



## Gareth Long's perfect show for our stupid Trump moment

The uses of ignorance are pointed out in Susan Hobbs Gallery. Elsewhere in galleries, incomplete narratives hint at the disruption of Toronto's cultural scene.

By Murray Whyte  
Visual arts  
Wed., March 29, 2017

**Gareth Long, Square Peg Round Hole:** “(H)ow is stupidity taught” and “how can it be learned” form the core concerns of this show, which arrives, not coincidentally, at the apex of such matters. A Toronto artist, Long watched agape — like most of us — as absurd falsehoods began to shoulder out factual reporting in the run-up to last fall's U.S. presidential election. Now, “fake news” is a mantra for a president when he sees real things in the fact-based media he doesn't like; and facts be damned, he's been alarmingly successful at merging the perception of the wild and maliciously deceptive, openly bigoted alt-right (Pizzagate! Emails!) with that of the real world. In the realm of “how stupidity is taught,” Donald Trump is conducting a master class.

But wait: In Long's view, stupidity can actually be a productive tool. Willful ignorance, he reasons, can liberate the mind from conventional thinking and force a kind of re-education, new pathways to facts and comprehension. In this show, Long recruits a handful of his former students (Jaimie Aitken, Grace Esford, Nora Downer, and Claudia Rick) to produce various works meant to embody that workaround — fumbling in the dark, against knowing, to a new set of resolutions. He calls it a kind of “rational stupidity,” the destructive phase that begets creation. If only a certain commander-in-chief's technique was so rational. At Susan Hobbs Gallery, 137 Tecumseth St., until April 29.