

cmagazine I36


Winter 2018

Contemporary Art & Criticism

Site/ation

guest
edited by
BUSH
gallery





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Editorial

6 *THE BUSH MANIFESTO*

8 *Site/ation*
by guest editors Peter
Morin and Tania Willard
of BUSH gallery

Features

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 11 | TO BE AT THE
MERCY OF THE SKY
<i>by Billy-Ray Belcourt</i> | 30 | to the archive
<i>by Jeremy Dutcher</i> |
| 14 | Refracting Bush
<i>by Ashok Mathur</i> | 34 | Re-centring Knowledge:
an Interview with Artist
and Curator Anique
Jordan
<i>by Tania Willard</i> |
| 18 | Coney Island Baby
<i>by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill,
Amy Kazymierchyk, Chandra
Melting Tallow and Jeneen
Frei Njootli</i> | 40 | Primary Colours: Preparing
a New Generation
<i>by Clayton Windatt</i> |
| 26 | A Feast for the Stewards of
the Land: Contemporary
Art and Netukulimk on
Unama'ki
<i>by Amish Morrell</i> | 44 | Learning from the Land:
BUSH gallery @dechintau |
| | | 49 | Kinstillatory Gathering
<i>by Karyn Recollet</i> |

Artist Project

53 *Sovereign Capitals*
An open exhibition model that is the
expression between an artist's instructions
and the participants' actions.
by Native Art Department International

Exhibition Reviews

- 56 *Seeing You and Looking Back: Display as Land Rights and Title*
by Marianne Nicolson
- 58 *I Am*
by Maureen Gruben
- 59 *tagatavāsā*
by Léuli Māzyār Luna'í Eshrāghi
- 61 *Where I Learned to Weave*
by Meghann O'Brien
- 63 *The Labrador Interpretation Centre*
by Mark Igloliorte and Peter Morin
- 65 *Natural fibre shopping with Renee "Wasson" Dillard at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, and nearby bush, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Summer 2016*
by Crystal Migwans

Book Reviews

- 67 *Storymancy*
by Peter Morin and Tania Willard

On Writing

- 69 *Moving*
by Michael Turner

Inventory

- 70 *... On the land, on the body, on and off the walls...*
by Jaimie Isaac

Artefact

- 72 *Architecture of the Bush*
by Toby Katrine Lawrence

Cover

Maureen Gruben, *Flight*, 2017. Beluga whale vertebrae, aluminium foil, 38 × 20 × 12 cm.

PHOTO: KYRA KORDOSKI; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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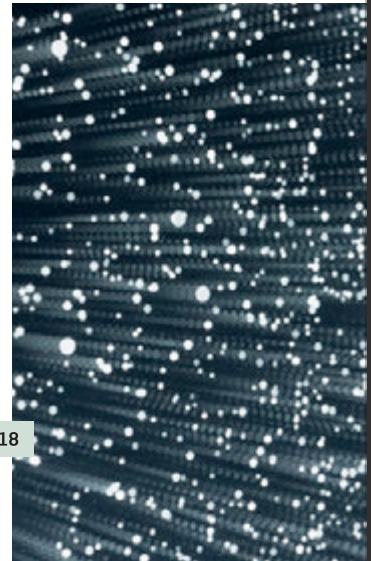
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The C New Critics Award is designed to help develop and promote the work of emerging art critics. Writers are invited to submit a review of an exhibition, performance, or site-specific intervention, between 800 and 1,000 words, by Friday April 20th, 2018. The winner will receive \$500, editorial support in order to prepare their article for publication in *C Magazine*, and a two-year subscription to *C Magazine*. All other participants will receive a one-year subscription.

2018

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the masthead. C welcomes dissenting viewpoints. Send your letters and include your full name, address and daytime telephone number. Note that letters may be printed and edited for clarity and length.

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Michele Arismandez, 'Every Creature'
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Spring 2018



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THE BUSH MANIFESTO

BUSH gallery is a space for dialogue, experimental practice and community engaged work that contributes to an understanding of how gallery systems and art mediums might be transfigured, translated and transformed by Indigenous knowledges, traditions, aesthetics, performance and land use systems. This model of decolonial, non-institutional ways to engage with and value Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous creative production is at the heart of BUSH gallery. BUSH gallery is a trans-conceptual gallery space. To be trans-conceptual is to reposition ideas born within Indigenous and western epistemological conditions. A trans-conceptual space requires your body to be in a constant state of flux – never settling, like the flow of water in a river. One of the goals of BUSH gallery is to articulate Indigenous creative land practices which are born out of a lived connection to the land.

This gallery is out on the land, it is outside of or at the margins of monetary systems and away from the colonized space of art institutions. This gallery is a gallery of the land, of Indigenous culture(s) and language(s); this gallery can show new media with basketry, beading with installation art, performance art and storytelling.

BUSH gallery is alive and breathing.

BUSH gallery is on Indigenous Lands.

BUSH gallery is animate and inanimate at the same time.

BUSH gallery is radically inclusive – all bodies and lands and kids and dogs and bears are welcome.

BUSH gallery requires new words.

BUSH gallery includes working the land.

BUSH gallery includes walking the land.

BUSH gallery includes conversations with kids.

BUSH gallery includes moms and dads and caregivers.

BUSH gallery includes all Indigenous languages

(within BUSH gallery, we understand that Indigenous languages are spoken with hands, with the movements of bodies, with the tongue, with the movements of mouths, with laughter, with tears, and with righteous anger).

BUSH gallery includes dogs.

BUSH gallery is in constant transition as the land is in constant transition.

BUSH gallery knows that disruption inspires growth.

BUSH gallery is a place of hope and no hope.

Our ancestors are buried there, in BUSH gallery.

BUSH gallery is not afraid of opinions.
BUSH gallery is not afraid of sharing our opinions.
BUSH gallery is not not-for-profit.
BUSH gallery is for Indigenous and non-Indigenous art and artists and curators and thinkings and grandmothers and grandfathers and fathers and mothers and cousins and aunts and uncles.
BUSH gallery is eating whipped berries under the stars, punctuating conversations and visits about art.
BUSH gallery is a space to make art, but the openings are attended by bears harvesting the last of the berries before hibernation and maybe the neighbours' horses or cows are grazing, and there are crows, reservation dogs and the spirit of the land, lots of spirits.
BUSH gallery is an autonomous space... for birds.
BUSH gallery is human-led, Indigenous knowledge-based, we trace our impacts on the land in search of balance amidst our inherent selfish humanity.
BUSH gallery talks big, dreams bigger and doesn't bother to walk its talk, we send our talk straight up to the stars and the sky, on the wings of eagles and hawks...
BUSH gallery can disappear.
BUSH gallery fits into our pockets.
BUSH gallery can be called into being and called out.
BUSH gallery is not one place, not one territory, not one Nation, we trace out our family, our blood, our belonging in cities, on reserves, in the BUSH, in the suburbs, overseas and under mountains.
BUSH gallery believes in dreaming, and sleeping, and walking, and being.
BUSH gallery is sometimes nothing but opening your eyes and breathing in the land around you.
BUSH gallery hopes that art matters.
BUSH gallery is sometimes a blockade, sometimes a bridge, always a balancing beam.
BUSH gallery says sometimes you gotta stop dreaming and get to work, dig a well, hunt and grow food, chop wood, bury sunshine for later and give food to ghosts.
BUSH gallery is stick gambling for all the bragging rights.
BUSH gallery respects the land and is in love with it.
BUSH gallery means nothing if you are in the way of a bear and his berry patch, you better move it on.
BUSH gallery is performance, installation, craft, conceptual, painting, photography, stand up comedy, cooking, movie watching with trees and many other things you might call bullshit on 'cause they are not really art. But bullshit is part of BUSH gallery too.
BUSH gallery seeks to speak with many tongues, honouring Indigenous languages as a way to speak with, to and from the land. BUSH Gallery asks what does pop culture mean in the BUSH? If you hashtag the land, and no one is there with a cell phone, does the land even know it is on social media.
BUSH gallery; ants might crawl on your art, surprise rain might ruin or make your next work and you should think about carrying bear spray.
BUSH gallery starts now.
BUSH gallery ends here.
BUSH gallery will pitstop intermittently.
It is recommended you have your web browser settings filter out any obscene images you may find when you google search BUSH gallery – that means images of war leaders as well.
BUSH gallery is idea(s), place(s), story(ies), mood(s), artist(s), farmer(s), fighter(s), kid(s), the four-legged, the fish, the birds and the bugs, the stars and the water that makes us all.
BUSH gallery is yours and mine and no one's.
BUSH gallery is going to blow up.
BUSH gallery sees the bush in the city.
BUSH gallery imagines what art for ourselves – not for the institutions of galleries, museums, history or academies – looks like.
BUSH gallery wonders what art can do.

BUSH gallery works towards Indigenous resurgence.

BUSH gallery is expanded, not limited, by tradition.
BUSH gallery is feminist.
BUSH gallery remembers the things we never knew.
BUSH gallery is inauthentic.
BUSH gallery is unsettled.
BUSH gallery is representative and abstract.
BUSH gallery is on the land, researches land, goes to the land, because land is the foundation of Indigenous life and Indigenous struggle.
BUSH gallery is a place where knowledge is open-ended.
BUSH gallery thanks the land.

This year, the annual guest edited issue of *C Magazine* has been organized by artist Peter Morin and artist and curator Tania Willard. Together they represent two members of a shifting group of Indigenous artists that make up BUSH gallery – an experimental land-based, Indigenous-led artist rez-idency that takes place on Willard's land in Secwepemc Nation in interior British Columbia.

This is a very special issue of *C Magazine*. Part of this lies in the fact that it focuses inwardly, with the texts circling back to friendship, kinship and often to the specific plot of land at BUSH gallery where many of the contributors in these pages have gathered to think and work. But the texts, interviews, poems, scores and artworks within also extend far beyond BUSH gallery, provoking critical discussion

of where and how art exists – and has existed for thousands of years – on the land, outside of city centres, gallery systems and western systems of valuation. With many thanks to Peter, Tania and BUSH gallery for their radical work herein.

— Kari Cwynar, Editor

Site/ation by guest editors Peter Morin and Tania Willard

BUSH gallery is located on the traditional territories of the Secwepemc Nation, hosted on Tania Willard's land. BUSH gallery is a series of on-going gatherings of like-minded folks united under questions concerning art making, land, Indigenous art history and interventions into the colonial. These gatherings focus on experimental investigations that enable the complexities of Indigenous knowing along with an active disengagement with western logic.

In this issue of *C Magazine* we dared to ask this question about land: does it still mean art if we make it on the reserve? We dared to ask this question about art: does it help us to realize the depth of Indigenous art history when we make art on the reserve outside of gallery and museum systems? We present here a decolonization of the idea of an art magazine or an art review or art writing or art criticism. We asked writers to consider the future and space-making. We asked writers to consider and acknowledge the creative force of the

body. Instead of reviewing the places art circulates in dominantly non-Indigenous institutions, we called on writers to review experiences, exhibitions, events or lands close to their heart. We asked them to give voice to aesthetic experiences in their communities, defining community generatively to include spaces on and off reserve, Indigenous or non-Indigenous spaces in which they find home and cultural continuity and safety. We asked writers to de-centre the city as the place of contemporary art, to ask ourselves what it means for contemporary art conversations to circulate in rural or non-art spaces.

BUSH gallery opens up space to experience all of the complexities that build contemporary Indigenous art, Indigenous knowledge, history, ancestors and future ancestors fusing time streams in a non-linear constellation of meaning, history and futurity. Within these pages is an interrogation of the established structures of meaning within english language, and an active questioning of the unnamed and

silent barriers that keep us just one foot away from an imagined and inherited futurity.

There are no contemporary art galleries or artist-run centres on First Nation reserves/reservations because people have been too busy surviving. Art is both a record and a future. In these pages, we want to ask the spirits: is it a good idea to have Indigenous art galleries on a reserve or on the land? What do Indigenous artist-run centres look like on Indian land? And when they do happen on reserve land, do they just feel like artist-run centres in cities?

The reader is invited to plant these pages in the ground for mother earth to read.

When the Guests Are Not Looking
Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens

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IMAGE
Richard Ibghy & Marilou
Lemmens, *When the Guests
Are Not Looking*, 2016.
Publication (detail).
Photo: RIML

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KAPWANI KIWANGA

a wall is just a wall
(and nothing more at all)

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daveandjenn

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The exhibition *Kapwani Kiwanga, A wall is just a wall (and nothing more at all)* is organized and circulated by The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto. The exhibition is curated by Nabila Abdel Nabi, Assistant Curator, The Power Plant. It was sponsored by TD Bank Group.

Support for the development and production of new works for the exhibition provided by Esker Foundation.

Kapwani Kiwanga: A wall is just a wall. Installation view: The Power Plant, Toronto, 2017.
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin and Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid.

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Image: Marlene Creates, excerpt (2010) from *Larch, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Hand, Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland, 2007*, (ongoing), detail



TO BE AT THE MERCY OF THE SKY

II

by Billy-Ray Belcourt



Billy-Ray Belcourt, 1947, 2017
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

in front of me, 1947; a fractured door; rotted wooden beams. behind me, an old forest of gone peoples. these are what's left of an indian residential school in joussard, alberta. what remains exceeds the infrastructural remains. we are caught up in the afterlife of captivity. cages were made out of bodies, and then bodies out of anything that was left behind. this is the world we have inherited. it is infused with the violence of being left to float in the air like an unanswered question.

it is an afternoon in june when i return to this primal scene, this open wound. the air clots, as if to make a fool out of my lungs, as if to remind me that having a body were a sick joke i was never in on. air enters, and out comes smoke.

there is something unsayable about this type of return. it makes words crumble in my mouth. they taste like dust this time. it feels ndn to be pulled anew into a scene of injury like this one.

it is summer, so rich white people are camped on the shores of lesser slave lake, just a few feet away from this prison house. they think nothing of it. not thinking is a way to think the world. they bathe in the aroma of violence, but unlike me their sense of self stays intact. a self that's been dragged through the dirt of bad social structures cannot bear this kind of looking.

one day, the government of alberta might make this place into an historic site. i can see it now: a spectacle during which white politicians crawl out of the bloody maw of the past, smiling with the carcasses of words like history and forgiveness hanging from their lips. they mistake the red on their skin for sunlight.

to be ndn is to know that a spectacle isn't always an event.

online dating bio: i want to refuse the non-event of the present with you. my hobbies include: not dying, apologizing to the future, and slow dancing to the tune of bryan adams' "heaven" with white men who won't find it in themselves to love me.

i am fixed by the darkness that emanates from the doorway. it is a thick nothingness at which i feel compelled to stare. nothingness is a thing. a lot of indians live there. i don't blame them; who needs a map when the world is labyrinthine? who needs geography when there are doorways everywhere?

does the sky look like it could fall apart at any given moment, or is that just me?

here, i have no words for things like *priest* or *prayer*. the dead come back from the dead for at least the possibility of revenge. revenge is something more satisfying than justice.

did you know: a group of indians is called a murder?

a white boyfriend of mine wanted me to be less beholden to the clouds. i told him that we are all at the mercy of the sky, for better or for worse. part of me still thinks that he didn't deserve to know about this mode of attention, about this art of description. but i can't keep secrets: i am addicted to the high of letting my own words betray me.

there is no shelter under skies like these. when i was a little boy, my mooshum told me a story about the day the sky fell down. the sky is still falling, but only indians can tell the difference. i look up, and down comes an endless parade of half-smiling children.

Billy-Ray Belcourt is from the Driftpile Cree Nation. He is a PhD student in the Dept. of English & Film Studies at the University of Alberta. He is the author of *This Wound is a World: Poems*.

I4

Re

fra

c

ting

Bush

by Ashok Mathur

to time it, and is full of the longing and pass
ked with tears. Piroja wipes them away with
year after that, Parvin, just that sometime,
his: the Reverend Mother has told me that I
I want you to promise me that if I do so w
"Yes," adds Parvin, mentally calculating ho
to me." "Of course, of course," chant Parvin
the cards, and Piroja wonders how to fra
argues and Piroja agrees, both of them y
nks down on the counter. "This is it," she
ospital that year and would not be eligi
er intake interview with one Miss Phillip
hteen months, considering the household
uce if it began with one vat per week be
ss, seeing where the cases upon cases
self a suitable marriage partner and she
ill be taking on the role of a grownup as
cannot imagine what it will be to be a w
scene. Still, during her tenure at home, J
good family. Inevitably, however, the boy
has to sit with Piroja and ask her what is
parents find themselves not worrying abo
s even one who she sent into tears, who k
to Delhi, a city she has visited only once w
delight, and not a little reminiscent of her fi



This is not an essay, nor a review, nor very much of an interrogation, which means (perhaps) it fails to fulfill the intended desires of the editors. Nor does this fractured writing posit itself as daring to do much of anything, whether confronting binaries of Bush versus Cube or otherwise interrupting the hubris of established and power-bent art criticism. Instead, this is a speculation and a way of reflecting through.

This writing is more of a consideration. Of openings and opportunities that happen through what Bush might be. What Bush reaches for and pulls a muscle in doing so.

In other words (and there are so many other words dragging in different directions), in order to breathe, drink, ingest Bush, there may need to be a straggling outside the struggle, a way of speaking alongside instead of about.¹

Then, for your consideration, co-readers/writers, here are 10 preliminary reflections on this thing called Bush. Not so much a primer, but a collection of ruminations.

¹ I take this from Trinh T. Minh-ha's 1983 film, *Reassemblage*, where she suggests a way of performing ethnography in a fashion more akin to poetry than didacticism.

1

Cube versus Bush – is there such an oppositional imaginary? One infects, informs and disrupts the other always. We cannot speak of Bush without having in mind Cube (or city gallery or artist-run space or artistic institution). And we cannot think of Cube without rendering its negative space as Bush.

2

I had an exhibition once where I tried to think through the project of the written novel and reimagine it as a physical space. I told my assistants and colleagues that my imagining entailed ensuring every word of the novel was available in the exhibition in some form or manner, perhaps not easily read or rendered, but present. One of the key elements was the novel writ large, printed out on a dozen eight-foot-long scrimms so gallery visitors could walk through the text and read the novel in its entirety if they were so compelled. At BUSH gallery this summer, we took it upon ourselves to reinstall that work

as a palimpsest of targeted love, those self-same scrimms hanging between trees and across shrubs, readable in the moonlight and rain showers and giving evidence of the novel to the land and the bugs and the animals who came across the installation.

3

Driving north until you are too tired to drive but the sky is a gallery, yes, the sky reminds you of that time you remarked upon the colours of landscape paintings in a gallery down south. This was our journey to Tahltan territory where we left parts of ourselves in the grasslands precipiced over rivers. Feeling the body and its failings, I stayed behind as the others climbed to the peak, and I lay on sloped grass and watched the clouds shadow the prints Peter had installed on the banks. This, no Eames chair perfectly distanced from a framed classic, but a hump of dirt and grass and insect life that serves the same purpose.



