

In Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *On Scams*, video monologues in which actors perform the text of scam e-mails are accompanied by globe-like sculptures of oxidized steel lines, above, based on the geographic paths the e-mails have followed. HENRY CHAN JR.

Three shows to see at the Power Plant

Toronto gallery's exhibitions probe themes of globalism, race and video art

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VISUAL ARTS

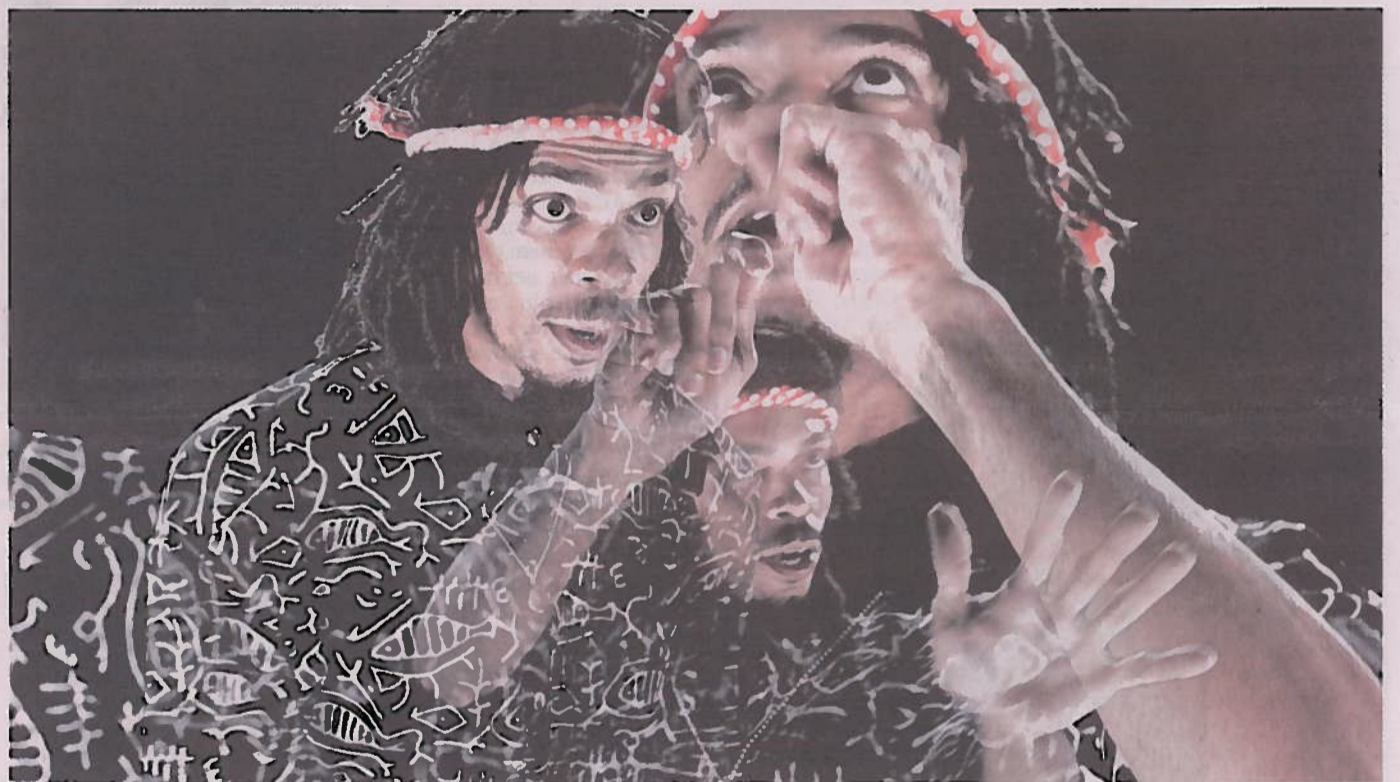


Everybody has received those e-mails. The ones in which the widow or orphan of the former minister or president needs to spirit millions out of some faraway country and for some reason has hit on you as a willing collaborator — in exchange for a good percentage, of course. You may scratch your head wondering who could be so stupid as to be taken in, but apparently these scams work, which would explain why they keep coming.

Lebanese artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige have collected 4,000 of these e-mails since 1999 and turned them to more artistic purposes. Their 2014 body of work titled *On Scams* is now showing at Toronto's Power Plant gallery as part of a summer exhibition schedule about globalism, race and video art that also features German filmmaker Mario Pfeifer and British sculptor Thomas J Price.

The centrepiece of *On Scams* is a darkened room where 18 competing video monitors feature 36 different amateur actors simultaneously performing the desperate pleas and enticing schemes of the scam e-mails. You can only hear the individual monologues by approaching a monitor very closely, and since the cast includes all races, ages and types, the effect of their many twisting tales is an international cacophony. The artists have also created globe-like sculptures of oxidized steel lines based on the geographic paths various e-mails have followed.

When the work becomes this abstracted, you have to wonder whether a documentary film would do a lot more to elucidate



Mario Pfeifer's short film *#blackactivist*, above, is a collaboration with hip-hop group Flatbush Zombies. The bronze statues that make up *Ordinary Men* by Thomas J Price, below, are inspired by real people, although not intended as portraits. ABOVE: MARIO PFEIFER STUDIO; BELOW: HENRY CHAN JR.



and the probing of attitudes to refugees in *Again*.

Price, the British artist, completes the conversation with his simple but thoughtful sculptures about race. In *Ordinary Men*, he creates a series of bronze statuettes, perhaps half life-size, and mounts them on ornate wooden plinths, as well as fashioning pure white sculpted heads from an acrylic composite. The initial point is obvious: These figures, elevated as though they were classical emperors or Victorian colonialists, are all of black men. Straightforward-looking guys, these impassive, solitary figures evoke a basic human solidarity, the exact opposite of the foreignness and strangeness evoked by the multiracial crowd of fraudsters in *On Scams*. Outside the Power Plant's doors, Price repeats the trick, but this time at a greatly enlarged scale: *Cover Up (The Reveal)* is one giant of a guy now surveying the Toronto water-