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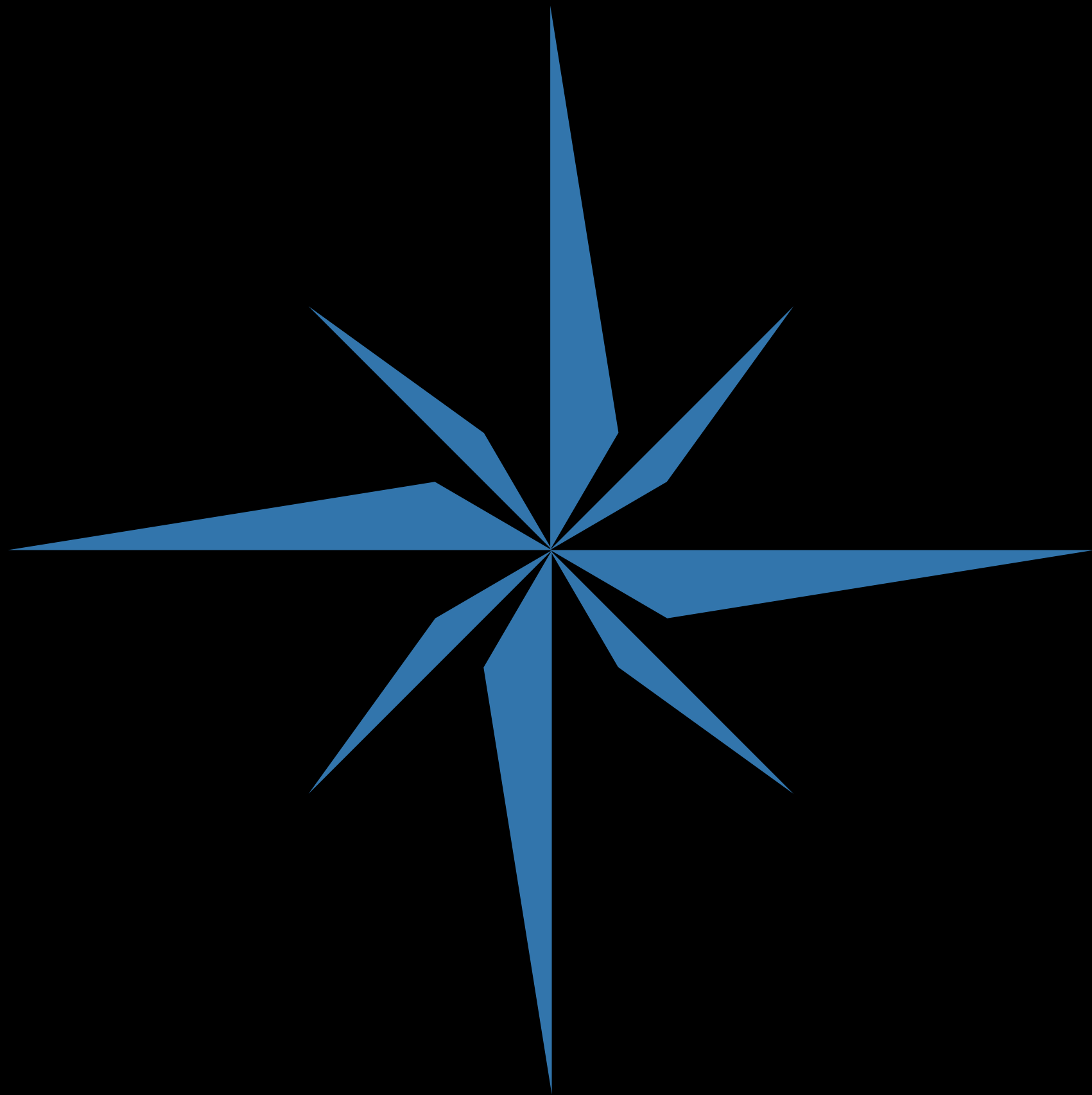
NAVIGATING THE METAMODERN