Ashok Mathur, documentation of *A Little Distillery in Nowgong: a novel across media*, presented at BUSH gallery, 2017. Inkjet prints on acetate.
PHOTO: TANIA WILLARD

4

Projecting light onto living objects that miss particles of light and just don't reflect them back so they travel forward into eternal space. Old movies and long extension cords to bring a data projector into the field. Kicking up dust to watch the light sprinkle through an image of a face caught on particulate matter and blown through onto trees. Like watching a movie between fingers, except these are not digits attached to hands but fine lines of foliage disturbing the unity and providing a different vision.

5

Bringing dirt into the gallery is a sign of Cube critique and re-invention of the gallery, but is it Bush and what might Bush be if you brought in hardwood floors and drywall, which is what the gallery in the urban centre is if you time-travel back a few hundred years. The question is not how to differentiate, but what constitutes the difference, perspectival and perceptually.

6

Is being on Indigenous land what makes Bush, Bush? What of land unmarked by such designations? And land imitates art wherever it goes. The exterior of the Cube space, whether urban or far-flung rural has elements of Bush, even if the ground is concrete instead of humus.

7

The sun prints hashtags, ancient heat eight minutes away, wheeling and dealing with a new social media economy. Chemistry and solutions combine to make light permanent, but not in a laboratory unless Bush is a lab of unknown resources. Nevertheless, there are these #sunprints made inside and outside and living new lives inside Cube galleries.

8

If the earth sees the art, it can write a review, but its form takes many different tacks. It decentres words and moves from affect to affection. A stick drawing letters in the sand, a checkmarked thumb's up as an act of criticality.

9

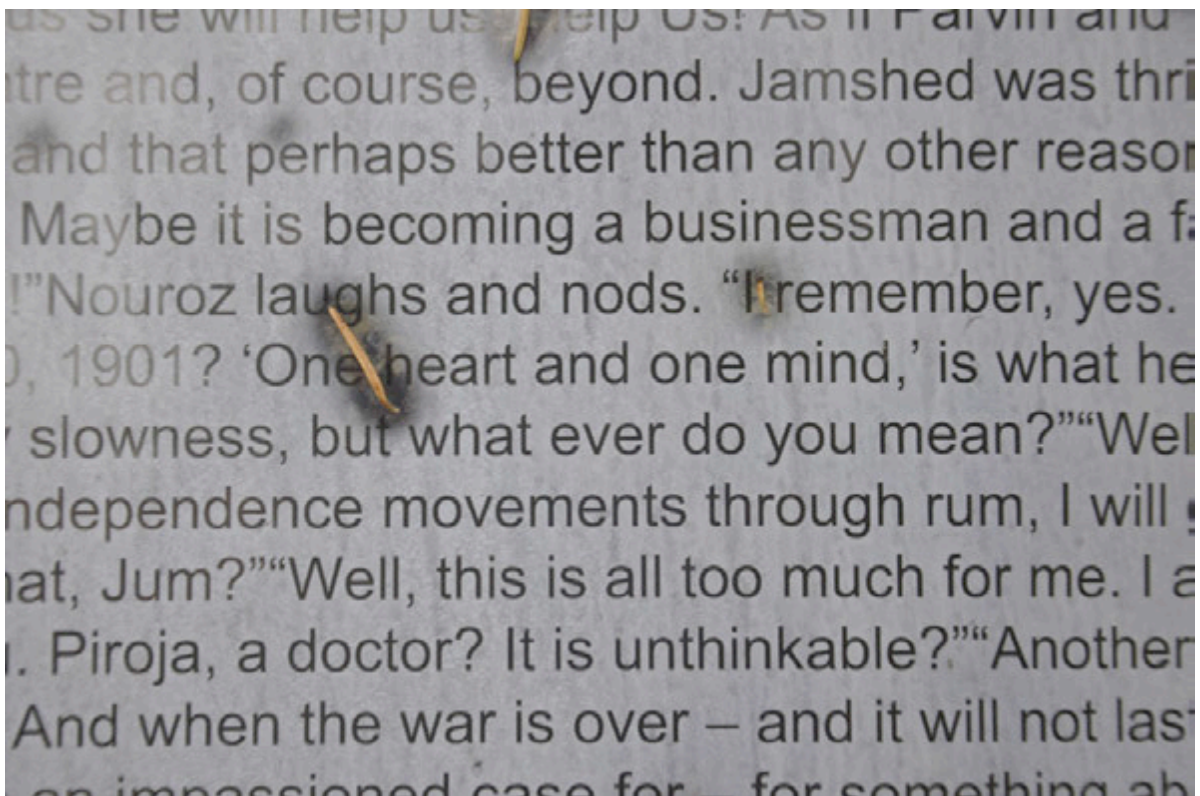
Addressing injustice with moral rectitude in the middle of the land. Social justice is branded by the activism of the street: the marches, the protests and ultimately the re/presentation of ideas inside a gallery. But streets are not animal paths, and what of the idea of corrective measures taken by the streams and watering holes, demands of systemic change under a clear blue sky?

10

Bringing BUSH gallery into a city is an experiment in redolonization or dereolonization. Or perhaps the very shift questions whether colonization has a fit here. If we cease a focus on those histories, might that reinvent a future, or does that doom us to historical repetition? Or maybe Bush, by its very iteration, already encapsulates such critiques – and yet, through oblique reference, allows a shift into new terrain.

Considerations such as the above are not suggested solutions or even earmarked directions, but merely a struggle to complexify and re-identify where Bush might lead us, or how we may lead ourselves into a new form of roughing it in the Bush. As with many a movement, the risk here is not that we fail to articulate an identity, but that we may overemphatically overdetermine and, in so doing, promote a demise as we prescribe a genesis. The path of Bush, it seems, is best understood not with a spotlight but under a whispering rain.

Ashok Mathur is a writer, artist and cultural organizer who works around issues of racialization and Indigeneity in the fields of creative practice and postsecondary education. He is a Professor in the Department of Creative Studies at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus and incoming Dean of Graduate Studies (2018) at OCAD University.



Ashok Mathur, documentation of *A Little Distillery in Nowgong: a novel across media*, presented at BUSH gallery, 2017. Inkjet prints on acetate.
PHOTO: TANIA WILLARD

Coney
Island
Baby

by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, Amy
Kazymerchyk, Chandra Melting Tallow and
Jeneen Frei Njootli

In the winter of 2016, Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, Chandra Melting Tallow, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Tania Willard, Amy Kazymierchuk and Aaron Leon came together at BUSH gallery to make a film about trapping rabbits. Gabrielle, a previous resident at BUSH and a long-time collaborator of Tania's, had proposed the project the year before, after speaking with Jeneen about her experiences hunting and trapping in Gwich'in territory. Chandra, a sound artist who heads the musical project Mourning Coup, was invited to score the film, as well as to come trapping. Amy, a curator who has made films, was asked to be the Director of Photography and Aaron, a photographer who had also previously worked with BUSH gallery, joined the group as a camera person. In this interview, four of the artists involved discuss what happened that week and the ideas at the heart of *Coney Island Baby*.



Still from *Coney Island Baby*, directed by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, 2018. Cinematographers: Aaron Leon and Amy Kazymierchuk. HD video. COPYRIGHT: GABRIELLE L'HIRONDELLE HILL

AMY: Gabe, why don't you start by telling us about where the title for the film came from?

GABRIELLE: The title of the work, *Coney Island Baby*, refers to Coney Island in New York, I think it's Lenape territory, a place that was renamed by colonizers after the wild rabbits that populated that place. "Coney" is an old English word for rabbit and it is also the root word of "cunny," which leads to the word "cunt," and is used similarly in a derogatory way. So, for me, the title connects the topic of the film, trapping and raising rabbits – which is a feminized and often diminished kind of labour – to the idea of bunnies as feminized and sexualized, like ski bunnies and Playboy bunnies.

And I also wanted to talk about Indigenous women's and feminized labour without essentializing or falling back on a gender binary. Without assuming that everybody identifies as a woman, and acknowledging that there are men that trap and raise rabbits too. Which isn't to say that this labour is not gendered, just that it's more complex than binary. Maybe the way to put it is that when labour is feminized and racialized, it is also often devalued, no matter who does it.

AMY: Your first idea was to shoot the film at Jericho Beach, in the centre of Vancouver, but we ended up shooting at BUSH gallery. What precipitated the change?

GABRIELLE: The original idea for this project came from thinking about my Uncle Johnny who used to help a friend run a trapline in Ottawa. I thought that was a really crazy story, that he had a trapline in the city. So, I visited him not too long ago and I asked him about it. He told me the story of running this trapline with a friend, and he taught me how to set a snare, just in his living room. He showed me how you'd tie the wire and how you'd set up a little rabbit run, and he set up objects from his living room, like a pen and a beer bottle, the way you'd set up sticks to guide the rabbits. My original idea was that I wanted to

have a trapline in the city too, and one day I was talking with Jeneen and asked her if she'd like to help me.

However, after talking it through with other Indigenous artists, it was pointed out to us that it wasn't really respectful, or being a good guest, to just go and trap rabbits on somebody else's land without their permission. And so, we began the process of getting permission to trap on Musqueam territory, out at ʔəyalməx^w, or Jericho. These sorts of things take time to do them right, and so that is something in process.

In the meantime, we went to Secwepemculew, which is the territory of the Secwepemc Nation. We were invited there by Tania Willard, who was already a part of the project, to trap rabbits on her family's land. Aaron Leon, who is from the same territory, and whom we've worked with before, also became a part of the project.

JENEEN: And you've also had a relationship with BUSH gallery since the beginning, and have shared a long-term conversation with Tania about your practices and politics around land-based art. So, I think that BUSH gallery just seemed like a natural place to return to and continue that conversation. In terms of being respectful or mindful in one's practice, it feels right to be invited to stay in a good friend's home and to work around their kids and family, while also being able to contribute to the labour of taking care of a family and a home. These aspects are as important to our process as snaring rabbits, and I really like that we made an effort to film all of the work that was happening around the snaring, which are also forms of feminized labour in domestic space.

AMY: BUSH Gallery was really the ideal place to shoot *Coney Island Baby* because it works at centring artistic production in familial and community life, and pays attention to the economic responsibilities of those entwined relations. Within this complexity, BUSH is still flexible about experimenting and improvising new ways of making art and taking care of each other. In that context, the proj-



(After) *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1991), 2016 (l-r Chandra Melting Tallow, Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, Amy Kazymierchuk, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Tania Willard). PHOTO: AARON LEON

ect could emerge from how we lived together, rather than from a script that was written at a speculative distance. I think the method of the film's production demonstrates the same values as its content. We were simultaneously helping each other live, planning what we were going to shoot and learning to snare rabbits.

Gabe, Jeneen and I had all been to BUSH gallery before, but it was your first time, Chandra. How did you experience it?

CHANDRA: I had a very difficult time. It was during a period of my life when I was still reconciling my limitations because of an autoimmune disorder. I've only been living with it for five years and it's difficult to navigate because it gets better and then worse almost unpredictably. So, going into the shoot, I wasn't really aware of how bad it would be and it coloured my experience in a big way.

I'm constantly reminded of the contrast between my life before I developed this condition and after. And because of that, I was very aware of my inability to participate. I think what was really touching was everyone's encouragement that the contributions I was able to make, like doing dishes, were valid. The perspective that as a disabled person I'm not contributing, of my limitations being the focus of my role in society, very much comes from Eurocentric, capitalist, white society. Intellectually, I know it's not true, but everyone's encouragement made it feel embodied. It reminded me of the values that are Indigenous – that each contribution has value.

GABRIELLE: Your experience kind of captures what *Coney Island Baby* is about too, right? How all of the labour that people do for free gets undervalued because it's not monetized. And obviously, you were working really hard on the shoot. Even your contributions to the ideas that form the project are part of an intellectual labour. There are all these people working all the time, not getting credit, and so it was cool to me because your participation added a third level of something that was missing from how I had been thinking about the project.

I had been thinking about how Indigenous economies are operating somehow outside of capitalism, yet subsidiz-

ing it, and I was thinking about how labour in the home is working all the time for capitalism, unpaid. But then a third level is that people who have disabilities end up working for free, and working in an unrecognized way.

CHANDRA: Yeah, I think it really brought to light the way that those attitudes, like childcare or domestic labour, are not as valuable, can be internalized. And it's one thing to know intellectually that this isn't true, but it's another to embody this.

AMY: I think that autonomous collectives like BUSH gallery have an opportunity to initiate fairer and more flexible economic and professional protocols that acknowledge those different levels of labour. Many contemporary art institutions have very narrow parameters around the forms of work, methods of productivity and outcomes and deliverables that are supported and commended. These parameters are born from value systems, and the problem is that if you live under conditions that preclude you from being able to meet them, you get valued negatively. For example, if you have a difficult time meeting deadlines due to chronic illness, you are undependable, or if you need more material support and assistance, you are needy. In institutions, equality is often upheld as the leveller, but equal is not fair. Fair is creating protocols that are flexible, and working processes that are negotiable, to be able to meet people's individual conditions. Maybe fair is even too soft a word for it – maybe it's justice.

Chandra, one of the really meaningful contributions you made to the shoot was reminding us to take care of ourselves and care about each other. This is an aspect of collaboration that often gets undermined. You reminded us that we don't need to be uncomfortable, in pain or exhausted in the name of making art. This became a really important part of our working methodology. There were so many times during the shoot when someone asked for filming to be put on pause in order to rest, to eat, to put kids to bed, to go tobogganing or to play cribbage in front of the fire. I'm so happy that we were flexible and responsive to these requests, and that, in many instances, we

changed our plans and filmed what people needed to do. It will be interesting to see how this strategy becomes visible in the final edit.

JENEEN: After working on this project with all of you in December, I ended up doing some work with rabbit hide, just thinking about rabbits and spending time with them. It's kind of like when you hear a word for the first time, and then you hear it everywhere. It was kind of like that – everything was about rabbits.

GABRIELLE: Me too. I'm thinking about rabbits all the time. Another thing is that rabbits are associated with poor people, and brown people with large families. The idea is that, you know, we just can't stop breeding...

AMY: ...breeding like rabbits.

GABRIELLE: Yeah, exactly. And so, I think there's something that's cool about that, in the reference to bunnies, that sees reproduction as something really powerful, instead of ignorant or whatever it's normally associated with.

JENEEN: It's the fact that rabbits breed so much that they're able to be a sustaining force, right? They're available for people to eat in abundance.

We're talking about care, and what it means to take care of each other, and I think that rabbits have saved a lot of lives and helped a lot of people. But they have a kind of quiet medicine. Their coats are protective and camouflage them, so unless you really pay attention, or are really present and know them, you won't likely get to see them.

This kind of applies to the process of making this film, and expectations around a finished artwork. I think it's really fitting that we didn't catch any rabbits during the shoot. Part of me is really glad. Not catching any is perfect because it's made us talk more about our time together and labour and the land – more than how to respectfully depict the snaring. We're still talking about how we have to be respectful of the rabbits, but it's just taking a different form than if our snares had been full.

CHANDRA: It was initially about catching rabbits, but then the circumstance of not catching them, and the context of being in Tania's home, allowed the project to take on a life of its own that I don't think we could have foreseen. I find that really special and I love when that happens with projects, especially when you're working with other people. As for the part about initially wanting to do it at Jericho, considering the implications of being a good guest, and then wanting to go about it in a respectful way... really, we ended up at BUSH gallery by happenstance. I think it's just interesting that it's taken this whole other direction.

JENEEN: It also makes me think about the idea of success, and what it means to take something home. Gabe, even you saying that you've been encountering rabbits more and thinking about them more, is about you developing a relationship with them. And then that relationship's stronger to move forward with – or not even move forward, but just to live with. It feels really good that I'm sewing with them after spending time with the land.

I'm reading a book right now called *Two Old Women: An Alaska Legend of Betrayal, Courage, and Survival* (1993) by Velma Wallis. Have you read it? It's pretty short, but I'm taking a long time to read it because I feel like I'll read a few pages and be like, *damn*, and then I just need to spend time with it. They talk about their survival and the first things that they eat, which are squirrels and then rabbits.

GABRIELLE: I'm so glad you brought that up because it's so true, and it's the other thing that's central to the project for me. I was thinking about people who live off of rabbits – small game hunting – but also about people who raise rabbits in hutches to help make ends meet. That was something we did when I was a little kid; my parents had a rabbit hutch in the backyard. It didn't last for long because we moved to the city and so we ate them all or whatever. But, just like you said, it's this unassuming animal that actually feeds so many people.

And I feel like a lot of Indigenous economies work this way, keeping people alive and keeping people healthy through this crazy network, you know. It's this unacknowledged labour. I mean, hopefully not unacknowledged by us, but it's something that a lot of people don't know about. My family grew up on K'ómoks territory on Vancouver Island, even though we're not K'ómoks. But because of our relationship with people at K'ómoks, we've always been fed with the fish from that land. Ernie Hardy would bring my grandmother fish every year, and my auntie would can fish with her friend Georgia and would send the fish to us every year. When you're a kid, you just think it's normal that you eat canned fish all year round. But as an adult, looking back, I can see that those people – the fishers – sustained my family. And the salmon sustained my family. So, part of this project is also thinking about these things.

AMY: The network of artists, and conversation between artworks, is also a big part of *Coney Island Baby*. We began our shoot at BUSH gallery by watching two movies that we wanted to be in dialogue with while making the film. One was *Modest Livelihood* (2012) by Brian Jungen and Duane Linklater and the other was *Gallup Motel Butchering* (2011) by Postcommodity. They resonated with this project because they're both made by Indigenous collectives, and they both concern Indigenous economies of hunting and harvesting animals.

While we were watching them, we all expressed wanting to portray the process of learning how to snare rabbits. We wanted to be vulnerable about the process of not knowing, and the collective process of coming to know together. There are two scenes that emerged from this conversation that are really important. One is a conversation with Jeneen's dad, Stan Njootli, over speakerphone, during which he shares his strategies for setting traps, and the other, is the day we spent learning to kill, skin and gut rabbits with Don Arnouse, who breeds and sells rabbit meat in Cstalen (Adams Lake).

GABRIELLE: I saw Postcommodity speak recently: they gave this really good talk about a work that they did for documenta 14 in Athens called *The Ears Between Worlds are Always Speaking* (2017). They installed it at the site where Socrates used to walk with his pupils as he gave his lessons – he believed in a theory that knowledge was based in movement.

AMY: Peripatetic.

GABRIELLE: Yes, peripatetic. They talked about how Socrates believed that to be a philosopher, you had to walk. And they said that, because there's 60 million refugees and immigrants moving through the world right now, there's 60 million philosophers that we're not listening to. And so, they recorded the stories of all these different people who were forced to migrate for different reasons, including people who had memories of the stories from the Navajo Long Walk, and they projected those stories into the space where Socrates walked with his students.



