb up onto the gang plank and tear down the hang tags of the Quick Lobotomy billboard that he created as a rogue install for Nuit Blanche in 2007 (YouTube it); installing a portrait series of former pulp and paper workers on a shuttered pulp and paper mill in Gaspesia,



Quebec; working with Specter on A City Renewal Project; having a school teacher approach him on site in Regent Park to say that one of the portraits he installed of one of her students had totally changed the student's outlook and behaviour in her class, these are just a few.

One of Bergeron's favourite pieces was one he created after his mother passed away in 2007. "I needed to deal with her death in a positive way. So I created a piece from a photo I found of her when I was going through her stuff and I installed it on a trip to New York later that year. I put it up close to a Swoon piece near the West Side Highway. It was a beautiful autumn day and it helped me to have closure with that experience."

His recipe for being a successful artist involves talent, originality, discipline, an eye for business, and the ability to be persistent – all of which he has in spades. You also can't be afraid to put yourself out there. "I think you need to not be afraid of rejection, failing or making mistakes, or at least if you are afraid of those things, you are not afraid to try. There's nothing wrong with fear because it keeps you in check. The problem is when fear gets the better of you and you don't take any action."