SELECTIONS FROM THE 15ᵀᴴ ANNUAL YORK UNIVERSITY ART HISTORY GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

PRODUCTION

ZACH PEARL DESIGN & ART DIRECTION
LINDSAY LeBLANC EDITORIAL
SARA ENGLAND MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
YOLI TERZIYSKA DEVELOPMENT

In consultation with:
CAOIMHE MORGAN-FEIR
FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS
KATHERINE DENNIS

CONTRIBUTORS

DANIEL FISET
EMILY PUTNAM
NICOLE CLOUSTON
TINA CARLISI
SABRINA SCOTT
WILLIAM BRERETON

On the Cover:

EIJA·LIISA AHTILA

Detail of *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1 / Tutkimuksia Draaman Ekologiasta 1* (2014). 4channel projected installation, 16:9/1:1.78 DD5.0, original language Finnish, English subtitles. 27 min 40 sec. © Crystal Eye Kristallisilmä Oy, Helsinki. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

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Foreword:
The Metamodern as Scaffold

Navigation implies an ongoing search. This is the current state of "metamodernism," a term new to many of us in the early stages of this year's conference planning. Seth Abramson of *Metamoderna* writes that the fledgling signifier "arises from a yearning," and it is this yearning we begin with—

Navigating the Metamodern, held in March 2016 in two bright studios in downtown Toronto, considered the extent to which the metamodern surfaces as a desire, to mark a distinction from previous eras or the possibility of a paradigmatic, rhetorical shift in light of the specific crises of our time. Metamodernism situates itself between Modernist romanticism and the postmodern impulse to declare the death of Everything, from truth to ideology, meaning, art, and the subject. It can be characterized by the phrase "pragmatic optimism," or a cautious return to sincerity. Although first proposed by political theorist Mas'ud Zavarzadeh in 1975, the concept remains little explored on a mass scale, with an array of exploratory definitions from a few major sources: a series of texts by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker which resurrect and propagate the term in the 2010s, and Luke Turner's Manifesto in 2011 (**www.metamodernism.org**). Perhaps the most popular instance of metamodernist speculation is Turner's collaborative practice with Nastja Säde Rönkkö and actor Shia LaBeouf, including the momentarily viral *#ALLMYMOVIES* (2015) in which the audience was invited to join LaBeouf, in person or through livestream, as he sat through a screening of his entire oeuvre. This type of self-reference and reflexivity, blurring of public and private boundaries, and embrace of Web 2.0 seems to be typical of the metamodern age.

But what do we talk about, exactly, under the disparate, unstable covering of metamodernism? Vermeulen, van den Akker, and Turner characterize the movement as a *continual* oscillation between opposite or conflicting positions, like irony and sincerity, cynicism and hope, social change and futility/failure. In 2014, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam mounted the first and only major conference on the subject—with the subheading *The Return of History*—structured around the four defining years of 1989, 2001, 2008, and 2011. These dates encompass the fall of the Berlin Wall, 9/11, the global financial crisis, and the apex of the Arab Spring. I think to this we can add 2013, the year of Edward Snowden's NSA leaks, which casted light on the innate "creepiness" of electronic communication and life on the internet, to borrow Wendy Chun's term. Creepiness manifests in the contradictions of being private in public spaces (like social media). The NSA leaks further function as a metaphor for a leaky future, where narrative and history remain, but will always be vibrating between multiple, changeable poles. In other words, history has "bended," not ended.[1]

CRISIS defines metamodernism, from climate change, to anxiety about data protection, increasing wealth disparity, and the fight to centre marginal voices and bodies. Global movements in reaction to crisis also define this "structure of feeling,"[2] in part made possible by the creepiness of Web 2.0. In terms of contemporary art production, metamodernist logic extends to emerging trends like ObjectOriented Ontologies, Speculative Realism, the return of the sublime, and New Sincerity in literature (see the internetproliferated and widely popular

poetry of the likes of Warsan Shire). It also encompasses a return of collectivity on a large scale and the relationship between the local and the global in movements for change.

Albeit an academic qualifier, I take Dan Adler's comment from the conference that we can consider the metamodern as a scaffold, a talking point to lift off of, to support further conversations across disciplines based on a *desire*, to find likeminded artists, cultural workers, activists, and academics who deal with the exploratory oscillations of our age. This is also why the 15th annual York University Art History Graduate Symposium brings together such diverse thinkers with work ranging from occult ontologies to teaching bodily disciplines through virtual space to resistance through the poetic remaking of public space and collective action.