Both Images: Still from *Coney Island Baby*, directed by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, 2018.
Cinematographers: Aaron Leon and Amy Kazymierchuk. HD video. COPYRIGHT: GABRIELLE L'HIRONDELLE HILL



And like you said, Jeneen, everything's coming up rabbits. It made me think of how we're making this work through movement, you know, through walking in the bush, through playing with kids, through living. It's a kind of knowledge that is forming. Like you said, a lot of BUSH gallery doesn't make it into a product, you know, it's not product-oriented.

AMY: Gabe, when you and I were transferring video files onto your hard drive, you asked me if we had any footage of what Chandra had done. In that moment, my mind raced through all of the experiences we had had together, trying to recall when we were alert and responsive and recorded, and when we hesitated or were tired and didn't. There were a lot of moments that we didn't capture – sometimes consciously, and sometimes unconsciously. This may seem like a tenuous link, but I'm thinking about the routes that Socrates and his students walked, the paths of 60 million migrants around the world and maybe even rabbit tracks. The traces of their movement are indelible. Riffing off of that, even if something doesn't get filmed, is there a trace of it that persists?

CHANDRA: I see the point of what you're saying in terms of all the different aspects of the project. But the example you used with Gabe is different. She was asking about whether I was being filmed doing the dishes because I had talked to her about how I wasn't sure if it made sense for me to be in the project beyond doing the soundtrack because of my experience of mostly being unable to participate in the main aspects of the film because of my disability. My experience put me in this position of not being sure if I'm really comfortable or know how to navigate my presence in the project, yet also not wanting the experience that I had as a disabled person to be invisible because that's a huge problem in society. In ableist society, disabled people's lives and experiences are invisible and my existence is very much invisible. I spend the majority of my time here [gesturing to their home] because often I can't actually leave. Aside from footage of washing dishes, that specific example is different than talking about not every aspect needing to be documented on film because it's implicated in my experience.

GABRIELLE: Yes, me and Chandra talked a bit about how to deal with the fact that I wasn't prepared to make the project really work for Chandra, around ability issues. And we talked about treating that in a way that didn't make it invisible or pretend that it didn't happen. But also in a way that didn't say, "therefore, Chandra didn't participate." But it takes a presence of mind, being aware of that as a thing that happens, right? And then just keeping that in mind as we go. Which is something I felt like I learned about and am still learning about, and thinking about.

CHANDRA: Yeah, there were other things going on because, as I said at the beginning, this is also very new to me: understanding my limitations and how to communicate them. So, when you're talking about having presence of mind, and how you felt like you could have structured things to make it more accessible, it was also during a time when I was just learning what that even looks like for me. I'm navigating this new reality while unlearning things from living in a society that undermines the value of people with disabilities. Even just recognizing accessibility as an option I am entitled to... What is that? It's a paradigm shift. It's switching from the idea I've internalized, against my will even, that I'm a burden to people. But a conversation is slowly happening, of how to make society

more accessible to everyone. I think about it a lot, too, just like moving around through space, taking the bus, running errands. I think about what makes just living my life harder; I think about what would make it easier.

I fantasize about a world that disabled people could freely move through. It always comes back to values in Indigenous societies. You grow up knowing elders and children eat first, and that's the basis of it. To have society structured in a way so that people who have more difficulty, things are made easier for them. I'm still just learning how to be comfortable asking for what I need because, on one hand, I am still learning what that is, and on the other, I've internalized – to an extent deeper than my comprehension – that I am not entitled to the things that would make my life as livable as it is for able-bodied people.

JENEEN: I appreciate you sharing what you shared. And it's so important to think about. My friend and I were just talking about how the participation of Indigenous persons as participants or students can look different too. Let's say, in a classroom setting, if you don't contribute or vocalize in a conversation, it's often read as non-participation. But there are so many ways of participating and being deeply engaged and very present that don't always look like "contributing." It often comes down to a question of legibility. Silence in some scenarios is read as non-participation. But sometimes there's a kind of participation going on that has a longer duration, more depth and more strength than what's immediately legible. It's so important to be having discussions about legibility. But particularly this one because a lot of *Coney Island Baby* is about ideas of legibility, like the legibility of Indigenous women, our labour and our forms of relationships. But also our legibility to each other, right? And so, part of our learning has also been about how to present that in the film.

All the members of the collective will be working on post-production over the coming winter and Coney Island Baby will be released in 2018.

Amy Kazymierchuk is the curator of the Audain Gallery at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, BC. She has written an essay on BUSH gallery for the forthcoming *Wood Land School: Critical Anthology*, edited by Duane Linklater and published by Or Gallery and SFU Galleries.

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill is a Metis artist and writer from Vancouver, BC, located on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh lands. Gabrielle's found object sculptures, installations and video work perform as a material enquiry into economic systems, ideas of property and the land.

Chandra Melting Tallow is an interdisciplinary artist, musician and experimental filmmaker of mixed ancestry from Siksika Nation. They spearhead the music project Mourning Coup and have exhibited and performed across north america and Istanbul.

Jeneen Frei Njootli is a member of the self-governing Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and is a co-creator of the ReMatriate Collective. Based between the Yukon and unceded Coast Salish territories, she works collaboratively with artists, communities, youth and the land. Frei Njootli's practice takes the shape of sound, performance, fashion, workshops and barbeques.



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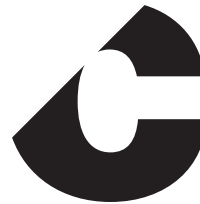


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Shary Boyle & Pierre Aupilardjuk, *Facing Forward*, 2016
Graham Fagen, video still, *The Slave's Lament*, 2015



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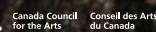


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Nicole Collins, *Apeiron* (detail, work in progress), 2017.

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Image: Emanuel Licha, *Hotel Machine*, 2016 (still).
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A Feast for the Stewards of the Land:

Contemporary Art and Netukulimk on Unama'ki

by Amish Morrell

This past summer's *LandMarks2017/Repères2017*, a nationwide public art program held in 20 national parks and historic sites across Canada as part of reflections on Canada 150, provides a rare opportunity to think about how contemporary art might engage with rural communities and wild places. Including projects by 12 artists, along with corresponding curricula at 16 universities across the country, *LandMarks2017/Repères2017* sought to engage a broad public in exploring the meaning and use of Canada's national parks and historic sites. While we might rely upon an image of these sites as wild places, separate from human activity, and often perceive their surrounding communities as being untouched by the contemporary, this is often far from the case. The creation of the parks system, and the concept of wilderness itself, as Kwantlen writer Robert Jago recently described in an article called "Take Back the Parks," has involved the appropriation of lands from the Indigenous people who have long occupied these places, as well as the destruction of their livelihoods.¹ While this is slowly changing, for a long time the parks system enforced a separation from the land for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, obscuring their own place within systems of survival and sustenance.

This past June, I travelled to Unama'ki, "the land of fog," otherwise known as Cape Breton Island, to attend *Festival of Stewards* in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. *Festival of Stewards* was the culminating performance of *(re)al-location*, a multi-faceted project by artist Ursula Johnson. *(re)al-location* was a process that began during a Banff residency when Johnson created a foliage pattern textile representing the present-day ecologies of the Highlands. She then used this pattern to structure a series of conversations with sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students from Cabot Junior-Senior High School in Neil's Harbour, who live in the communities near the park. The students, many of them from Acadian and Scottish families whose ancestors had settled there following the expulsion of the Acadians during the 18th century and the Highland clearances of Scotland in the 19th century, discussed their connection to the land of northern Cape Breton. From these conversations, the textile was adapted into a series of costume accessories – capes, masks, bandannas and jumpsuits – transforming the students and others who wore them into superhero-like stewards of the Highlands. They came up with a list of local collaborators who told the stories of this place, and worked with students and faculty from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, artists and musicians from nearby communities, and employees of the Cape Breton Highlands National Park to create *Festival of Stewards*.

Festival of Stewards was held over the span of an afternoon at MacIntosh Brook Campground, a picnic area and self-service tent site on the northern edge of the park, where the nearest grocery store and gas station is an hour-long drive away. Aside from park visitors, the only people on this part of the Island are those who live in nearby Pleasant Bay, a tiny settlement with a population of 250, consisting mostly of lobster and crab fishers, Buddhist monks who live at the abbey there, and a few others who sustain themselves through subsistence farming, hunting or running one of the few seasonal businesses in town. This provides a challenging context for the presentation and reception of contemporary art, where there are no art organizations and any potential audience is unlikely to be familiar with its language and conventions. It does, however, offer a rich and complex site for thinking about what a critical practice might look like in relation to the systems and practices of survival that shape the reality and imagination of those who live in such places. I'm

from a remote rural community on the other side of the Highlands, so I am somewhat familiar with the landscape and cultural histories that Johnson engaged through this project.

In *(re)al-location* Johnson set out to explore the Mi'kmaq philosophy of Netukulimk,² a concept that has also informed her past work in sculpture and performance. Explained in the most basic terms, Netukulimk describes the practice of maintaining sustainable relationships to the land, taking only as much as one needs for one's family and community. But it also encapsulates a worldview, with both sacred and practical forms of knowledge that are embedded in the land, including rules and obligations that ensure the continued regeneration of life. In her project *Mi'kwite'tmn (Do You Remember)* (2014-ongoing), Johnson learned how to make baskets from her late great-grandmother, renowned basket-maker Caroline Gould. Eschewing the conventional presentation of baskets as artifacts or as collector's items, and often making baskets that are strange and mutant in their appearance and function, she seeks to understand the essence of the Mi'kmaq basket and how Netukulimk operates through basket making.³ To simply make a basket, even a perfect basket, is not enough. Netukulimk involves a knowledge of the land: where to find the ash trees needed for the basket, when and how to harvest the wood, and how to do this in a sustainable and respectful manner.⁴ In this example, the basket is an animate object, a body of lived knowledge, inseparable from the ecological and cultural context within which it is made and used.⁵ In relation to the moose, which has provided food, shelter, clothing, tools, medicine and games for the Mi'kmaq for more than 12,000 years, practising Netukulimk doesn't merely include sustainable hunting, but re-learning its spiritual and practical significance.⁶ As a way of exploring these ideas in relation to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park and the varied communities that live on Unama'ki, Johnson planned a feast where guests would reflect on their relation to the land and together eat moose meat that had been harvested in the Highlands.

The day that *Festival of Stewards* was held was cool and overcast, with light fog and intermittent rain falling in the narrow valley just outside of Pleasant Bay. A crew of volunteers began the day by looking for a place protected from the rain to set up a massive stainless-steel barbecue grill called the *Meat/Meet Swing*, built by a nearby blacksmith, which looked like one of the jury-rigged stands used to hoist an engine block out of a car or to hang a deer. The grill, which also functioned as a porch swing, required three iron fireboxes and a truckload of firewood. The team of volunteers, consisting mostly of NSCAD students and a few of the artist's friends, built the fire early to heat up the fireboxes and to dry out the wood. At one point, the fire burned through a base hastily built out of firewood to elevate one of the fireboxes. Wielding a dead-fall log, Johnson levered four boulders from the brook, pushed the burning hardwood logs out from under the dangerously hot furnace box and made a new fireproof platform.

As the fire grew hotter, the cloud cover lifted and then set in again, the rain stopped and then started again, as it did throughout the day, and people gathered under a tent to listen to performances by local musicians. They listened to Maxim Cormier, an Acadian-Métis guitarist and songwriter; Jason Roach, a pianist (like Cormier, also from nearby Cheticamp); and Chrissy Crowley, a fiddle player from Margaree. Adrienne Chapman-Gorey and Mike Gorey, Celtic-folk musicians from Ingonish, also performed and Rebecca-Lynne MacDonald-May and

Geoffrey May from Margaree Harbour sung Gaelic songs. At the end of the day, Johnson's 11-year-old niece, Jenessa Paul, gave her debut performance, singing a version of Lukas Graham's pop hit "7 Years." As people moved back and forth between the dry cover of the tent and the warming heat of the fire, caterers from Salty Rose's and the Periwinkle Café in Ingonish served beans and fishcakes, and Parks Canada interpreters led people on walks into the woods to see some of the tiny creatures and plants that live along MacIntosh Brook. At one point in the afternoon, I walked up the brook to a series of waterfalls. Kids were gleefully marching down the stream, knee-deep in the water, and below the falls, people were enjoying the view and playing *Waltés*, a Mi'kmaq board game that traditionally includes dice made from moose bones. We hung out, we warmed ourselves by the fire, we ate and talked. I spoke to people I hadn't seen in years – who lived in far-flung communities from Port Hood to Bay St. Lawrence – and met new people, including Ursula's cousin and Jenessa's mother, who was 37 weeks pregnant and who had come all the way from the other side of the Island. In the woods along the brook, I found piles of stones from when MacIntosh Farm was cleared, and other signs of its earlier inhabitants. The day was full of catching up, eating, listening, sharing information and telling stories, connecting the many different lives that came together in this misty valley below North Mountain.

The development of *Festival of Stewards* also included working with other artists from the Highlands to explore their connection to the land. Among them, Angie Arsenaault, an artist whose family is from Ingonish, created a commemorative garden installation called *Haunting the Valley*, referencing her Acadian and Mi'kmaq ancestors who lived in the Clyburn Valley. Near Ingonish, on the eastern side of the National Park, the Clyburn Valley was where Acadians also settled and lived alongside the Mi'kmaq for hundreds of years.⁷ Arsenaault's grandparents were the last of her family to live in the Clyburn Valley, where they grew vegetables after World War I to sell to supermarkets in Sydney, until their land was expropriated in 1937 in order to create a golf course for the National Park. (Traces of their farm, including an apple tree, can still be found in the woods near the 11th hole.) With her aunt Carol MacLean, who is a gardener at the inn adjacent to the golf course, Arsenaault planted a garden made up of the plants her great-grandparents grew – turnips, cabbage, cauliflower, summer savory, parsley and rhubarb.⁸ Describing this project during her remarks at *Festival of Stewards*, Johnson contrasted what she referred to as "intangible cultural heritage" and the "permanence and solidity of the land," where land and memory are both powerful, entwined forces that exist in ongoing dialogue across time on Unama'ki. Through *Haunting the Valley*, Arsenaault conjures the spirits of her ancestors from the Clyburn Valley to help us consider our relationship to the land.

Throughout *Festival of Stewards*, Johnson's role was that of host and organizer, introducing the performers, stoking the fire, cajoling and managing the team of volunteers and students. She was a facilitator of what she calls a "co-operative didactic intervention" involving dozens of people from many different communities across the island. While *Festival of Stewards* had the character of many other community events, with music, food and a raffle (where someone won a bicycle), the culminating feast brought the concept of Netukulimk into sharp focus. At the end of the day, Johnson and her volunteers brought out approximately 1,000 pieces of moose meat, and grilled them on the *Meat/Meet Swing*. Around the raging fire, guests ate the dark, tender meat, which was full of the rich, complex

taste of the Highlands: the young birch and alder shoots, the lake grasses, the spruce and balsam and the clear spring snowmelt. Amidst the conviviality of the event, it was a transgressive gesture that stood the risk of re-igniting volatile exchanges between Mi'kmaq hunters, settler communities and provincial and federal institutions such as the Department of Natural Resources and Parks Canada. These are among the continued obstacles that come into play around the practice of Netukulimk.

There is a long history of conflict between settler and Indigenous hunters around hunting rights. More recently, in the fall of 2015, Parks Canada initiated a controlled hunt, working with Mi'kmaq hunters to reduce the number of moose in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. The hunt drew the attention of people who took issue with hunting in National Parks, as well as non-Indigenous hunters from the area who felt they were being unfairly excluded from the hunt. The controversy regarding the moose hunt has not been because moose are endangered, but rather the opposite. After being hunted to near-extinction by the early 20th century, moose were reintroduced in the Park during the 1940s. Protected from hunting over the intervening 75 years, they thrived, radically transformed the landscape and turning vast sections of the boreal forest into grassland. In November 2015, in response to the planned hunt, protestors formed a blockade at the base of North Mountain, and confrontations ensued between white and Mi'kmaq hunters. There were death threats and a temporary shelter erected by a protestor was burned to the ground.⁹ Two weeks later, Mi'kmaq hunters camped at the top of North Mountain, and with the assistance of Parks Canada, harvested 37 moose.¹⁰ The following year, in November and December 2016, they harvested 50 moose, and a third harvest occurred in the fall of 2017.

The moose meat that was served at *Festival of Stewards* came from the fall 2016 harvest in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park, seven kilometres away on the top of North Mountain. It had been provided by the Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNKO), an organization that works to ensure the equitable division of resources between Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq peoples, which had helped supervise the hunt and distribute the meat. For the Mi'kmaq, the right to hunt and fish for sustenance is legally protected – at least in theory. However, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of Natural Resources, and non-Mi'kmaq hunters police this right aggressively. And for non-Mi'kmaq hunters, there are severe consequences for possessing moose meat without a permit or a license. Consequently, fish and game rights are among the most politically volatile issues in rural Nova Scotia. The promotion for *Festival of Stewards* on the Parks Canada and *LandMarks2017/Repères2017* websites advertised "a celebratory feast," avoiding any potential allusion to these tensions and to the recent controversy around the moose cull. While these controversies and barriers are part of the context that *Festival of Stewards* engages, the event was more about bringing people together to share the knowledge, practices and memory that constitutes their present and historical relationships to Unama'ki. Around a feast, where everyone ate moose meat that had been harvested a short distance from where they were gathered, using Mi'kmaq wildlife management techniques, guests were invited to see themselves in relation to a practice of Netukulimk.

Both *Festival of Stewards* and *(re)al-location* explored these ideas through a complex – and at times, transgressive – social choreography. Though it was not explicit in

the publicity for *Festival of Stewards*, Johnson's project engaged two difficult and contentious events centred around the Cape Breton Highlands National Park: the moose culls held in 2015 and 2016 and the expropriation of lands for the creation of the park in 1936.¹¹ Through the public practice of Netukulimk, and through acts of collective commemoration (*re)al-location* foregrounded the spiritual and practical relationship people have to the land on Unama'ki. While addressing federal and provincial institutional structures that determine wildlife management and how we imagine and interact with wild spaces, (*re)al-location* served to recuperate the invisible structures that shape our relationship to the land: stories, practices of survival, the land itself and its memories. These stories and practices are not separate from contemporary life, but map a different "contemporary" – one that extends across time and memory, grounded in histories, places and forms of knowledge that survive at the peripheries of a global, neoliberal world order. (*re)al-location* thus intervened within the very definitions of contemporary art, working with a vocabulary that is specific to Unama'ki and the northern Highlands, that arises from histories of survival and Mi'kmaq philosophy. It was there, beside MacIntosh Brook, in the land of fog, that about 300 people came together on a rainy June afternoon to eat food that came from the surrounding mountains and valleys, and to reflect on their relationship and responsibility towards the land. And these are some of the memories, stories and ideas that brought them together.