The essays included in this issue represent a cross-section of the diversity of our speakers, both researchers and visual artists, on three panels regarding metamodernist definitions, the residual relevance of affect and peripheral senses in the experience of art, and manifestations of the "posthuman" as part of a contemporary condition. Emily Putnam and Tina Carlisi consider the transformative and healing possibilities of inviting public gathering in a Canadian national context through the already seminal *Walking With Our Sisters* project, and the artist's conscious, willful occupation of city space. William Brereton expands on the movingimage installations of Eija-Liisa Ahtila using a twoway reciprocal experience he calls "performative viewership" which also encourages the imagining of nonhuman perceptions. Nicole Clouston writes about how her practice is informed by the microbial sublime, forcing us to confront that our bodies are porous parts of our environment. Daniel Fiset examines the notion of post-photography through a metamodernist lens and the proliferation of images of floating bodies

on the internet. Finally, Sabrina Scott posits the value of "witchbody" as a position to enter into empathic relations with other human and nonhuman bodies and objects in the communal creation of existence.

We greatly appreciate everyone who dedicated their time to organizing and fundraising for this year's conference, as well as York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance, and Design (AMPD) and KAPSULA for this third year of partnership with AHGSA. Most of all, we thank each of our symposium panelists for their insightful approaches to what can be considered the "metamodern," as we find a common ground to stand on in the midst of personal and political yearnings that keep us in constant flux.

Joy Xiang

On behalf of AHGSA Symposium Committee,
Department of Visual Art & Art History
York University

EMILY PUTNAM

Collaboration as Activism:
Walking With Our Sisters Through a Metamodern Lens

A nation-wide travelling memorial, *Walking With Our Sisters* shines a spotlight on the horrific disappearance and murder of over 1,181 women, girls, and two-spirited people in the Canadian Indigenous community. While Indigenous people make up only about five percent of the country's population, Indigenous women are six times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Indigenous women (Miladinovic and Mulligan 2014). In their **2015 operational report**, the RCMP concluded that Indigenous women "continue to be overrepresented among Canada's missing and murdered." The level of violence perpetrated against Indigenous individuals who identify as two-spirited is located entirely outside current statistical analysis. These statistics, or lack of, emphasize the significance of a project like *Walking With Our Sisters*.

Founded by Metis artist Christi Belcourt in 2012, beginning with a call on social media for the donation of 600 moccasin vamps (the decorative top of a pair of moccasins), *Walking With Our Sisters* now includes over 1,800 moccasin vamps and approximately 108 children's vamps. The memorial has travelled across Canada and the United States since 2013. *Walking With Our Sisters* is not only a commemorative installation that engages acts of collective memory and mourning, but a challenge to the injustice and inequity suffered by Indigenous individuals within Canadian social, cultural, and political spheres. Belcourt has said that the memorial is meant to "empower people to talk about [these injustices]" (Belcourt 2014). The project's engagement with the non-Indigenous community in acts of collective commemoration offers an example of how art functions in Indigenous culture as activism and creates a wider sense of community within contemporary Canadian society. The memorial presents a powerful critique of media coverage and law enforcement, as well as the lack of public and political acknowledgement of the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada over the past thirty years. The memorial's display of collectivity as a form of resistance casts itself through the lens of metamodernism.

Considered a structure of feeling, as opposed to an ontology or theory, metamodernism relies on a return to the sincere, the affective, the romantic, and the hopeful. A cultural model still in flux, metamodernism is reluctant to define itself too narrowly. While certain aspects of metamodernism—such as affect, sincerity, hope—fit particularly well with *Walking With Our Sisters*, other aspects, such as romanticizing the return of grand narratives or universal truths, do not. In-context, grand narratives tend to exclude particular voices while *Walking With Our Sisters* moves towards narratives of inclusion.

I understand metamodernism as reliant on ideas around affect and the infinite possibilities of experience. Through

this lens, the acts of collaboration, resistance, and encircling cultural trauma on the part of the various Indigenous communities participating in *Walking With Our Sisters* complement metamodern notions of affect and a hope for change. A key feature of metamodernism is its constant oscillation between various perspectives. While postmodern theorists understand oscillation as the movement between two binary poles, metamodernism recognizes the possibility of oscillating among multiple perspectives, ultimately altering the dynamics of that movement. Some may argue that this form of dynamic oscillation is still a characteristic of postmodernity, but its relationship to affect, hope, and sincerity

places it within the ideas of metamodernism and at some remove from postmodern irony. Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker see this type of oscillation as a negotiation between many opposites: in the case of *Walking With Our Sisters*, this negotiation exists between many cultural positions.

There is a colourful, vibrant aesthetic to *Walking With Our Sisters*. Rows upon rows of intricate moccasin vamps line a red pathway, guiding visitors around the space. Each pair of vamps is distinct: many are beaded, some are made with unconventional material, and others are deeply personal with the faces and names of loved ones em-

blazoned upon them. All possess an element of being unfinished, because they represent the unfinished lives of over 1,000 Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people in Canada. The memorial effectively oscillates between a range of different affective impacts: the purely aesthetic, the metaphoric, the traumatic, and the socially responsible.

In considering the memorial and its ability to create a wider sense of community, the question of what defines community surfaces. At each venue where the project is shown across Canada and the United States, a national collective collaborates with local committees to organize the layout and ceremony, based on the Indigenous customs of the region. Local committees are composed of both Indigenous individuals and settlers. While the wider *Walking With Our Sisters* community does share entangled histories, participants do not exist within a cohesive community before engaging with the memorial. To assume so would be a disservice to the diversity of those involved, as well as the transformative aspects of community-building found within the project. In this instance, "community" is defined as a site for the working-together of individuals to open a dialogue that transcends shared history, state narratives, and geography. As curator Marie Bouchard describes it, community is "both a point of departure and arrival" (Bouchard 2004, 220). While grieving friends and family members may belong to a geographical or cultural community, not all donors or volunteers at each installation site can identify with their experience. Instead, *Walking With Our Sisters* invites each participant, each donor, each volunteer into a larger, shared community through empathy and a sense of social responsibility, without dissolving difference. Participants shift through cultural positions and various stages of emotional distance—an oscillation between distance and closeness, tradition and truth.

In Sault Ste. Marie, the memorial welcomed an addition of child-size vamps during a four-hour ceremony to recognize and honour the children who died or never came home from the Indian Residential Schools. The inclusion of the children's vamps in the memorial highlights the importance of healing with community in the project. Jonathan Dewar, Director of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, cites "social and systemic dysfunction" (Dewar 2015, 91) as the intersection connecting the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the current issues surrounding the staggering numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Through its collaborative, "crowd-sourced" effort, *Walking With Our Sisters* enables visitors and volunteers who encounter the memorial at an emotional distance to listen and understand these issues in a new way. The structure of the project—based around traditional, local Indigenous ceremony—encourages distanced visitors and volunteers to widen their perspective when engaging with the space. By having an open mind while engaging with the memorial, visitors and volunteers allow movement between positions of distance to positions of an emotional collective. This oscillation creates an alternative narrative to an issue, that until recent years was largely unacknowledged by the majority of Canadian citizens.

Each unique installation of *Walking With Our Sisters* is designed to reflect a traditional Indigenous lodge, according to regional customs. Ceremonial medicines (cedar, sage, sweet grass, tobacco) lie beneath the swathes of red and black cloth that cover the floor, offering protection and transforming the room into a sacred space. Tissues are available throughout the installation for visitors to catch their tears. Visitors are requested to carry small red cloth pouches of tobacco in their left hand as they walk along the path, led by the vamps.

Into those pouches, visitors are meant to place only good thoughts, good intentions, and good prayers. At the end of their visit, visitors deposit their tissues and pouches into paper bags and wooden boxes; each is then placed in the sacred fire at the end of each day. This act sends every tear, prayer, and positive thought into the world, connecting it to the spirits of the missing and murdered women. Based around ideas of memorial, ceremony, and collective healing, *Walking With Our Sisters* has effec-

tively initiated an expanded community, working together to bring social and mainstream awareness to Canada's stolen sisters.