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Endnotes

- 1 Jago describes how Canada 150 celebrates the thefts of lands and impoverishment of First Nations people through the creation of Canada's parks system, in what he calls "green colonialism." Robert Jago, "Take Back the Parks," *The Walrus* (October 2017), p. 14. When the Cape Breton Highlands National Park was created, Scottish and Acadian settlers were also forced to leave these lands.
- 2 The Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources in Eskasoni, Cape Breton, describes Netukulimk here: <http://www.uinr.ca/programs/netukulimk/>
- 3 Ursula Johnson "First Nations Cultural Preservation Through Art" TEDxHalifax, November 23, 2012 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHvazKFgRA&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)
- 4 This project includes a series of baskets called *O'ptek (It is Not Right)* that foreclose any possibility of being designated as artifacts or traditional craft objects: for example, a fishing creel that that she describes as not being intended for fishing, but instead functions as a purse that one carries to the store to buy farmed fish. In these particular artworks, Johnson intentionally subverts any familiar notion of these baskets as remnants of an exotic and vanished past. (See: "First Nations Cultural Preservation Through Art" [2012])
- 5 Ongoing legal obstacles to the practice of Netukulimk through the denial of fishing and hunting rights is illustrated by the 1999 arrest of Donald Marshall Jr., for catching and selling eels, a story that dominated the news in Nova Scotia for half a decade. In 2003, a Supreme Court decision upheld Mi'kmaq treaty rights to fish for a livelihood, though similar problems continue to persist due to aggressive and often punitive oversight, in contradiction to federal law, by the provincial Department of Natural Resources.

6 An excellent and detailed source discussing Netukulimk specifically in relation to the moose is Kerry Prosper, Jane McMillan, Morgan Moffitt and Anthony Davis' "Returning to Netukulimk: Mi'kmaq cultural and spiritual connections with resource stewardship and self-governance" in *International Indigenous Policy Journal*. Vol. 2. (October, 2011).

7 Though they eventually returned, both the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq were driven out by the British after the siege of Louisbourg, as described in Joanne Doucette's book, *Up the Humber to the West: My Métis Voyageurs* (self-published e-book, 2016). Available at: <https://liatris52.wordpress.com/up-the-humber-to-the-west-my-metis-voyageurs/>.

8 For documentation of this project, see: <https://haunting-the-valley.tumblr.com/>

9 "Moose Cull" on Land and Sea, CBC Television, season 15, episode 10 (2015) (<http://watch.cbc.ca/land-and-sea-network/season-2015/episode-10/38e815a-00a0672d999>). It should also be noted that local kids were blamed for the fire, not Mi'kmaq hunters or the protestors.

10 For Mi'kmaq hunters, the hunt enabled them to reconnect with their traditional practices and hunting grounds, using Indigenous wildlife management strategies while maintaining the balance of the highland ecosystem, imparting these skills to younger hunters and providing food for their communities.

11 The expropriation of land for the formation of the Cape Breton Highlands National Park had the effect of once-again displacing people – mostly Scottish and Acadian – who had arrived there as a result of a previous, violent displacement, stories about which are a significant part of the oral and written culture of northern Cape Breton.

Ursula Johnson, *Festival of Stewards*, June 24, 2017, cooperative didactic intervention at MacIntosh Brook Campground, Cape Breton Highlands National Park. PHOTO: ERIC LE BEL; IMAGE COURTESY OF LANDMARKS2017/REPÈRES2017



30

to the archive

by Jeremy Dutcher

to the archive is part visual score, part road map. It describes the formation of my most recent work, *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*, which reinterprets 20th-century field recordings of the Wolastoqiyik. The journey of this visual piece begins in Tobique (Neqotkuk) First Nation, on the banks of the Wolastoq river. The shapes, words and colours describe the journey that follows. Drawing inspiration from John Cage's *Aria* (1958), shapes and colours replace common black note notation. It concludes on the steps of the Canadian Museum of History, where this archive is housed. Sing along. Return the knowledge to the people.

to the archive

Neqotkuk

Where the two rivers meet

Eliyay (as I go)

Through
Past

Eliyay (as I go)

Other side of Kepek

Elakomkwik (Algonquin)
These are our relatives

Essuwonike (let's trade)

Kani-lintuwakonol (old songs)

I dance.

The piece is a reflection of the journey to access archival material of the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet people) from the Museum of Canadian History on the unceded territories of the Algonquin people. We continue to assert our identity and work to reclaim the cultural knowledge that is institutionally held; bridges from past to future.

Neqotkuk -- Tobique/ Where the two rivers meet

Eliyay -- As I go

Elakomkwik -- Algonquin

Essuwonike -- Let's trade

Kani-lintuwakonol -- Old songs

Instructions for performance:

This score is to be rendered in an acoustically sound space. Renderers are encouraged to perform it first privately, followed by a public iteration; notice the difference. Renderers are encouraged to move in ways they see fit. Shapes indicate movement – vocal/physical. The colours indicate the qualities of the voice. Their distinctiveness is essential. Repeat as needed.

Re-centring

Knowledge

an
Interview
with
Artist
and
Curator
Anique Jordan

by Tania Willard

BUSH gallery recently spoke with artist and curator Anique Jordan about her recently curated off-site programming for the Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibition *Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood*, and ways in which this programming resonated with ideas we are activating at BUSH gallery.

The Public – Land and Body (West) was a video art exhibition installed inside the Black Creek Community Farm farmhouse in North York. Black Creek Community Farm focuses on improving food security, reducing social isolation and improving employment and education outcomes. *The Public* used performance, video installation and discussion to explore themes of land and body across two community sites: *The Public – Land and Body (West)* at Black Creek Community Farm and *The Public – Land and Body (East)* at Y+ contemporary in Scarborough. At Black Creek Community Farm, the program included work by artists Yu Gu, Lisa Hirmer, Lisa Myers, Ella Cooper and Joshua Vettivelu and panel discussions with Cooper (artist, educator), Erica Violet Lee (writer, blogger) and Sabrina “Butterfly” GoPaul (community activist and journalist) in conversation with curator, Anique Jordan.

TANIA WILLARD: At BUSH gallery we are thinking about creating intentional space for art-making or art-conversation or different things, but not in gallery spaces. Not that it's meant to be a binary – we love gallery spaces, we want to be in gallery spaces – but part of the impetus for BUSH gallery is finding ourselves always having to move to cities to show in galleries. There are very few that are Indigenous- or people of colour- or Black-led; for this issue of *C Magazine*, we wanted to play with that idea and do reviews and texts that are more about experiences of art within a community that's important to you or within a natural outdoor space or that kind of thing, rather than in a typical gallery system.

In thinking about that, I was following the work from the AGO exhibition and had noticed the programming you did at Black Creek Community Farm.

ANIQUE JORDAN: When I first started going to the AGO, only two years ago, I came with family and friends who also had never been there. I remember having conversations with people who didn't feel like they had the right to interpret what they were seeing. They felt uncomfortable and I felt that with them.

I've always been a community worker, and because of working for so many years in my community I always think about a responsibility that I have to return art to

the community that informs it. I feel like it's up to artists and curators, and whomever is in the gallery world, to always be thinking about how the work that we are doing is a reflection of the experiences in the communities that we have come from. And therefore how do we give that back to them, to those spaces. I wanted to be able to do something that was not centred in the downtown core but reached out into the wings of the city, which are the places I grew up in and did all of my community work in – recognizing that these people typically are absent from gallery settings but the experiences that inform our lives in those wings of the city are constantly being leveraged in the gallery. The work is really centred in a public downtown geography. I wanted to privilege the knowledge that came from other sites and say that there are things that we can learn from showing and witnessing work that is coming from those spaces, but also there are things that we can learn just by being in those spaces.

TW: Absolutely. It's what we are thinking about in terms of decentring the gallery experience; it's intimidating to people, often people of colour, Indigenous people, people who feel like the gallery has some kind of colonial authority about it, and so we're very much interested in decentring that and valuing other spaces of artistic exploration.



Both Images: *Public: Land and Body*, September 16-17, 2017. Black Creek Community Farm farmhouse, Toronto. PHOTO: FATIN CHOWDHURY



AJ: My background in community work is really embedded in my way of thinking. I am truly indebted to the people, mentors and young people, who have taught me and who I have worked with growing up in Scarborough. I was pushed further to understand and be able to speak about what those experiences meant to me through the work of Quill Christie, an artist and educator, who also worked with me at the AGO. I learned from her the language to speak about what has been so fundamental to my work. She talks about relationships as a core artistic practice – the central role that relationships have in everything that you do. This helped me find the language in designing the work for *The Public*. I want to make sure that those community folks who taught me so much are centred.

There were a couple of elements that were really significant in *The Public* on both sides. One was that knowledge was centred on the people from the community, the activism and work that was coming from the community, and the sites that we were working with. That came from a strong partnership with the community members, between organizations – Black Creek Community Farm, Y+ contemporary and the AGO – but more so it came from the relationships that I had built knowing the folks on the ground, who had been doing this work. It was really about re-centring the site where knowledge comes from and privileging that as the forefront.

Another element was that the project had to be accessible in many ways. I used my mom and my elder aunt as sort of a barometer – if they can go to a space and feel a visceral response or feel like they are comfortable talking about it or finding their own meaning through it, then I feel like it's a success. I really thought about the different challenges that they would experience going through institutions as Black people, as women, as elder folk with disabilities, as folks who come from working class backgrounds, and so I wanted to ensure that the art, if it was art that was maybe abstract, or layered and symbolic, they would still have an entry point.

In *The Public (West)* it was important to have a panel discussion that allowed for the themes in the work at the farmhouse to be brought into a conversational space. That people could talk about it and those who learn differently could have a way of entering it in different forms. What was important to me, in that panel conversation, was that there was somebody there whose work really thought about land, and thought about particularly Canada as a site. It was important that there was an activist from the community or a community worker who was deeply rooted in that community as part of the panel. To bring the artwork into this conversation allowed us to make sense of the things we were talking about – so that we can start to, as a community, think about the ways that we interpret visual language, to understand what we are experiencing now. And while that becomes intuitive for an artist, or for folks who studied art, it's not necessarily intuitive for many people. It mattered as a political action, in saying that this work comes from you, is informed by you and it is important that we return it to you in a way that we can talk about it. So that was how it was done in *The Public (West)*.

We invited community members who are excluded from so many art spaces, so that they felt like they one-hundred-percent could own this, they do own this, and they could speak about it in a way that makes sense to them. Another important element was that the community that we were investing and embedding ourselves in was completely involved from the very beginning. That meant having conversations about the name, having conversations

about the sites, selecting the artists together, selecting the placements of things together, talking about what sort of things would happen in tandem – for example Black Creek Community Farm just recently opened an outdoor pizza oven so we wanted to have fresh pizza with fresh vegetables from their garden, from the farm, to serve to people.

Community members were the first ones hired for anything. In particular, young people as photographers, as distributors of the flyers – we also made sure to print flyers so that we weren't relying only on online presence, particularly in communities where there are a lot of seniors or people who may not be on the computer all time. So we flyer'd throughout the entire community. All these people came straight from the community, also as a way to ensure that there was a mix between artists who were in the show paired with artists who have a relationship to the community, currently living in the community or from that community. Having these kinds of components and the deepening of relationships was a really significant part of the work.

All the youth from the Indigenous youth residency, that Quill led and designed, were hired as gallery educators. I did an orientation with the group where we focused on what they thought of the art – what questions, feelings, stories they felt came from it – it was then their interpretation of the work that led visitors through. Making sure to continue to reiterate you are a keeper of knowledge. You can make sense of this. You know things. You bring so much. Together we asked what, for you, is coming from this? What is it that makes sense to you? What would you ask of this? It was really just asking questions of each other so that they had the space to come up with their own language to speak about the artworks. That was one of the most important components to the project, one that no one would have seen. When visitors came to the site, they would be led around by one of these young people. They would be speaking, and it wouldn't be something I told them as a script. They would be speaking from their own perspectives, from the ways they understand this artwork. This is the way I want to work. I am constantly re-centering where knowledge comes from and affirming that.

That knowledge is often in a cycle, for example presenting the panelists with gifts that came from the farm. On the Black Creek Community Farm they have beehives and they collect honey and so we bought honey from their business to gift to the panelists. Things like that. Constantly recycling and returning resources that we have and thinking about how we can redistribute those resources. And really thinking about what matters, then, in the community as a site of knowledge within their own power.

It was also important to continue to build a relationship between Black, Indigenous and POC communities. That work was really central to how I programmed this. An example is Yu Gu's work called *Interior Migrations* (2008). Her work is about migrant workers on the farms in the Niagara-on-the-Lake region. It's about food and social justice. It's about migrant labour. Three videos were put in the Black Creek Community Farm kitchen while the kitchen maintained its function. So when the people from the outreach program that the farm runs came, food was prepared in the kitchen right next to the screens with the migrant farmworkers of Gu's documentary. With that, every action the kitchen became a performance as well.

One of the great things about the installation at Black Creek Community Farm was how children related to the work. I look at large cultural institutions, and when we go into these spaces with children they are taught to obey. They are taught how to follow rules. They are taught how to stop. Not play. Be silent. And I thought about how

when we did this program at the farm, they were taught how to be free. How to run. How to touch things. How to eat things that they found. There were children playing with ducks and chicks. Going and sitting down in front of Lisa Myers' work that was on the balcony. Or going inside to look at the incredible work by Joshua Vettivelu, Lisa Hirmer or Ella Cooper, and this would just happen fluidly throughout. I started seeing how confining an arts institution can be. Why wouldn't we want it to be a place of freedom? It's not a space where you can breathe and see a horizon behind the work or feel as though you can remember there is land and communities and neighbourhoods and people surrounding it.

I was thinking about work that has pain in it, not necessarily in a bad way, but work that is showing pain or hurt or difficult times and how you are drawn into that and it surrounds you. And then seeing how different displays of pain felt at the farm, where you could see that things still live even after that or through that. Thinking about Lisa Myers' work, about her grandfather and the residential school, or seeing a door that's wide open to the outside right next to Lisa Hirmer's work that's about climate change, and knowing that there is a type of agency, even amongst the pain and amongst whatever the work was about.

TW: So the artwork was able to be in relationship with the site, in relationship with the farm.

AJ: That was something that everybody really spoke about. How the farm informed how you understood the work. And the work informed how you understood the farm. And the land that the farm is on. And the community that surrounds the farm. I also thought about it as refusal, as a practice of refusal, where we are going to do this because we are artists and we are people in a community and this is our community space and we don't need permission to show the work that comes from us. Even within that I also recognized that we were able to do that because there was money backing it. Which is important because artists have to be paid and their labour has to be accounted for.

TW: It's important. We want to bring the circulation of economy that comes with art practices and the art world back into our communities, instead of always outside of.

AJ: Right. Yeah.

Thinking back to the women in my family – my mom and my aunts. I have always created work for little Black girls. Every time I create an artwork I imagine, or remember how few images that I had or even people to look to. I always want to be that person who, if you look to me and you can see what I'm doing, you can be affirmed and given strength. And now I've started looking to my mother and my aunts instead of only to that little girl. My mom is the youngest of 13 children and so people always think my aunts are my grandmothers. They are 70 and 80 years old. I started looking to them because my mom was telling me – you know, I want to understand this art but it feels so complicated.

And so I look to mother and my aunts, because I want them to be able to understand this because they created this. They gave us this and therefore we have a responsibility to make sure that they as elders and that little Black girl, as a child, can enter it. That is something that I felt was successful about this show. It's not just the farmhouse, it's everything else that surrounds it – the young

people who spent time and took the care to talk to every person who came through because they were proud of it. It was their work and it came from their knowledge. The conversations on the farm were emotional. We talked about fighting, we talked about what community and art; it was a conversation that was so intimate and it was held outside in the sun with the pizza oven and a dog barking. Children were running and playing. Geese in the pen. And flower and corn. And things growing all around us. Having this conversation outside was such a different experience. It created a sense of freedom that was so necessary to come from work, and from our discussions about it. It was a human way to experience art.

Scarborough-born **Anique Jordan** is Toronto's 2017 Emerging Artist of the Year, the Executive Director of Whippersnapper Gallery, the co-curator of the groundbreaking *Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood* at the Art Gallery of Ontario and an award-winning writer, artist and social entrepreneur who has lectured in institutions across North America including UCLA, MIT and Harvard. She has been a community worker for over a decade and is most proud of being a self-taught artist whose practice is shaped by and reflects the communities and mentors that raised her.

Acknowledgments:

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Erica Violet Lee
Ella Cooper

Artists:

Ella Cooper
Lisa Hirmer
Lisa Myers
Yu Gu
Joshua Vettivelu

Black Creek Community Farm:

Ama Boahen
Nathan Walters
Hinda Omer
Rudy Gerodi

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Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood
Madelyne Beckles, performance artist and
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Coordinator, AGO



Both Images: Yu Gu, *Interior Migrations*, 2017, in *Public: Land and Body*, September 16-17, 2017. Black Creek Community Farm farmhouse, Toronto.
PHOTO: FATIN CHOWDHURY



Primary
Colours:
Preparing
a New
Generation

A recent gathering conducted by *Primary Colours* on Lekwungen Territory, Victoria, BC, gathered various artists; Indigenous artists, Black artists, artists of colour and artists of settler heritage to discuss shared histories of colonialism, race and convention in the arts. This gathering acted as a platform of investigation into exclusionary power dynamics, exploring the constructs of inclusivity, building collective memory and offering tools to those attending, who represented all generations of cultural leaders from diverse and marginalized communities locally, nationally and internationally. Explorations of privilege, abuse, control and ways to circumvent those hazards within institutionalized models served as tools handed from one generation of cultural leaders to the next.

Primary Colours is a major Canada-wide initiative taking form as a multidisciplinary series of actions. The actions, spanning from 2016 to 2018, place Indigenous art practices at the centre of the Canadian art system and assert that art practices by people of colour play critical roles within any system that imagines Canada's potential futures.

The *Primary Colours* gathering hosted approximately 90 invited participants, in addition to many coordinators, technicians, curators and various partnering representatives including governmental and foundation representatives. The gathering engaged process-based methodology to explore contemporary issues raised by Black Lives Matter, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Islamophobia, unsettling settlers and the strange occurrence of Canada 150 celebrations as a way of framing critiques of nationhood and cultural policy.

Chris Creighton-Kelly and France Trépanier led the *Primary Colours* conversations, both embodying a volume of experience within their individual and combined careers dealing with rights, culture and social justice through making. Chris Creighton-Kelly was born in the United Kingdom, of South Asian and British heritage, while France Trépanier is of Kanien'kéha:ka and French ancestry. Both are interdisciplinary artists and writers who work within critical curatorial, community-driven and research-based circles locally and internationally. Their work recognizes and values different bodies of knowledge, making steady progress towards understanding intrinsically, respecting protocols, honouring processes of collaboration and developing trust through transparency.