Widespread participation in the project initiates a discussion about discourses of resistance seen in Canadian visual culture. Acts of resistance in art have long been a part of Canada's aesthetic history. Unlike many examples of protest art, *Walking With Our Sisters* cannot be dismissed as ineffective, assimilated, or co-opted (Cronin and Robertson 2011, 6). While it is a powerful memorial with a certain calculated aesthetic, creating a common urge to define it as "art," Belcourt insists that it is not an art exhibition, but a memorial.[1] The memorial is inherently resistant because it intends to function as a tribute to the lives of Indigenous women who suffered violent deaths in the wake of social inequity. Kirsty Robertson and J. Keri Cronin (2011, 5) ask: "What does it mean to study, write about, and resist through the visual?" A sense of profound commitment (Dyck 2015) is felt throughout the entire process of *Walking With Our Sisters*, giving the memorial a sense of activist purpose. The movement to raise awareness and mourn Canada's stolen sisters is deeply intertwined with the politics of decolonization and persistent settler-colonial issues, making it impossible to separate the memorial from resistance. The memorial engages with public space much in same way that political activism does, such as in the *Idle No More* and various *Occupy* movements. These movements use public space to advocate for societal, political, economic, and cultural transformation. Hundreds of individuals have given their time, respect, and care to the success of the installation. This becomes a very distinctive form of resistance because it has demonstrated the ability to bring people together under one, politically directed aim.

A way of understanding *Walking With Our Sisters* as an act of decolonizing resistance is in consideration of David Jefferess' discussion of road blockades,

commonly understood as a popular mode of Indigenous resistance. Jefferess suggests that while often considered a "violent embodiment" of the cultural impasse between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, the road blockade offers an "opportunity for transcendence" (Hargreaves and Jefferess 2015, 209-210). While the road blockade signals a cultural impasse to non-Indigenous communities, *Walking With Our Sisters* transcends societal barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, thus rupturing dominant modes of thinking in Canadian culture. This rupture disregards the belief that Canada's colonial history and colonial violence exists only in the past, while also challenging current definitions of reconciliation. Caused by what I would consider a metamodern oscillation of perspectives, *Walking With Our Sisters* gently forces those who normally occupy the centre in society (settlers) to step into the periphery, creating space for marginalized voices to be heard. The memorial's established and ongoing community exists beyond cultural boundaries and immerses visitors into the collective, cultural trauma being memorialized. The memorial brings up a crucial question: How can non-Indigenous scholars think about and participate in the project of decolonizing Canada? According to Hargreaves and Jefferess (2015, 201), productive settler participation occurs through "respectful acknowledgement, responsible sharing, and mutual engagement."

During its tour at the Carleton University Art Gallery, I visited the memorial about a week after its ceremonial opening. Before visiting the memorial, I met Thomas, an Elder responsible for tending the sacred fire outside of the art gallery every day of the three-week exhibition period. After smudging with sage to open our hearts and minds, Thomas sang a song of prayer and shared his personal history of abuse as a survivor of an Indian Residential School. He also told us that the land we are standing on belongs to all of us, settler and Indigenous alike. It became a powerful, expansive moment of oscillation between the contemporary and the historical; between distance and complicity; between the centre and the periphery.

In struggling with my own questions of responsibility and privilege as a product of Canada's settler-colonial history, I think of Thomas' voice and open heart. These issues are not just Indigenous issues; they are Canadian issues, North American issues, world issues. While settlers should not occupy a central subject position in *Walking With Our Sisters*, the memorial has the potential to act as a cross-cultural contact zone where Indigenous experience, traditions, and mourning can take precedence, and settlers can begin to question what reconciliation means and reflect on their own complicity. Settlers do share a responsibility in dialogues of decolonization and in dialogues concerning missing and murdered Indigenous women. The settler responsibility lies partially in speaking as allies—but more importantly as attentive listeners. Hargreaves and Jefferess (2015, 201) have explained that "the roles and responsibilities of settlers . . . are often obscured, avoided, or denied – because to think concertedly about the responsibilities of settlers would be to acknowledge our historical and ongoing complicity with colonization." Through oscillation, *Walking With Our Sisters* provides settlers an entry-point into decolonizing projects without allowing them to co-opt or control the cultural trauma on display. Settlers are invited to offer support, but are ultimately denied a central position in mourning.