The four-day gathering continuously challenged the expected "conference" format, making consistent efforts to consider alternative methodologies, including ones set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and practices rooted around the world. This meant that there would be no keynotes or formalized panel discussions but instead attempts were made to facilitate circles, sharing and informal conversations.

Primary Colours' breakout sessions empowered artists and curators to actively engage in sharing their stories and practices, opening dialogues for constructive criticism to take place between peers. These conversations led to highly theoretical critiques of colonial institutions and inevitably overarching colonial environments as the established "norms" in which we all exist. Considerations of transformation and change were ever-present, leading to functional recommendations on how actual change could occur. One breakout session entitled "Engaging the Institution" with Tom Hill and Aruna Srivastava brought a group through several different organizations' histories of transformation over the past 40 years. In each instance, the changes referenced were hard earned and required a great amount of self-sacrifice, but each also effectively became the foundation for new practices at institutions today. In many ways the groundwork set forward by figures such as Tom Hill or Louise Profeit LeBlanc, also present, supported the current climate at the Canada Council for the Arts and the creation of the new Creating Knowing and Sharing department. This gave the circle of people involved a higher level of firsthand knowledge towards leading institutional change and transferring generational knowledge to new leaders to continue advancing an agenda of transformation within the current models of Canadian cultural policy. An interdisciplinary focus has been an important curatorial strategy for many diverse cultural workers creating intergenerational dialogues that ultimately critique institutions to ensure privilege and power remain accountable.

Central to the gathering, the exhibition *Deconstructing Comfort* opened at Open Space, an artist-run centre in downtown Victoria. This exhibition was an interdisciplinary presentation of seven contemporary Indigenous artists and artists of colour, including Jamelie Hassan, Syrus Marcus Ware, Lisa Myers, Nadia Myre, Haruko Okano, Philip Kevin Paul and Léuli Māzyār Luna'ī Eshrāghī. *Deconstructing Comfort* was curated by Michelle Jacques, Doug Jarvis and France Trépanier, and all of artists and curators in the exhibition also contributed to the *Primary Colours* gathering.

Other issues that both *Primary Colours* and *Deconstructing Comfort* attempted to address were the constructs of "decolonization" and "indigenization" within Canada. Although many Canadians use these terms interchangeably, and at times they can be used to describe the same action, it is absolutely necessary to emphasize their difference. Wikipedia describes "indigenization" as "the act of making something more native; transformation of some service, idea, etc. to suit a local culture, especially through the use of more Indigenous people in administration, employment, etc." Wikipedia is referencing the action from a governmental standpoint and what it does not acknowledge, in this definition, is that this act also means the transfer of power to those Indigenous people, not just in administration, but in governance, management and implementation on all levels. The amount that an organization, institution or government becomes Indigenized is self-determined but often leads to a heightened state of communication between both parties, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Decolonization is the general act of undoing colonialism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "decolonization" as "the withdrawal from its colonies of a colonial power," meaning when a nation has established and maintained domination over dependent territories or people, the people affected carry the domination and subsequent withdrawal with them. The act of decolonization can

be organizationally driven or done on a personal level by dismantling preconceived notions left behind by colonization. It can also be the abandonment of one methodology to embrace another, less colonial way of life. It is not necessarily anchored to an Indigenous body as decolonizing oneself can be an act without Indigenous influence. This is also where many people start confusing the terms “indigenization” and “decolonization.” For a non-Indigenous person, the act of following Indigenous modes of being can be an act of decolonization but it is not an act of indigenization, as you can never change your blood or heritage. Indigenous people need to commit to decolonization as well but decolonization is unique to each individual colonized experience and the response differs each time.

Facilitating modes of communication between cultures is at the core of *Primary Colours* and the *Deconstructing Comfort* exhibition. It cannot be epitomized more than in the actions of Léuli Māzyār Luna’i Eshrāghi, who describes himself as coming from Sāmoan, Persian, German and Chinese ancestries and living as an uninvited guest in unceded Kulin Nation territory. Léuli describes his practice as: “Son travail est axé sur le renouveau cérémonial-politique, les langues, les avenir incorporés, et les indigénités locales et diasporiques. His work centres on ceremonial-political renewal, languages, embodied futures, diasporic and local indigenities.” Language is a vast part of Léuli’s artistic practice and life, and in the work that was part of *Deconstructing Comfort* entitled *tagatanu’u*, which means “people of the land / country / village / Indigenous.” In the piece, Léuli speaks in Sāmoan, Hawaiian, Tāltan, Woi Wurrung, Secwepemc, French and English as he emphasizes nuts, medicines and exoticised bodies as commodities simultaneously crushed by missionary body, spirit, sex-shaming and the extraction of labour into tourism, military, security, nuclear testing and plantations. During the performance, he immerses his body in a tub full of water, flowers and nuts in a way that is currently taboo in Sāmoan and other Indigenous cultures, to be in his body in a way that has power over intergenerational trauma and violence.

When gatherings take place – gatherings specifically focused on marginalized groups engaging with one another – there is a fear that the act of the gathering marginalizes those represented further; even the perceived action of segregation can cause further isolation. This is why *Primary Colours* ensured that many of the major stakeholders in the arts were present to witness the gathering, including the Musagetes Foundation, Department of Canadian Heritage, Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity, BC Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. The presence of these foundations and government agencies at the gathering ensures accountability in the large-scale recommendations for change being made. Those in power often wait until forced to respond either out of distraction, privilege or comfort, but should always feel accountable to the public. Challenging entrenched cultural policies, *Primary Colours* brought people together to address the urgent need for re-imagined Canadian art systems formed through the collective efforts of cultural leaders in many communities. Assembling this group of thinkers, advocates and activists allowed for an update of the 30+ year conversation that has taken place regarding race, ethnicity, colonialism and diversity in the arts. The resulting intersecting discourses between the many groups represented created consensus in terminology and a new context of expectations for changes in Canada’s future cultural policy.

Representation is never easy when examining the volume of publicly identified groups that are considered to be marginalized people. The idea that any individual can represent an entire population is laughable but making attempts to include many voices, with each bringing their own culture, heritage and perspective, is an act of cultural pluralism that enables relatively successful consensus building related between cultures, especially under the shadow of existing systemic frameworks in Canada. Discussions between marginalized groups outside of the presence of the dominantly “white” majority of arts administrators and government agents often takes on a completely different tone. Conversations that would not have the same critical commentary become heavily analysed as activists within social justice causes begin to share notes and point out areas where improvements could have been made. This also leads to conversations around issues of appropriation between marginalized groups and how all groups operating within the inherently white Canadian art system are inevitably damaged and cause damage to each other through that power.

Our relationships are messy and our identities are complicated but *Primary Colours* focuses our energies into collective actions. Bringing us all together allows us to find ways to empower one another through acts of collaboration and honest effort towards mutually beneficial goals for all. This also extends to those who may not consider themselves to be part of a marginalized group. Everyone needs to understand that these conversations discuss all people, and that major decisions about the climate of the arts and potential futures for Canada are taking place. This representation is not about displaying the “other” or allowing a spotlight to be shared with the less fortunate. The conversations that have taken place deal with the transfer of power from the existing infrastructures to new leaders. Major paradigm shifts are on the horizon, abandoning the notion of control and beginning leadership through stewardship. They ask us to contextualize language instead of creating new systems of complexity. They allow people to choose how they are identified and how they are discussed. These shifts ask that “empowerment” only be used as a term when power is being maintained or shared and that the “transfer of power” be considered for some situations. And such situations will become more pressing as these new leaders explore how they plan to enact change.

Clayton Windatt is a Métis multi-artist, curator, writer and filmmaker. His work has been featured in the Toronto International Film Festival, ImagineNATIVE and various art spaces across Canada. He is a writer for *Muskrat Magazine* and the Executive Director of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective.



Both Images: Léuli Mäzyār Luna'i Eshrāghi, *tagatanu'u*, 2017. PHOTO: CLAYTON WINDATT

In the performance, Léuli speaks in Sāmoan, Hawaiian, Tahtan, Woi Wurrung, Secwepemc, French and English to criticize commodified nuts, medicines and exoticised bodies that have simultaneously been crushed by missionary body-, spirit-, sex-shaming and the extraction of labour into tourism, military security, nuclear testing and plantations. He purposefully immerses his body in water, flowers and nuts in a way that is currently taboo in Sāmoan

and other Indigenous cultures, to be in his body in a way that has power over intergenerational trauma and violence. This work has been developed in Honolulu, Kelowna, Narrm/Melbourne with Rosanna Raymond, Paradise Cove collective, Ricky Tagaban, Bryan Kuwada, Peter Morin, Tania Willard, Sone Luna'i Eshraghi, Yara El-Ghadban, Louis-Karl Sioui-Picard, Angela Tiattia, Tyson Campbell and Julia Packard.



Learning from the Land: BUSH gallery @dechintau

Dechinta Centre for Research
and Learning/Bush University
<http://dechinta.ca>

This is a site/ation of Denendeh lands on BUSH gallery minds.

Bush University reaches us, at BUSH gallery, as a twin spirit.
Together these two entities reimagine the ancient tools
created for our use by ancestors.
This reimagining enables. This reimagining shapes our shared
futures.

We look to the land to support our practice. A space of
possibility and risk. This bringing our current experience
of learning from western institutions to/back on the land.
Practicing this art on the land. We honour our original
makers/thinkers. The history of innovation, often referred to
as survival, continues to transform our realities. This keeps
us connected to future ancestors. It is something beyond
colonial and decolonial.



willardart
Blachford Lake Lo... Following

willardart Reflecting
#leannebetamosakesimpson and
@settlahcolloquial scraping whitefish scales-
lessons we, BUSH gallery, are learning in
witnessing protocols of territorial land
acknowledgment @dechintau
#bushuniversity through the eyes and
Instagram of #BUSHgallery, a kind of
#sitation offered in advance of the BUSH
gallery guest edited issue of @cmagazineart
with @peter.morin.morin

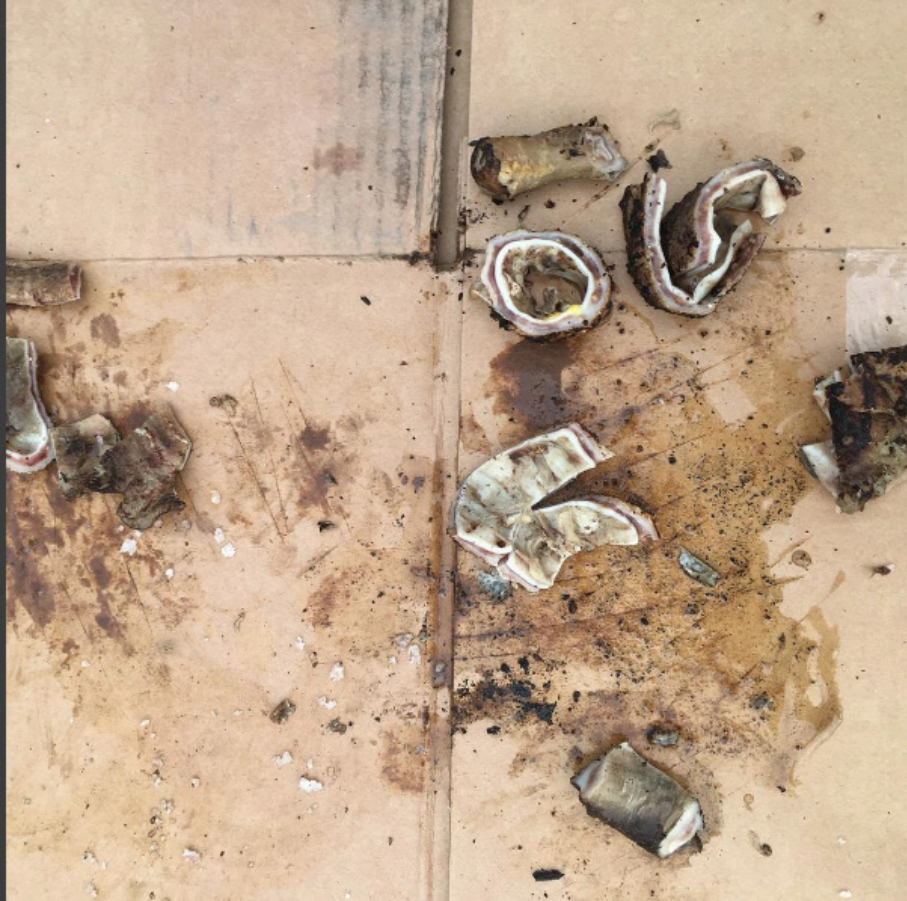
50 likes
OCTOBER 21
Add a comment... ...



willardart Following

willardart Professor and elder Paul
Mckenzie @dechintabushu showing us his
wolverine mitts--boom #BUSHgallery
#sitation

94 likes
OCTOBER 22
Add a comment... ...



willardart

Following

willardart And not to mention all the beautiful food from the land--gifts and rights excercised @dechintau #BUSHgallery was honoured to have this experience #sitation on this trout stomach roasted over a fire presented with Hawaiian salt from @kehindewiley @noiau and others in denendeh homelands.



21 likes

OCTOBER 21

Add a comment...



willardart

Following

willardart Labrador tea, focuses on visiting with the professors, family and participants of @dechintau #BUSHgallery remembers these beautiful moments at #bushuniversity with these #sitation --z



80 likes

OCTOBER 21

Add a comment...





willardart

Following

willardart @emmarosefeltes cyanotype printing in the sun on denendeh land with black duck wing and stones. Small gestures of respect from #BUSHgallery for the work of @dechintau #bushuniversity #sitation



52 likes

OCTOBER 21

Add a comment...



willardart

Following

willardart Inside out smoking fish tipi @dechintau #BUSHgallery views #sitation



91 likes

OCTOBER 22

Add a comment...





willardart

Following

willardart Fish blood and pure wild water-
fish cutting knowledge @dechintabushu
#sitation by #BUSHgallery



17 likes

OCTOBER 22

Add a comment...



willardart

Following

willardart Close up #BUSHgallery
cyanotypes by @kealaulili and Gracie Fox
@dechintabushu in the wall tent on spruce
bough floor on Denendeh land. The one to
the left are all the bones in the head of a
trout that are attached to narrative and look
like other tools and objects-narrative shared
by professor and elder Paul Mckenzie-Gracie
who is six then selected all these bones as
they glistened in the sun for her sun print.
And @kealaulili is a skilled artist and just
nailed this one! #sitation



33 likes

OCTOBER 20

Add a comment...



Kinstillatory

Ga
ther
ing

by Karyn Recollet



Kinstillatory gathering spaces, wishful thinking through dimmed light, making meaning out of the shadows because sometimes shadow-glyphs are all that we have left as our means for time travel. Ancestors peeking through cedar, “sometimes she hears them voicing and claims that she felt a tickle from her ancestor on her back.” Her dreams I pay attention to over my own. Leaves have traces too, they have memories written in the curves, contours and veins. Their smell is like old paper, yet sweeter, and in the winter, I long for their touch. If I place this leaf on my face, will it feel like skin, like that touch that chubby cheeks long for from momma’s hands? **Her six-year-old self has become my childhood, like mine infused with hers** from the moment she came into this spatial realm. My cheeks have stretched thinner – some call them Cree cheekbones, but I think of them more as fatigue. Sometimes this plain, grass... soil... gives the feeling of a chill, and I need to put my hat on... And think of all of the hipsters back home, **those on Ishpadiinaa who fail to know the real meaning of the bones ground up in the concrete...** that this really isn’t about them. Before Jimmy Bean, there was this muskeg. Sadly my tastebuds still want that soya chai latte. This my sad truth.

So I pour this latte into my Thermos and pretend it is muskeg but everyone can smell its pretentious sweetness, and I feel so dang urban. Then I come to this space and the languages we speak are kinstillatory – ally holding space here. He says I say “space” too much, hold onto space like it is my life-blood... and that is revealing. You see space, particularly dark matter, is my jam. **And dark matter is magic;** it is that wondrous active presence that is moving, vibrating, surging... formulating, ideating, creating... You see, **I stretch these star map hides so that you can build that frame and we can create maps to tomorrow.** Align them as though they are precious bundles scrolled, flattened, stretched, tanned, scraped, revealing hidden messages that lead to how we can be together here in this space, this land... that overflows the boundaries of water, subaqueous and celestial. “All is land,” she whispers and this is somehow always enough.

These layers always remind me of the strata in rock we are supposed to know the names of in public school, but I never paid attention. I like this idea of the ephemeral, I like to think of my loving as ephemeral even though it hurts the heart – these absences, presences... this flow of back and forth... makes life sometimes quite lonesome. **If I go back to the land, they say, maybe I will feel... home, belonging... something.** And I believe them a little ‘cause I know that me and the land... maybe we don’t have that great of a connection and, if I were to be totally honest with you, this land scares the shit out of me. **If you were to drop me in the middle of land alone – any land – I would be afraid for my life.** These disappearances, these absences of Indigenous lives taken to land – that ditch, that water’s edge – these are scary places for those of us whose bodies gesture to the otherwise possibilities of alternative worldings. But please don’t forget about me. Invite me to this gathering of people in land, on land, in its underneath and overhead spaces so that I can feel safe. I need you all, and **something in me knows that when we gather, we are stronger.**

So we tag these trees with the promise of our futurities, **we sing these dark spaces into light and gather around shadow-making against deer hide as we collectively embody our love letters to the future.** Marker trees – paint – brighter colours than could have ever been possible because **these times require neon – lots of it.** And I know that you wear colours well I have seen it... all the colours all the time, you say. And sometimes I think that these are ancient future teachings on how to be in these worlds together. You teach me that... and the cedar... the images through cedar... the making, the just frick’em “do it” ethic is brave like that first night in the bush. Make that mark – tag this space – is a marker that I am here, I am present here, others might know that I am here – this shit is scary but so necessary. Ephemerality doesn’t mean erasure, it is being the most present in this moment. The tiny feet, handprints in concrete that Grampie insisted on moulding into the fire pit... a part of me will forever still be there... my heart... **my love as rupturous as I know it to be.** I have this relationship now with fractals in concrete... **as though piecing together ancestral light to acknowledge my presence in Tkaronto.** We love taking pictures and sharing them. I think this is part of fractal relationality, kinstillatory presencing in the urban spaces that we love. I bring this silver fake leather coat to the bush because **these fractals are a part of me and I need to radiate this so that the star that I can see from that Tkaronto balcony recognizes that I have moved... and that I am not alone.**

Karyn Recollet is an urban Cree visitor to Tkaronto (where the trees stand in the water), Ontario. She is faculty in the Women and Gender Studies Department, University of Toronto. Her most recent imaginings and writings invite conversations around the intersections between cultural/ critical theory, dance choreographies and Indigenous futures. Recollet is beginning to explore how constellations/star mappings provide principles for social organizing and movement building.

All Images: Karyn Recollet, image from BUSH gallery, 2014. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Sovereign Capitals

An open exhibition model that is the expression between an artist's instructions and the participants' actions.

Native Art Department International is a collaborative long-term project created and administered by Maria Hupfield and Jason Lujan. It focuses on communications platforms and art-world systems of support while at the same time functioning as emancipation from identity based artwork. It seeks to circumvent easy categorization by comprising a diverse range such as curated exhibitions, video screenings, panel talks, collective art making, and an online presence, while maintaining an undercurrent of positive progress through cooperation and non-competition.

The Limits of R

After rainy weather
Gather some soil
Allow the brush to
While it burns, s
After completion

Natural Element

Move to a safe outdoor location.
In a comfortable position close your eyes.
Breathe deeply down to your toes.
Imagine a line running through your body along your spine and out the top.
Adjust your body in proximity with a non-human living being for direct contact.
While connected and with your eyes closed listen to your surroundings for
When you are ready open your eyes.

Stakes and Flags

Materials

2+ people

roll of surveyor flagging tape

Participants stand facing each other within hand passing distance.
Pass the surveyor tape behind each individual around the circle so that the
Continue to pass the tape until it is all used.
Tie off the end.
Step back to create more space.
Continue until the tape breaks.

Imagine One Thousand Suns in the Sky

Imagine one thousand suns in the sky.

Revivalism

her, cut a rectangular, brick shaped hole into the earth.
ft brush and grass from nearby, and place it into the hole, filling it halfway
and grass to dry over a few days, then set it alight with a match.
ay the phrase, "Only fools play the fool."
of burning, abandon the hole to the elements.

of your head.
act.
several breaths.

surveyor tape forms a boundary line of connectivity in support of the unit.

THE Sunshine Eaters

CURATED BY
Lisa Deanne Smith

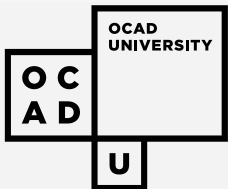
FEATURING WORK BY:

Shary Boyle
Nick Cave
Robert Holmes
Jim Holyoak
Brian Jungen
Jessica Karuhanga
Alexandra Kehayoglou
Nina Leo and Moez Surani
Tony Matelli
Alanis Obomsawin
Ebony G. Patterson
Winnie Truong



The Sunshine Eaters is an original multi-sensory exhibition that highlights how artists and designers look to plants, flowers and trees as a means to imagine and conjure hope in the face of local and global crises.

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Winnie Truong, *The Gauntlet* (detail), 2017, coloured pencils and paper collage, 38" x 46" framed. Courtesy of the artist and Erin Stump Projects. Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2015, mixed media including vintage toys and globes, wire, fabric, metal and mannequin, 104" x 50" x 44", © Nick Cave. Photo by James Prinz Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



56	Exhibition Reviews
67	Book Reviews
69	On Writing
70	Inventory
72	Artefact

Seeing You and Looking Back: Display as Land Rights and Title

by Marianne Nicolson

“WITNESS: I want the Commission to tell us the one that sold it, and they should remember that the Indians have a law among themselves just as the whitemen have – and no one is allowed to take another man’s land without first finding out who the land belongs to.”

— Kwakwaka’wakw Testimony to the
McKenna-McBride Royal Commission
(June 1914)

In June 1914, the head chiefs of the Kwakwaka’wakw Nations gathered in Alert Bay in order to testify to the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission. This commission was the culmination of decades of unresolved questions around Indigenous Land jurisdiction and the encroachment and imposition of colonial land needs and desires. It was a process that sought to dispossess Indigenous Nations of their lands and to impose severe limitations through the establishment of small “reserves.”

The photo below shows the Gigigame’ chiefs wearing all their regalia and standing inside their ceremonial house – note the remnants of the fire in the foreground. While the blankets and headdresses do indeed create a colourful and artistic display, their real meaning and importance was internal recognition of land title and rights. For instance, no chief could wear that to which he was not entitled, and the sanction was the public acceptance and validation of those rights. Each crest and image existed not only for simple display and beauty but also as a direct link to the histories telling of how each lineage came to be *in the land*. On the far left, the *kolus* headdress worn by ‘Maxwa’kutlala, Chief Johnny Scow of the Kwikwasut’inuxw, tells of his descent from the great thunderbird Udzista’lis (or,

A’udzistalaga’lis) who at the beginning of time came down at K’axadakwi (“Split-in-Two Mountain”) in Xakwikan (“Thompson Sound”). In order to affirm both ancestral rights and land rights, he would have been obligated to display these privileges publicly before the rest of the Kwakwaka’wakw, who as witnesses bore testimony to its legitimacy through the potlatch system. It is only in enacting this process that he is able to legally wear the headdress that connects to the history and place of the Kwikwasut’inuxw of whom he became head chief. This is true of all the Kwakwaka’wakw chiefs who accompany him in this photo. During the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission, these chiefs testified to their great discontent and alarm at being allocated only tiny reserves within lands that they considered theirs through great lineages established “since light first came into our world.” Mostly oblivious to their concerns, the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission carried on allocating tiny postage-stamp-sized reserves on the coast and ultimately swindling away the most valuable reserve lands for more, but less valuable, lands. They did this by recommending the removal of approximately 47,000 acres valued at \$13–15 million and the addition of 87,000 acres valued at less than \$500,000.¹

To complete the slight-of-hand transformation of Indigenous Lands into Crown Lands, the colonial authorities outlawed Kwakwaka’wakw traditional law and governance by banning the potlatch from 1893–1951. Though hard to prosecute by 1921, the Kwakwaka’wakw Indian Agent, William Hailliday, was successful in charging with an illegal offence many of the head Kwakwaka’wakw for potlatching. Those who wished to avoid jail time were given the option of giving up their regalia. With great sorrow they brought these things to Hailliday, who put them on display in the Alert Bay Community Hall and charged a quarter to people who wished to view them. For the Kwakwaka’wakw, this was a tremendous humiliation. Once sold to the major

¹ Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), “Our Homes are Bleeding” (<http://ourhomesarebleeding.ubcic.bc.ca/index.html>)

Kwakwaka’wakw Chiefs gathered for the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission, Alert Bay, 1914.
IMAGE COURTESY OF UBCIC DIGITAL ARCHIVES



museum institutions of colonial society, Halliday paid out paltry sums, thus imitating the coercive tactics of the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission in transforming that which was worth “beyond measure” to the Kwakwaka’wakw into next to nothing.

“I am returning to you cheque No.3799 for \$22.00 in favor of Abraham which he refuses to accept for his paraphernalia as he say the sum is absolutely too small for the paraphernalia he surrendered. He wants to tell you he would rather give them to you for nothing than accept \$22.00 for them.”

—Letter from Kwawkewlth Agency,
Alert Bay, BC to Department of Indian Affairs
(May 1st, 1922)

I cannot help but think of these things today when I see the great treasures of the Kwakwaka’wakw and other great nations within the great storehouses of colonization. Even today, the display maintains the illusion that these things are there to educate and illuminate the general public of our greatness. It is only with sorrow that I can see how captured they are and how trained we have become to view them as within their natural state, when the authority and relationship with land they were originally meant to express remains as disregarded and desecrated as they were in 1914 and again in 1921. I think this while knowing that the great fish runs that so sustained the Kwikwasut’inuxw since time immemorial are also desecrated and diseased and our way of life is under such threat that our young people are occupying fish farms in our territory in order to protest them while John Horgan, the new Premier of British Columbia, reiterates to us that Norwegian- and Japanese-owned fish farms “...now [generate] \$800 million in annual value...”

Marianne Nicolson (Tayagila’ogwa) is Dzawada’enuxw First Nation from Kingcome Inlet and of Scottish descent. Her artwork has been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally and she holds a PhD from the University of Victoria in Linguistics and Anthropology.

I Am

by Maureen Gruben

I am my ancestors' memory
I am a mirage of islands drifting on the Arctic ice
I am the sound of caribou hoof rattles
I am the hollow shaft of caribou hair keeping you warm
I am the caribou cow skin stretched across your drum
I am the old-timer's song
I am the red blood crystallized in snow
I am wafer-thin communion sheets of ice, melting in
your mouth
I am carved in glacier ice
I am ice in the breakup, celebrating movement
I am hanging onto polar bear's fur as we race across
the Beaufort Sea
I am the balloon in the beluga whale's stomach that
holds your berries
I am the opalescent scales glittering on your hands
I am the oil slick on your ulu
I am the rocks worn smooth by the sea
I am the blue bird nestled in a grave of snow
I am an owl perched on a driftwood log
I am the goose feathers speckled on bushes
I am sinew stitching the landscape of my culture
I am the smoke-tanned moose hide wrapped around
your feet
I am lichen and moss absorbing your steps
I am an infant learning my place

Maureen Gruben is an artist based in Victoria, BC and Tuktoyaktuk, NWT. She has most recently exhibited work in the group show *150 Acts: Art, Activism, Impact* at Art Gallery of Guelph (2017-18), and as part of *Landmarks/Reperes2017*. Her first solo show, *UNGALAQ (When Stakes Come Loose)* opened at Vancouver's grunt gallery in 2017.

Maureen Gruben, *Flight*, 2017. Beluga whale vertebrae, aluminium foil, 38 x 20 x 12 cm.
PHOTO: KYRA KORDOSKI; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



tagatavāsā

by Léuli Māzyār Luna‘i Eshrāghi

tagatanu‘u
People/s of the land/s
People/s of the country
People/s of the village/s
People/s of the culture/s
People/s of the ocean/s
tagatavāsā

Ua fuifui fa‘atasi ae sa vao ‘ese‘ese is an enduring Sāmoan expression that signifies that we have gathered together from different parts of the forest. ‘O Sā. Our clans. ‘O ‘āiga. Our families. ‘O tupuga. Our ancestors. ‘O tapuafanua. Our guardian spirits. ‘O sulī – descendants. ‘O atua ma āitu. Our kin animals and birds and plants. ‘O mauga. Our mountains. ‘O vaitafe. Our rivers. ‘O ma‘umaga. Our food gardens. ‘O matafaga. Our beaches. ‘O fale sā. Our temples. Our lands and waters shared amongst clans for the use of all, disputes and all. All this in the ancestral time of the lupe pigeon’s heyday before plantation and missionary colonial rule in the 1800s destroyed lupe pigeon numbers and our own with hunting, abduction into forced labour and blackbirding into overseas slavery, and introduced diseases decimated our numbers, all across the ocean. Before we moved offshore in vast numbers. Before our coral and fish boiled in high-temperature waters. Before nuclear testing and overfishing poisoned our primary ancestor, Vāsālaolao, sacred-far-reaching-undulating-relational-space, who cares for us yet. Before the body-, sex-, spirit-shaming of the missionaries and Eurocentric knowledge systems imported into our language, culture and outlook were unleashed to destroy us one by us, long after the original violators from Europe had passed on to the spirit world. Before we resisted and fought back. Before we re-made ourselves in our ancestors’ image for our own Indigenous diasporic and archipelagic resurgence. I know this every time I stand in our ancestral belonging, and recently when I spent a few days on a sanctuary island, Namu‘a, to the southeast of our

main island, ‘Upolu. There, debris installations wash up every day from far across the sea; there, pe‘a flying foxes, laumei turtles, pa‘a crabs and manu birds rule the land, air and sea! There, humans only spend a little time at a time, and this decentring of human-centrism is salvatory to me and my kin there. The smell of the sea on the breeze, the humidity and rain gliding off leaves in the forest, nearing creatures of the sky, remind that this is not only our home, that Earth-centred ways of knowing are active yet.

What is a city but a collection of villages? What is an aesthetic experience but a passage of moments? All lands and waters are known and inhabited by living beings, sometimes including us humans. All cities are built on still-sacred lands and waters. In unceded Kulin Nation territory, where I mainly live and work, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung clans of inner Narrm/Melbourne and their relations, the Wadawurrung, Taungwurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung clans further west and north, are in sovereign resurgence right now. Their oratory, performing and visual languages are expressed with power. The settler colonial city of Melbourne/Port Phillip was built over their territory but has not subsumed them, rather a rebalancing is afoot where their cultures, and those of other First Nations and global Indigenous cultures, are being centred in accordance with protocol and respect. The city is also Country, to amplify the concept of First Peoples in “Australia.” As Elders teach us uninvited guests in every Welcome to Country ceremony, Country will nurture you if you respect it, and if you do not harm the children of Bunjil. All of the mineral resources used to create the built environment also come from the very lands and waters we are indebted to for our lives. So, Country is really all around us.

Ninety rotations of Lā Sun and many more of goddess Māsina Moon. Indigenous matriarchy heals and binds. Ia manuia lou aso fānau, peleina Tinā matua, Nātia Fa‘ase‘e Tautua. In my ‘āiga, we call grandma, great-grandma, mum, aunty, cousin, “mum” across generations. My grandma has looked after many generations of children, nieces and nephews, from our extensive family and those needing love and a home, for decades. Every day, amongst all the affairs she is managing in our 40-member house-

Tinā matua in her daily studio, 2016.
PHOTO: LÉULI ESHRAGHI



hold (not including all of us in the diaspora), she has a cup of tea or fresh lemonade, some fruit, sets up her weaving space in the living room, primes the fala pandanus lengths, fashions scary/amazing dolls with cube heads and siapo barkcloth attire, rectangular handbags with fala squares and triangles for the trocus shells and siapo lining the inside. She shows my younger cousins how to spin the fala into a tight length to be used as a strap on the bags, my aunts and older cousins watching on and weaving their own magic. Tinā matua has created ‘afa coconut sennit and fala dresses for couture competitions in our archipelago, her creations, the models and her glowing in the local paper and in our memory. The sounds of our village, the soundtrack to Tinā matua’s daily practice: chickens scuttling along, a Tarago van slowing down behind an old rusty and faithful pickup along the village road weaving around our ancestral Mount Vaea, children screaming with glee/hurt around the open-air and closed-air houses of all our relations, the melodies of church choir practice, the water flowing (when it does) in Loimata o Apaula Creek from our ancestors to us, and the excitement of young people able to forsake duties and homework for some volleyball under the big trees before dinner.

Last December, we celebrated Tinā matua’s 90th birthday in the hall of the Papauta Girls’ School, which she attended as a young girl, just on the main road side of our village. I remember the officiating of my orator uncle, Leuli, the local pastor, the organizational prowess of my mother, Sone, and aunts Sally, Elisapeta and Sualua, the tribute songs performed by cousins living in Aotearoa and Sāmoa, the classics in our language playing on the speakers so the third age could dance a little before the bones crackle again. I remember the intense aromas of seafood, landfood, served in delicious arrangements by my chef uncle, Siasoi, and the protocol of serving the eldest to the youngest, the best pieces of meat, lobster, limu seaweed, taro, ta’amū yam going out first. The village gossip about who prepared such sumptuous take-away packs of food, so fresh and generous. (This is eternally the measure of a successful event in the islands: was the food good, generous and were you able to get extra take-away packs for those who didn’t make it to the event? You

really just want another pack, but let’s say, it’s for the ancestors, of course.) I don’t live in my village, more than half of my ‘āiga don’t, but my brothers and I did grow up there for a few years when we were much younger. Mum moved back three years ago, and this anchoring always brings a rebalancing to what’s going on in my life in Narrm. My grandma has been an artist her whole life, independent of the gallery system, supporting our expansive family relationships across lands, waters, airs, in a sovereignty that is care from the land, in a matriarchy that is love from the ancestors, in a binding of diasporic children that is making with the fruit of your labour what is denied from us in the capitalist system of our colonizers, who left but never leave our minds, spirits, bodies. The keys to our liberation are also found in the wisdom of the diaspora for all our people (more Sāmoans, like many Indigenous archipelagic peoples, do not live on our lands and waters). Tinā matua reiterates her messages to me and my cousins in Sāmoan and in English. Don’t forget me. Don’t take too long to come home, I don’t want to be buried already when you do. And the excited cackle when I respond in Sāmoan: ‘Ou te alofa ia te ‘oe, Tinā. E lē galo ‘oe, e lē galo lo tātou atunu’u.

Léuli Māzyār Luna’i Eshrāghi (Sāmoan, Persian, German, Chinese ancestries) is an uninvited guest in unceded Kulin Nation territory, and a PhD candidate at Monash University Art Design Architecture (MADA). His work centres on ceremonial-political renewal, languages, embodied futures, diasporic and local Indigeneities.

Papauta Girls School tree of ages, 2016.
PHOTO: LÉULI ESHRAGHI



Where I Learned to Weave by Meghann O'Brien

These writings are reflections on growing up in the Kwakwaka'wakw community of Alert Bay, where I also learned to weave. After we moved away, I returned each summer with my family for the commercial salmon fishing season. One year (2007) I brought around a typewriter with me everywhere I went, including on the fishing boat and into the forest. When I look back on the writing from this time I value it so much. Because, I feel like at that time I was the kind of person that the weaving wanted to give itself to, or trusted itself with.

I feel like the weaving took root in my heart as a worthy place to flourish in, and lately I find myself wondering if I'm still that person. It offered so much, but to translate this skill from another time into the capitalist structure we exist within poses challenges. The weaving has been my hiding place, quiet, private, intimate, the place where I can love the way that I want to, and that is why I treat the tradition with such respect. I wouldn't go back and take out my original weavings from that time to make them perfect aesthetically. They carry the same weight if not heavier than current work, even if the exterior expression is more refined now. In the same way I wouldn't want to heavily edit these words. They stand as are. I see them now as in protest to the English language and the world it evokes into being and its lack. I may be abiding to tradition in my weavings, but the English language is something that was violently imposed on my people. I take free reign in assembling the colonizers' language in any way I feel fit to do so.

19.

There are such gifts of the past so valuable, that they must be repeated. There is the weaving of cedar bark and I wish with my heart to learn of it. To learn such means of practicality. I desire to wear the love of my ancestry as a headband on my head that comes down to a basket who was

woven for berries. I have a certain desire to sleep after this. I have a desire to compose boxes of bent maple or cedar for the storage of herbs and weeds from the sea and berry cakes of all kinds. And things such as dinosaurs and guts from the sensitive type of man who loves. The kinds of love offered are terrible. I despise the love as it exists between humans on this planet. I want love like it is shared between roots and the soil.

21. yesterday was the 5th July, Thursday. I worked on the net and made patches with a needle and tar twine, and Billy was drunk and had scabies. At his house Jared was cutting the lawn for beer money, and I was gathering clover; only especially ones who were very colorful. When the time had come for finishing the net for the day, Billy and I went to Gator Gardens swamp and he showed me the means of stripping cedar bark from trees and binding it for carrying. His son Kyle was four now, he stamped his feet to that certain rhythm from the log drum at the big house and started singing in Kwakwala. Billy said he was praying and singing songs for the trees while I took it's bark.