The memorial highlights a contemporary issue that developed out of Canada's colonial history. *Walking With Our Sisters* engages with both Indigenous and settler communities, and in many cases establishes a common ground. Fulfilling Jefferess' argument that the barricade has the potential to transcend irreconcilable conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, *Walking With Our Sisters* becomes a vehicle for social transformation. It succeeds in its request to all visitors, donors, and volunteers to expand their hearts and their minds when listening to the stories and spirits of stolen sisters, joining a community speaking out about social injustice.

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EMILY PUTNAM

is a Masters Art History candidate at Carleton University with a concentration in Curatorial Studies. She is in the early stages of a research project exploring contemporary art that deals with the lingering impact of the forced relocation of Japanese Canadians during WWII. More generally, her research focuses on contemporary art that deals with issues of trauma, conflict, affect, and post-memory, as well as ways in which contemporary art can comment and reflect upon Canada's past.

THE POETIC REMAKING OF SPACE

TINA CARLISI

How can poetic gestures that invite public gathering and leisure foster meaningful micro-transformations?

As an artist and researcher, my practice is deeply rooted in the social imagination. Philosopher Charles Taylor describes the social imaginary as how people imagine their surroundings, often expressed in images, stories, and legends (Taylor 2004). Imaginaries are not necessarily embedded in ideologies, but rather in social perceptions and practices that are dynamic and always unfolding. They are intrinsically utopian, not in the sense that they are unachievable, but in that they trace what exists and what is possible. In this essay, I aim to contribute to the expanding discourse on metamodernism through my art praxis. The art projects I will discuss explore the potential of imagining new social spaces in relation to our right to public space and free time. Whether through a situation or an invitation for action, I consider how art can foster "temporary autonomous zones," defined by Hakin Bey as moments that are ephemeral, free, and exist in the cracks of everyday life (Bey 2003). These zones produce celebratory ruptures that allow the public sphere to become a site for the autonomous production of social space (Lefebvre 1974), in a poetic gesture of reclamation. This production of space also allows contemplation and becoming—to imagine a *what could be*, a *what is possible.*

As the main proponents for metamodernism, cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker inscribe this emerging discourse within the utopian turn in contemporary art. Few texts are currently published on defining what metamodernism is, providing new ground for dialogue and debate. I do not relate with many qualities associated with this supposedly new sensibility. For example, in their article "Notes on Metamodernism," Vermeulen and van den Akker quote art critic Jerry Saltz to support their characterization of this new attitude or approach as "creating [art that] may seem silly, even stupid, or that it might have been done before, but that doesn't mean this isn't serious" (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010, 2). The quote continues to suggest that this new type of art-making is self-conscious about art, unafraid and unashamed, and that young artists can be ironic and sincere at the same time. Although I do not identify with these sentiments or strategies in my own work, I do relate with other aspects defined by the authors, which I argue hold the potential to expand metamodern discourse to include more socially and politically engaged art by emerging artists. Metamodern qualities that can be found in my work include a search for meaning and genuine change; engagement with materiality, affect and beauty; and

the possibility for both personal and universal narratives, based on the common, the communal or the collective (unlike the modernist conception).

An interest in the political and poetic potential of spatial expression stems from my master's research about the Québec student strike of 2012. As a researcher on art practices that emerge parallel to social movements, and like many other people who were involved in the strike, I was electrified by the occupation of the street, which ranged from mass marches to the banging of pots and pans on people's balconies. Despite the recent proliferation of writing on the role of social media in social movements, protest and demonstration largely remain an expression with and of space (Tonkiss 2005). My thesis reflected on how art was used to make manifest ideas in the public sphere, and how the strike became a third space—between the university and the street—as a place of invention and transformational encounters, which I argue offers new ways of envisioning the 21st century art school (Carlisi 2013).