Then I went and gathered more roses petals. I seen Dorothy Daniels, and I collected salmon berries, and the sun had a beautiful time, I think, in the sky. It was evening now, I was by myself, we were together on the other side of the island that is more empty than the other. This side of the island is looser, it looks at Malcom Island, although they do not have eyes. It was so lovely last night, just so

Haida baskets.
PHOTO: MEGHANN O'BRIEN



. It is so lovely here tonight, I've spent this evening by myself, it was nice out and the clouds were out too. My salmon berry cakes were ready when I returned, so I took them out and put new ones in.

Then that night I am stripping the outer bark from the inner bark from the cedar trees bark. Is it that you are weeping for the naked flesh of the living tree unclothed? It was dark by then, there was cakes to be made from salmon berries, and there was a pot of honey wine to be made. And rose petals to be laid down then, down in the spare bunk. My dad said the roses made them smell good like roses. I felt pleased at this yesterday.

24. July 7th, 2007.

Today I went to Jeanette's parents house and picked some of their raspberries. On the way down I found my way to some salmon berry bushes and was gathering a few of those when they came alive, the whole bushes when I looked into them they just began to be bursting with berries. And I picked them, then some leaves would rustle or shift and then and then a whole new bunch of perfectly ripe huge berries would jump out, so shiny. They were so shiny, and dark and soft, . I made my way into the thicket. It was so thick, so old. There was an opening, and the prickles were surprisingly prickly. There was so much old dead twigs under there, it looked really excellent. Then there was the main trunk of the bushes, a few of them, they were so awesome. When the salmon berry bushes get older, their trunks get thicker. There is an outer skin like paper or bark that forms, like an arbutus tree. And it grows sideways, shooting up shoots straight up in the sky, so from the outside it looks like the bushes just grow straight up. But they don't they grow very sideways with the shoots straight up. They make it look like the bushes grow up, not sideways. It was so thick with skinny dead twigs all in the underbrush. There were some dead looking leaves, slightly brown colored and crinkly like foil paper, and then these berries hanging everywhere, like being inside a salmon berry Christmas tree. It felt like

I was inside the heart of the salmon berry. It felt like the salmon berries had come from the centre of the earth, and that it was the energy from the centre of the earth, the heart of the salmon berry spirit. The thicket felt and looked like it was really old, it was magnificent and I miss it already. It reminded me of the thicket that was beside the house I grew up in. That thicket we used to play in it every day when we were little. Me and Kimberley and Andy Wagald. He was my first friend. I think me and him played together more in there than Kimberley and I did, or more than he and I and she.

Aug 5th, finally I have made it to the forest near the beach with my typewriter. I find myself fond of small lilies in this step forest, an interest towards the way they grow, their beauty makes it hard to stand being alive, they have a pattern, flowing, it is flowing, the way similar to how the heart would flow, if it could contain love.

there are straw grasses too, green ones, the typewriter sitting on quite a hill, this hilly forest with an ocean underneath it, and rocks who are larger than they appear from a distance.

There is devil's club, i was sifting about the lillies and green grasses when i got a small blue jay's feather, how lovely, i like the devils clubs presence, and the ferns, who have their powdery seeds all lined in a row on their undersides, fidgeting, this is a lovely place to be. My basket looks good here, too, I went for a brief walk up the slope. A slug has made friends with the typewriter while I was absent. Then I sang songs to the devil's club and i watched it in the breeze. Then the sun went behind the mountain, and I decided to walk to the rocks down the slope to go back to the boat to sleep or skip rope. I keep fear about the kinds of beauty that wakes us. I have finally made it to the top of the boat at dusk with my typewriter. And now, look, I've nothing to say. Except for how the mosquitos are out and perhaps its time to hide under sleeping bag covers for the night.

Meghann O'Brien is a weaver descended from the Haida and Kwakwaka'wakw nations. She lives and works in Vancouver, BC.

The Labrador Interpretation Centre by Mark Igloliorte and Peter Morin

On October 13, 2017, Mark Igloliorte and I met to talk about art, communities, art spaces and land. I asked him to share with me a place in his community where he experienced art. The following is a brief transcription of what we discussed.

— Peter Morin

PETER MORIN: Tell me what you wanted to write about; tell me about what this place is.

MARK IGLOLIORTE: I'm talking about the Labrador Interpretation Centre. There is a website with a few images. It's <https://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/plan-and-book/attractions/11303055>. On the website, you can see the space. There is a kayak in the middle. Actually, this is really good because I can use it to jog my memory about the Centre for our conversation.

PM: You were saying you worked there?

MI: I worked there for at least two seasons when Navarana and I moved back to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. We were off in the summer from our studies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. The thing about the Centre is that I was unaware of it at first. I did not live in Labrador at the time, so I missed when this building was built and when it opened. Before I started [at the Labrador Interpretation Centre], I was working at an airline call centre, booking tickets over the phone. And I really didn't like it because you would sit in a room waiting for the phone to ring and people would call in and complain. I was not happy with it. So, Navi was like, in so many words, "You should find another job. If you're not happy with it." I asked around and found out there was some potential for some summer work at the Labrador Interpretation Centre in North West River, which is a small town of just over 500 people and about a half an hour's drive from Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I remember thinking on my drive

over that I didn't know what to expect to find at the Centre at all.

PM: Tell me about the first time you went into the museum.

MI: I met Mina Campbell when I first arrived. She has been the curator at the Centre nearly 20 years now. She took me through the building, walking through the temporary exhibit space – which rotates a few times a year – into the large permanent interpretation space, which features exhibits from the Indigenous people that live in Labrador as well as a settler exhibit. It is a mix between archaeology, anthropological objects, dioramas, recreated scenes and commissioned artworks. In Labrador, there are several groups of Indigenous people that live there, which includes the Innu from two settled communities – Sheshatshiu and Natuashish – and the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut. Each of these groups of people have one significant commissioned artwork in the exhibition space.

PM: In the space, all of those people are represented?

MI: Yes. And it is worth mentioning the significance of having the space located in North West River. I heard that the original intention was for the museum to be in Happy Valley-Goose Bay where there is a larger population. The cool thing about having it in North West River is that there are beneficiaries of Nunatsiavut, as well as other Indigenous people, in town and it is directly across the river from the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation.

PM: It is interesting to think about that exhibition space, and its story, where people actively use the space and are happy with how their story is represented.

MI: Exactly. The building is, in a number of ways, also a community resource space. For example, when I used to teach art at the school in Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, there would be days when the students would come over to check out the exhibits and do activities in the Centre. Same thing for the

Exhibition documentation from the Labrador Interpretation Centre, 2017.
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LABRADOR INTERPRETATION CENTRE



students from North West River and Goose Bay.

PM: So, folks come there and activate the collections?

MI: Absolutely. It was my job to take people on tours through the exhibitions, but the groups were often small and it would be more of a conversation as we talked about the exhibits and the people of Labrador.

I also loved the long amounts of time where I was on my own and I would read copies of *Them Days* magazine. It's really well done magazine of the history and culture of Labrador published in the area. In addition to the English material, there would be articles and interviews in the Indigenous languages of Inuktitut and Innu-aimun. It was a good resource for me to read up on the history of Labrador and the people of Labrador. In recent years, the exhibits at the Centre have had text and audio in the Indigenous languages added to the permanent exhibit.

There was also a history book, *As Near To Heaven By Sea: A History Of Newfoundland And Labrador* by Kevin Major, who is a well-known author in Newfoundland. I reread this book while I was at work. Major's novels are also read by students in Newfoundland and Labrador. His history book had a significant portion related to Labrador. It was always good to have the events in mind, to talk about it when people would come in. Often, I would get further perspective from the people I was speaking with.

PM: Thinking about 20-year-old [at the time] Mark, artist, thinking about this heritage, these ancestors, what did it feel like to be in that space with this old artwork?

MI: For me, perhaps the most significant was being around an original kayak from the coast of Labrador. I heard that it had been in storage in the attic of a church. There were two of them. The second one is on exhibit in Hopedale, where my father used to live. The kayak has become really significant to me and my practice. A few years after working at the Centre, I painted a series [called] *Kayait* (the Inuktitut plural of kayak), which were based on a series of early photographs of kayakers from Okak. Now that I live in Vancouver, I purchased a secondhand

ocean kayak, which Noah Noggasak, a kayak instructor from Nain, Nunatsiavut, recommended for me. I have been learning how to get around and also learning the "Eskimo Roll," where I can flip myself in a capsized kayak to sitting upright again.

Being around an original kayak, and also telling stories of how people would hunt from them, taught me to value this Inuit vehicle. I especially enjoyed talking about the innovation of the avataq. A hunter would have the avataq – an inflated hide – attached to the harpoon head by a line. When the seal was struck, it would swim off – yet the avataq would be attached. The resistance of inflated hide to being submerged would tire out the seal and allow the hunter to retrieve the animal. It was a great opportunity to talk about Indigenous technology and innovation. The whole exhibit, the pre-colonial vehicle and innovative hunting tools right in the middle of the room – it was meaningful to me to be around that.

PM: There is something magical there and it's nice that you got to be surrounded by that history.

MI: Definitely. Another of my favourite objects was this Innu stick that was used for painting. It was a stick with a flat end, with areas carved out where thin strips of wood would come into contact with the material. There was also a palette. And the story that I heard, and that I would retell, is that the Innu would use fish roe – fish eggs – in order to bind pigment to paint their clothing. And what I thought was so awesome about that Innu innovation is that there is this Western parallel history of painting with egg tempera for binding pigment to make paint. The Innu people independently developed a local binding medium to make paint. As a painter, I always appreciated those objects.

Mark Igloliorte is an Inuit Artist from Nunatsiavut, Labrador. He is an interdisciplinary artist who works primarily in painting and drawing. He has exhibited paintings both across Canada and internationally. Currently some of his paintings are touring in the exhibition *SakKijäjuk - Fine Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut, Sanaguagatsiat Mitsugaillu Nunatsavummit*. In addition to his studio work, Igloliorte has completed performances like *Kamutik Dogs* – at iNuit Blanche (St. John's, NL, 2016) and *Art in the Open* (Charlottetown, PEI, 2014) where he drew portraits of domestic dogs tied to a Kamutik (dog team sled). Igloliorte lives in Vancouver, where he continues his artistic practice and teaches at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

Natural fibre shopping with Renee “Wasson” Dillard at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, and nearby bush, M’Chigeeng First Nation, Summer 2016 by Crystal Migwans

“Let’s go shopping, *kwe*,” Wasson jokes as we pull up to the densely treed lot where M’Chigeeng First Nation’s new grocery store is slated to be built in the coming months. Seeing as the land is scheduled to be cleared, we figure no one will mind if we snap up some choice natural fibres.

On our shopping list today is basswood bark, though Wasson always keeps an eye out for healthy black ash – an increasing rarity in Michigan now that the invasive emerald ash borer (EAB) beetle has destroyed tens of millions of its ash trees. We spent about an hour driving around the rez before coming to this spot, Wasson hanging out the passenger side window to scan the canopies. There are still several good stands in the swampier areas, she notes happily. The EAB hasn’t yet left its mark on Manitoulin Island.

We get out of the car and she leans on the hood of her rez beater and calls out choice bits of wisdom while I navigate through the underbrush towards some promising-looking trees. It’s very uneven ground, and she’s not as mobile as she used to be, so the harvesting is delegated to me, the young-ish helper. The Elder guides the Youth on the right path.

“You’re looking for a smooth-bodied young man,” she calls.

“Oh my god.” She can’t see me blushing from there, at least.

I come to a narrow tree growing straight and relatively knot-free out of the swampy soil, reaching high above me before branching out. Its trunk is grey and, yes, smooth. It is about as wide around as my two hands and its canopy is full and green far above me. A young black ash.

“How do I tell if it’s a male?” I call back.

“You check under his breechclout. No, no, I’m kidding, *kwe*. You can get a female ash if you prefer. Kidding! Just bring me a branch.”

I dutifully break off one of the compound leaves and bring it back to the car. She points out the way that the leaves are paired, the blade coming right down to meet the stem with no stalk, and the “chocolate chips” nestled at each branching.

“That’s a black ash all right,” she smiles. “Looks healthy. Did you see any holes in the bark? New branches shooting out low on the trunk?” I respond in the negative to both questions, and she nods. It’s a good tree. A little small to harvest yet, so, if this were one of her black ash stands back home, she’d remember to come back for this one. She’s just showing me how to identify it today, though.

Renee “Wasson” Dillard is – or was – a black ash basketmaker. Until recently, the Anishinaabe grandmother made her living harvesting, processing and weaving black ash into beautiful basketry. Today, she has expanded her repertoire to twined bags, lodge mats and more. As her reputation grew across Michigan and beyond, she began supplementing her income by running workshops at museums, schools and cultural centres.

Renee “Wasson” Dillard demonstrates how to strip the basswood bast from the outer bark.
PHOTO: TANIA WILLARD



It's a demanding life. But Wasson is something of a powerhouse: charismatic, warm and determined, she has gained herself many dedicated collectors and students. Not only has she made herself a living from these old, land-based practices, but through her advocacy and educational work she has also made it possible for others to do the same. What she hopes to pass on is the capacity for Anishinaabeg to have a continuing relationship with the land even under colonial conditions. Change is coming, but that's nothing new for us.

Climate change and a new invader are altering the landscape. The emerald ash borer was first reported in southern Michigan in 2002, and has since killed tens of millions of ash trees in that state alone. It is an aggressive invader, killing nearly 100 per cent of infected stands within six years. And with no natural predators in North America, it is spreading unchecked. Along with habitat destruction caused by climate change, the EAB looks set to destroy black ash – and, with it, the practice of black ash basketry. Black ash is uniquely suited to basketry: as its growth rings lack connecting fibres between layers so pounding along the length of a fresh tree will separate the rings into splints. Even if there was another tree with these properties, the black ash is not just a convenient resource for Wasson and other artists, it's also a partner in living. Like family.

Even with the death of a family member on the horizon, Wasson is not resigned to grief. There are many other Anishinaabe fibre traditions, though the lines of transmission for many of these old art forms have been severed under colonialism. Woven lodge mats of cattail, bulrush and white cedar; twined bags of basswood, nettle and milkweed. Wasson has spent the 15 years since the EAB invasion began researching these traditions and sharing her new skills.

On our own little teaching tour this summer day, we move on from black ash to other fibres that Anishinaabeg have historically worked.

I head in the other direction, toward a stand of trees with a darker canopy. Wasson has directed me to look for another young tree with grey bark, this one with broad, spade-shaped leaves as big as my hand. As instructed, I cut a deep slice across the base of the tree and slip my hand under the bark. It comes

away in a long strip all the way up the tree. We sit in her car and she shows me how to split the bast (inner bark) from the outer bark.

Later on, we take others from her week-long workshop at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation (OCF) to do the tour as well. I get to act like I know what I'm talking about as I lead the way back into the bush and show off the two trees we've identified. I can tell Wasson is laughing at me from the car, but one of the lessons here is that laughter is instructive. The other lesson is that you don't know something until you can teach it to someone else.

"To keep it, you have to give it away," she admonishes us.

When she can, Wasson likes to begin instructing students in the bush so they become acquainted with their materials from start to finish. This is about mastery of the medium, certainly, but as we walk around the bush and find ourselves getting to know the different trees (scoping out those smooth young men), it becomes clear that it's also about becoming acquainted with the land itself. Belonging there.

Anishinaabe weaving is a practice of sovereignty as much as survival.

Crystal Migwans is an Anishinaabekwe of Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation, and the place she calls home is the Mahzenahzing River. A multimedia artist by training, Crystal's path turned to research and community arts during her time as Curatorial Assistant at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in M'Chigeeng, Canada. She is currently in the Art History PhD program at Columbia University in New York, where she looks for echoes of an Anishinaabe artistic legacy in the archives of the colonial metropolis.

Storymancy by Peter Morin and Tania Willard

Instructions for BUSH gallery *Storymancy*:

Indigenous knowledges intervene into western systems through spirit and intention. It is brave holding to – being accountable to – the deep histories of Indigenous knowledge(s). BUSH gallery *Storymancy* reorganizes our experiences with “the book.” *Storymancy* is a chance to imagine a new way of opening up the complexities connected to knowledge and knowing. There is no easy way forward. BUSH gallery *Storymancy* is a River moving through english words and pages.

To practice BUSH gallery *Storymancy*:

1. You find the “right” book. Hold this book in both hands. Calm yourself. Calm your mind. Create harmonic resonance with your body, the book and the land.
2. Next, locate your question. Ask this question out loud with intention. For example: “Vine Deloria, Jr., Vine Deloria, Jr., Vine Deloria, Jr., will we continue to build knowledges?” Close your eyes while asking the question.
3. Leaf through the pages of the book with your eyes closed. Stop on the page that feels right. Move your hand over the page. Stop your hand where it feels right on the page. And read the word, sentence, paragraph to infer meaning or find your answer.

BUSH gallery *Storymancy* works anywhere but works best on your traditional territory. Consider that traditional territories also include urban rezs, the friendship centre, your aunty’s house, your uncle’s house, your mom’s house, your dad’s house, your grandma and grandpa’s house.

Storymancy is one method of decoding Indigenous knowledge; it is a liberation for Indigenous histories to move outside of western structures. This use of BUSH gallery *Storymancy* remains a radical activation of body, land and future ancestors. These answers are meant to be interpreted. They are not endings but begin-

nings to increase your knowledge. Knowing this, we decided to use this method to read and review the following books:

The Days of Augusta edited by Jeane E. Speare; photography by Robert Keziere (J.J. Douglas, 1973)

Virgin Bones: Belayak Kcikug’nas’ikn’ug by Shirley Bear (McGilligan Books, 2006)

Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction edited by Grace L. Dillon (University of Arizona Press, 2012)

Smoke Signals: A Screen Play by Sherman Alexie (Hyperion, 1998)

The Only Good Indian: Essays by Canadian Indians edited by Waubageshig, *Citizens Plus, The Indian Chiefs of Alberta (known as the Red Paper)* p 5-39 (New Press, 1970)

Secwepemc – English Dictionary, Version 3 by the Elder’s Language Committee and Language Advisory Committee (Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, 2001)

Basic Tabltan Conversation Lessons (Tahltan Central Council, 1992)

We asked these books, these containers of knowledge, kinship and ancestry, the following questions:

What is Indigenous art?

We asked this to *The Days of Augusta* and Augusta said (page 37):

“They didn’t have a ceremony when a man became a chief, Anyway, I don’t remember a ceremony. I guess they had their times, yes, before my time, I guess they did.