An important point of departure for the thesis was revisiting the root of the word "school" from classical Greek, which first denoted "a pursuit or time of leisure" and only later came to mean a forum for discussion and a place for learning (Raqs Media Collective 2009). Thus, it is time and a particular kind of *quality time* that supports the creativity and reflection central to learning and living coupled with spatial practice. The student movement was no doubt an exceptional moment, and I increasingly became interested in exploring how autonomous practices that express the right to occupy space in spontaneous ways can connect to our everyday life.

In his seminal book *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre emphasizes that space is not a subject nor object, but a social reality. In other words, our social relations define places. *Taking Back the Sky* [Figure 1] is the beginning of a series of projects where I explore how gestures, actions and situations can reimagine and remake places – even momentarily—and in effect, remake our social reality. The project is a call to action to occupy the sky, both as a metaphor for limitless possibilities and as an act of resistance to drone technology surveillance and intrusion of our social spaces. *Taking Back the Sky* was completed during an artist residency in Amsterdam, where I was also doing research on Provo, a short-

lived Dutch anarchist group from the sixties that continues to resonate in Dutch culture (van Riemsdijk 2013). Best known for their white bicycle plan, Provo members formally proposed to the city that they distribute 20,000 free bicycles to counter the filtration of cars in the city centre at the time, which caused congestion, pollution, and reduction of walkable and sociable spaces. With their proposal refused by city hall, Provo members decided to paint fifty bicycles in white and left them unlocked all around Amsterdam for people to use for free. Inevitably, the police confiscated the bicycles, but these symbolic gestures did have an influence. Woonerf, a Dutch word meaning "a living street" for pedestrians, became popular in the seventies (de Vletter 2004), which arguably points to Provo's influence on general attitudes toward new urbanisms that fostered spaces for leisure, urban nature, and social life.

Taking Back the Sky involved an art action on Zandvoort beach outside of Amsterdam with a series of white fabric kites I produced at the residency. The kites were printed with silkscreened text that read "taking back the sky" in English and Dutch, including versions with Provo's symbol and other typographic references to their material provenance. The project referenced the Dutch tradition of kite flying and hinted to the representation of the sky in Dutch Old Master paintings, but mainly acted as a commentary on how public spaces have become increasingly inhabited by disconnected individuals, often absorbed by personal devices. This project shifted the focus up to the sky, rather than down to device, through a leisure activity that encourages free time.

In continuum with the ideas explored in *Taking Back the Sky*, that same summer in Montréal I created a poetic happening for Darling Foundry's Place Publique—a series of weekly events that were held on a pedestrian street in front of the gallery. The project, titled *Possible/Possibilities* [Figure 2], staged an intervention on the gallery's pop-up greenery. Inspired by Yoko Ono's wish tree, the project invited passersby to make paper windmills and write on them a wish or interpretation of the question "what is

possible?" All of the required materials to make the white and yellow windmills were provided on a white painted picnic table that also included a bouquet of fresh daisies, infused water, and grapes for the participants. The picnic table and pop-up greenery installation contrasted the concrete urban setting, carving out a beautiful, perhaps even precious space for strangers to gather and exchange in spontaneous ways. Adopting beauty as a strategy was a way to foster a space for contemplation (Beech 2009).

Taking Back the Sky and *Possible/Possibilities* both raised questions around well-being as a fundamental necessity, and the importance of the histories of those devoted to fighting for what Lefebvre designates as the right to the city (Lefebvre 1968). This social concept is not a question of gaining access to necessary services; it is about the right to transform oneself by transforming the city. To further expand on the poetic remaking of space as a potentially metamodern approach or attitude, I continue by considering some of the research that led to my second "taking back" project: *Taking Back the Land* [Figure 3].