We had a Priest... We had a priest who talked Shuswap. He was an early, early priest, yes. He died from appendicitis, Or old age, or something. Anyhow, he died.”

The BUSH wants to learn from Augusta that art is sometimes like a priest, a priest who speaks your language but ultimately that priest will die. I guess art also has its times and maybe some ceremonies, but we ultimately can only carry our own knowledge of those leaders, ceremonies and spirits that we are in relationship to. This is how we think about Augusta’s answers to our question.

How should we remember the ancestor artists?

We asked this to Simon Ortiz’s “Men on the Moon” (page 92) in *Walking the Clouds*:

“Later the spaceship reached the moon. Amarocho was with his grandfather Faustin. They watched a TV Replay of two men walking on the moon. So that’s the men on the moon, Faustin said. Yes, Nana, there they are, Amarocho said. There were two men inside of heavy clothing, and they carried Heavy looking equipment.”

The idea of the moon and us is both an historical moment, an ancient story and a future possibility. Simultaneously existing in all times, we position this as a continuum of how ancestor artists inform our work at BUSH gallery. The heaviness is history and accountability.

Is there a difference between Indigenous art and Indigenous land?

We asked this to *Virgin Bones: Belayak Kcikug’nas’ikn’ug* (page 105):

“It is my belief that the first and final responsibility for all creation is the healing; the healing of the earth without whom we will not survive; and the healing of our attitudes toward one and other, because without our love and respect, our descendants will not survive.”

I mean Shirley Bear just said it all, I am not sure I can tell you any more.

Moving by Michael Turner

...when the narrated identity is unbearable, when the boundary between subject and object is shaken, and when even the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain, the narrative is what is challenged first.¹

— Julia Kristeva

I am working through my books, pulling titles from shelves, reading first lines.

“We tell ourselves stories in order to live,”² writes American novelist, journalist and memoirist Joan Didion at the beginning of her highly regarded essay collection *The White Album* (1979).

I always get a tingle when I read that line – its economy, its assurance – but I never settle for it. For me, living is less about telling stories than exploring the narratives that order the events of our stories, our lives and how these narratives determine how we experience subsequent events.

Didion’s opening paragraph ends like this:

“We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the ideas with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.”

Didion does not discuss the ideological forces behind this narrative line, nor does she elaborate on her “we,” though she admits that between 1966 and 1971 she “began to doubt the premises of all the stories I had ever told myself, a common condition but one I found troubling.”

Is that doubt really so “common” (any more)? Is the premise of a story constituent of a larger, more insidious narrative?

“To be an Indian is to be a man, with all a man’s needs and abilities,”³ writes Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien at the opening of his department’s *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*, also known as the “White Paper.”

What is the premise of a story that begins with a definition of a sovereign people (based on “needs and abilities”) as supplied by those who have robbed a sovereign people of their land?

“Indians are like the weather,”⁴ writes Standing Rock Sioux writer and activist Vine Deloria Jr. at the opening of *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969).

I tingle at this line, too, particularly after spending the past year as an uninvited guest on the land of the Syilx (Okanagan) people, a year that featured an unusually cold winter and a usually hot summer. The effect of these weather events varied.

For some, they contributed to a story of “mounting disaster;” for others, further evidence of global warming; for others still, a critique of private property.

In July 2016, I was invited by Kelowna-based writer and educator Ashok Mathur to “sit in” on the University of British Columbia Okanagan’s Summer Indigenous Intensive. Among the highlights of this extraordinary gathering of artists, writers and scholars was an introduction to Syilx cosmology by Aboriginal and Traditional Knowledge Keeper Richard Armstrong, who spoke of the land not as a surface on which to draw conclusions – “through trial and error, as the anthropologists tell us” – but as a sentient presence inextricably related to the Syilx people.

“What I have to say to you this afternoon is not found in books,” said Armstrong at the 2017 Intensive, before once again describing the land as “our parents” and “a teacher,” which only re-enforced my doubts about the sustainability of our increasingly business-driven Global Art Culture, a recognition I did not find “troubling,” as Didion describes her doubt, but generative.

And so it was that the land showed me something, first through a series of heavy snowfalls that covered the ground from the first week of December to the middle of March, followed by a sudden blast of heat, when the snows melted and the lakes rose.

“Everyone knows all about the weather,” Deloria continues, “but none can change it. When storms are predicted, the sun shines. When picnic weather is announced, the rains begin.”

“The land is showing us something,” I wrote in a postcard to my mother last spring, only to cross out “showing” and “something” and replace “showing” with criticizing.

We criticize our stories in order to live. Which is to say the “we” who listen to the land and who live in history take issue with the established order of events, the narrative line that conditions both the stories people tell and the people themselves.

A consequence of this narrative conditioning can be found in what Coast Salish and Okanagan artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun refers to as “colonial stress disorder syndrome,” an affliction that results from historic exposure to imperialism, the capitalist mode of production, the scientific method, neoliberal democracies... Another consequence can be found in our ignorance of this conditioning.

Tania Willard’s presentation of BUSH gallery at UBCO Indigenous Summer Intensive, July 27, 2016.

IMAGE: MICHAEL TURNER



“Likewise,” writes Deloria at the conclusion of his first paragraph, “if you count on the unpredictability of Indian people, you will never be sorry.”

“The land is showing criticizing us something, Mom, and no matter how many sandbags someone is paid to stack outside someone else’s lakeside mansion, they cannot stop the waters from rising beneath it.” Nor will these sandbags protect us from septic fields built too close to these now receding lakes – until what remains is not a mound of unemployed sandbags but a shit-ridden Minimalist sculpture.

Before we learned of these toxic sandbags, we were told not to take them to beaches and empty them, as people were doing, because their sand is coarser, greyer, not the soft ochre-coloured sand imported by municipalities for tourists to lie on. But why were we fed this story (based on aesthetics) when what was stewing inside these bags posed a more convincing (health) threat?

We tell ourselves stories in order to distract.

Something else the land showed me this year: a record number of wildfires. While the worst of these fires were in the Caribou, winds brought their smoke south, transforming gentle sunsets into lurid tableaux, but also, like the rising waters, turning cliff-top landlords into Custers armed not with sandbags but with garden hoses. I am speaking of those in Lake Country, not far from where I began this text, and where, as an itinerant critic alert to the narrative line, I struggled with fires of my own.

Michael Turner is a writer of fiction, criticism and song. His books include *Hard Core Logo*, *The Pornographer’s Poem*, *8x10* and *Free Concert*.

Endotes

1 Julia Kristeva. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 141

2 Joan Didion. *The White Album* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 11

3 Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1969), 1

4 Vine Deloria Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 9

Beyond the traditional walls and white-cube space of the gallery, these projects highlight works on and about the land, and depict the body as space, standing in harmonious tension with Canada 150 discourse.

Taking up physical space in, out and on a large gallery, the *Insurgence Resurgence* exhibition (September 22–April 22, 2018) performed a major shift at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG), curated by Dr. Julie Nagam and myself (shameless mention). This exhibition celebrated and asserted Indigenous presence on these lands long before 150 years. The WAG's largest-ever contemporary Indigenous exhibition featured 12 new commissions from artists across Canada considering movements of political insurgency and cultural resurgence. One of the artists commissioned was Kenneth Lavalée, a Winnipeg-based artist, who created a monumental-sized design on a four-story canvas currently pinned to the tyndall façade of the WAG, entitled *Creation Story* (2017). Lavalée's work draws on local histories, the parallels of Indigenous mythologies, classical Greek and biblical texts to explore balance, harmony and connection to the universe. His work evokes a sense of movement and water, inspired by creation stories and the destruction of the "great floods." *Creation Story* makes the wall come alive with rich, teal-coloured curvilinear lines that contrast the building's late modernist, pale tyndall stone structure. *Creation Story* will leave a lasting mark on the WAG's exterior, with a mural that will hold a permanent memory of taking up space for Indigenous contemporary work at the WAG and in Winnipeg. WAG curators also teamed up with Wall-to-Wall Mural Festival/Synonym Art Consultation to partner and support a collaboration mural between artists Dee Barsy (Winnipeg) and Jordan Bennett (Stephenville Crossing, Ktaqmkuk) called *Marwpile'n (Tie It Together)* (2017), which will grace the walls of Great West Life at 650 Broadway Street in the West End of Winnipeg and on the WAG for the duration of the exhibition.

From August 18 to September 4, 2018, Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art presented a project called *STAGES: Drawing the Curtain*, a series of temporary public sculptures and performances, featuring nine artists: Abbas Akhavan (Toronto), Pablo Bronstein (London, UK), Erica Eyres (Glasgow, Scotland), Kara Hamilton (Toronto), Federico Herrero (San José, Costa Rica), Toril Johannessen (Tromsø, Norway), Divya Mehra (Winnipeg), Krista Belle Stewart (Vancouver), Ron Tran (Vancouver) and curated by Jenifer Pappararo (Winnipeg). *STAGES* was a public exhibition that situated Winnipeg as a stage and space for public art and performances – both

... On the land,
on the body,
on and off the walls...
by Jaimie Isaac

material and immaterial – that spoke to audiences about theoretical and situational considerations. The two-week public exhibition and programming was ambitious, with six guided tours, a speaker series, a publication and several performances throughout the city.

Canada's first-ever Indigenous Tattoo School debuted during the 2017 Summer Indigenous Intensive initiative at UBC Okanagan in Kelowna in July. The School featured instructors Dion Kaszas, Amy Malbeuf and Jordan Bennett of the Earthline Tattoo Collective, guest mentor artists Dean Hunt, Nahaan, Pip Hartley (NZ) and artist participants Amberley John, Sheldon Piere, Louise Danika Nolte, Jerry Evans, Maani Oakes and Ippiksaut Friesen. Their collaborative act of revival declares and reclaims this traditional practice of identity declaration: Indigenous cultural tattoo practitioners taught and tattooed each other following their nation-based knowledge and style. Students, visiting artists, curators and faculty were of the many that were marked that month and skin was the canvas, imprinting permanent signals of resurgence.

Indigenous Fashion & Wearable Art, an Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective partnership with Western Canada Fashion Week (WCFW), presented three Indigenous contemporary artists as designers at the Fall 2017 fashion week in Edmonton: Jeneen

Frei Njootli, Meghann O'Brien and Sage Paul. As the Ociciwan website explained, "These artists/designers explore fashion and the body, using traditional material or traditional garment making techniques to inspire and inform contemporary fashions. Each artist has created a fashion line that narrates histories and innovations of Indigenous people; creating a surface of insights on cultural complexity and diversity, that can be worn for special occasions or in daily life." In the fashion industry, with its routine habits of cultural appropriation of Indigenous cultural materials and design, in often awkward or harmful stereotypes, the work of the Ociciwan Collective and the artists presented an example that Indigenous fashion from Indigenous designers can be honoured and acknowledged, while decorously highlighting their diverse cultural identities to revolutionize and reframe perceptions of Indigenous cultures.

A mammoth project, *LandMarks-2017/Repères2017* created a deeper connection to the land through a series of contemporary art projects in and around Canada's National Parks and Historic Sites from June 10–25, 2017, “inspiring dialogue about people, places and perspectives that have shaped our past and are vital to our futures.”¹ This project brought together a team of curators working with artists across Canada with multiple experiences and projects. David Diviney, Ariella Pahlke and Melinda Spooner (a.k.a., ACT) curated *(re)al-location* with artist Ursula Johnson; Véronique LeBlanc curated *Subsistences* with Raphaëlle de Groot and Wanderer and *(re) Marking* with artist Douglas Scholes; Natalia Lebedinskaia curated *Coalescence* with artist Michael Belmore; Kathleen Ritter curated *Wave Sound* with artist Rebecca Belmore and *Long View* with artist Jin-me Yoon, as well as *Weaving Voices* with artists Chris Clarke and Bo Yeung; Tania Willard curated *Freedom Tours* with artists Cheryl L'Hirondelle and Camille Turner, *Being Skidoo* with artist Jeneen Frei Njootli, *Stitching my Landscape* with artist Maureen Gruben, and *Many Voices: Indigenous Art* at Bellevue House National Historic Site. Through an array of places, experiences, histories, differences and voices, *Land-Marks2017/Repères2017* was a symbol for a multi-space meeting place to express concerns for environmental, social, political and cultural territories that cast a wide net in exploring the complexities of Canadian discourse.

The new installation of PA System (Alexa Hatanaka and Patrick Thompson), *Towards Something New and Beautiful + Future Snowmachines in Kinngait*, was shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario as part of the exhibition *Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood*, curated by Andrew Hunter with Anique Jordan, until December 10, 2017. This new work is a collaborative schema that features youth from Kinngait (Cape Dorset) as Embassy of Imagination. *Towards Something New and Beautiful + Future Snowmachines in Kinngait* features sculptures of snowmobiles cast in aluminum from the remains of a local school that was lost to arson; it exposes issues of education and the lack of youth programming in the North. Collaborating Embassy of Imagination artists included Christine Adamie, Lachaolasie Akesuk, Moe Kelly,

David Pudlat and Nathan Adla. In keeping with the socially engaged and relational art practices of PA System, the cast aluminum sculptures are being sold with proceeds going to support elder and youth trips out onto the land and future Embassy of Imagination projects. PA System's other notable and mesmerizing work *Gauge, 2013–2015* is on tour with the exhibition *Floe Edge: Contemporary Art and Collaborations from Nunavut*, currently at Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery in Winnipeg. A most captivating film, *Gauge* shows the creation of large-scale, moving paintings on giant ice walls – ephemeral works created and erased by icebergs moving by the tide of the Arctic Ocean.

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Winnipeg Art Gallery. She is an interdisciplinary artist and co-founder of The Ephemerals Collective. Isaac is a member of Sagkeeng First Nation, of Anishnaabe and British heritage.

1 www.landmarks2017.ca



Sage Paul, presented at Western Canada Fashion Week, Edmonton. Curated by Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective.
PHOTO: IAN MACDONALD – ARAGONDINA PHOTOGRAPHY

Architecture of the Bush

by Toby Katrine Lawrence

The teepee has been an ever-present feature of BUSH gallery; but it does not stand *as* the gallery. Erected two years ago, the structure has weathered, presented and housed many of the actions of BUSH gallery. At the BUSH gallery Writers Union retreat in August 2017, the structure was dismantled; the canvas too brittle to maintain its architectural function after having ripped apart in a windstorm earlier in the summer.

After travelling to BUSH gallery in Secwepemc territory from Vancouver, Tarah Hogue joined Tania Willard in dismantling the teepee, dragging its wooden poles to be stacked for future purposes. Tarah recounted a re-linking of body to land in the reverberations between body, land and wooden pole, activated through their preparatory performance of sorts and marking the beginning of the retreat.

“The teepee poles are so dry and have deep cracks that run almost to the core of the poles at certain points, so when we dragged them across the ground, the sound of their being dragged was amplified. The sound was like a small echo chamber, hollow and almost electronic.” (Hogue)

Following our Sunday afternoon convergence of friends and colleagues at the annual Kamloopa Pow-wow, Tarah, Tania, Peter Morin, Ashok Mathur and I gathered at Quaaout Lodge on Little Shuswap Lake, and then at BUSH gallery the next day. The pow-wow, as a shared point of departure, centred Indigeneity and located experience as material for making, performing and thinking together.¹ At dinner, Tarah expressed her need to drag more poles – to utilize acts of labour to connect to place, to land, performance, situation. At breakfast, Peter asked us what it was we wanted to build. Though framed through colonial language, as Peter acknowledged, his question opened space for intellectual, textual, spatial and embodied restructuring of the ways in which Indigenous praxes, and more specifically Indigenous performance praxes, are approached in art writing and art galleries – and beyond.

Monday, we cut up the teepee. We laid out the teepee canvas. We intuitively assumed roles. Within this performative action, we marked the circumference of the canvas staking pink survey flags. Peter, with a blue raven rattle, and Tania, with tin can rattle, circumnavigated the canvas as Peter sang.

“Just as in our performance, we ripped long lengths of canvas fabric, so did the wind enact the inevitability of this temporary structure.” (Willard)

The canvas ripped easily along its weave and we made cuts to direct the tearing; the canvas pulled by two of our bodies in order to arrive at segments large enough for specific, repurposed functions. The largest uncompromised section was kept to be suspended in the trees as a movie screen (*Skinwalkers: The Navajo Mysteries. The Daughters of Dawn*. Netflix search: “Native American”). Smaller segments were used to produce solar prints and their edges finished with pinking shears; the excess made into ribbons. The remaining canvas segments were gathered for future uses. Enshrouded by the dense forest-fire smoke that permeated the region and crouched within the teepee’s flag outline, we cut ribbon and produced a series of solar prints out of rope, rattles, rocks, ribbons, collective writing, laser-cut “SITE/ation” text and toys. Ashok prepared bison meatballs, shish kebobs and Chilliwack corn.

Wednesday, when I returned, the flags had been removed. The activities were now concentrated around the forested area and the trees that supported the large piece of repurposed canvas. No longer in its distinguishable form, the teepee remained through abstraction. The screen became the conversational “teepee.” The location shifted along with the referent. Now in segments, the canvas marks as it is marked. Material for objects and surface for solar prints, lunar experiments, backdrop for movies, foreground for shadow play, hunting ground for insects...

In one of my trips back and forth from Kelowna to BUSH gallery, I was charged with transporting the 12 large Mylar panels produced for Ashok’s 2009 installation of *A Little Distillery in Nowgong*. Together, we hung them to weather and to remain in the trees at the edge of the forest with cord coloured the same pink as the survey flags. A twofold final installation. The final action of the BUSH gallery Writers Union retreat took shape through our collective curation of Ashok’s panels and as a collaborative performance by Ashok and Peter. Backed by the layering of *A Little Distillery in Nowgong* and the teepee, illuminated by a work light, Ashok read aloud *Loveruage: A Dance in Three Parts*, accompanied by strategically timed drumming by Peter. The text from one of the Mylar panels was incidentally visible through the canvas. And we all listened.

Changed by and changing the actions of its inhabitants and guests, the architecture of the bush is reciprocal. The collective and individual actions under the auspices of BUSH gallery are the materials that form BUSH gallery. The ephemerality and the place-based conceptual space supports the fluid architecture of the teepee. As an Indigenous “sovereign display territor[y],”² BUSH gallery functions beyond the systemized conventions of dominant culture exhibition spaces. In the Land.

Toby Katrine Lawrence is a curator, writer and researcher based between Kelowna and Gabriola Island, in British Columbia, on the traditional lands of the Syilx and Snuneymuxw peoples. She has held curatorial and programming positions with the Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and Nanaimo Art Gallery, and is currently curator of the Kelowna Art Gallery.

¹ In conversation with Peter Morin, August 6, 2017.

² David Garneau, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation: Art, Curation, and Healing,” in *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action In and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, edited by Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 35.



BUSH gallery Writers Union
Retreat, August 2017.
IMAGE: TOBY LAWRENCE



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