The germination for *Taking Back the Land* began on a walk in the once predominantly working class and now gentrifying neighborhood of Point-Saint-Charles in Montréal, when I came across a small resting park that had seventeen crabapple trees. This green patch of land, adorned with beautifying and edible trees (for humans and nonhumans alike) amidst a post-industrial cityscape by the train tracks, resonated with me as a special wedge of urban nature. Roughly the size of two small house lots, the church grew out of a Sunday school near the train tracks and stood there for thirty years, from 1858–1888, until the congregation became too large and was torn down and rebuilt in another location (SHPSC 2015). According to urban legend, a resident planted the crabapple trees in this abandoned space over twenty years ago. In a neighborhood that has a long history and spirit of activism, the green space has been officially recognized and named as a park, thanks to a citizens group who

made the request to the borough (Duquette 2009). Though residents continue to have an active engagement with this space, it has recently been under threat of being completely destroyed by the Canadian National Railway Company (CN). The citizens group held a protest in 2013 and succeeded in conserving the park. In the months that followed, residents have organized a series of family-friendly winter activities at the park as a way to demonstrate to the borough that they care about the preservation of their green space (Action-Gardien 2014).

With critical discussions about urban nature increasingly taking place in both academia and urban planning sectors, it is the emergence of autonomous social practices that have both inspired and participated in the cultivation of such spaces. For example, urban foraging proposes a radical shift in our relationship to urbanity—one that counters current modes of production and consumption in cities. Lefebvre's proposal that the right to transform oneself by transforming the city can be claimed as having an anarchist sentiment at its foundation. Interestingly, it is argued that modern forms of urban anarchism have their roots in the Diggers Movement, a Protestant radical movement in seventeenth century England.[1] The Diggers fought for common land and the right to grow food in leftover and neglected spaces (Awan, Schneider, and Till 2011). Cultivating land in urban spaces – whether it is for food, leisure, beautification, or a political provocation that brings into view who controls and exploits said land—is exemplified in Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield: A Confrontation, Battery Park Landfill, Downtown*. Completed in 1982 with the support of a Public Art Fund, a two-acre wheat field was planted on a landfill in lower Manhattan, two blocks from Wall Street and the World Trade Center, and facing the Statue of Liberty. The field was maintained for four months and then harvested, yielding over 1,000 pounds of healthy, golden wheat (Denes, nd). By being situated on land worth $4.5 billion, this project was symbolic insofar as "it represented food, energy, commerce, world trade, and economics. It referred to mismanagement, waste, world hunger and ecological concerns. It called attention to misplaced priorities" (ibid).

The community garden started by New York artist Liz Christy in the seventies, less than a decade before Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield*, provides an example of a longer-term project based on reimagining and remaking the city. Christy practiced and coined the term "guerrilla garden," which is the tactical action of planting seeds in neglected public spaces either for food or simply to beautify the city. At the time, inner-city neighbourhoods were in decline, the white middle-class had moved to the suburbs, and a lack of investment resulted in the steady decline of public spaces. Christy noticed plants growing out of rubbish, signaling for her some potential for developing green space, and so she began scattering seeds in empty spaces (Awan, Schneider, and Till 2011). This effort eventually culminated in a community garden that continues to exist in Manhattan's Bowery. It is open to anyone who needs a little refuge from the concrete jungle of the city.

Taking Back the Land is inspired by the histories, theories, projects, and initiatives discussed above. Consisting of printed matter and edible wildflower seed bombs[2] that will flourish in Montréal's biodiversity, the project invites guerrilla gardening as a gesture to both reimagine and remake our city. At a group exhibition held at a community space in the neighbourhood, seed bombs and screenprinted postcards were given away to visitors. Each postcard included information on the project, directions on how to seed bomb, and suggested recipes for the edible plants. As larger versions of the postcards, the screenprinted posters were wheat-pasted in various locations in the neighbourhood. For those who visited the exhibition, they could connect the posters to the project; without any context, the minimalist posters that read "taking back the land" and "reprendre la terre" created additional space for interpretation in hopes of provoking acknowledgment of place.

Through poetic gestures, *Taking Back the Sky*, *Possible/Possibilities* and *Taking Back the Land* explore how we can think about our urbanity as being connected to nature and not separate from us. These projects also consider how our right to well-being and social spaces is linked to our ability to individually transform cities. In the end, perhaps we can better navigate our

metamodernity by coming back to a sense of luxury, not in terms of material wealth, but through social spaces and social relations that foster quality time spent together. No doubt, claiming more autonomous moments of free time can potentially inspire new reimaginings and remakings that we collectively desire.

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TINA CARLISI

is an artist and doctoral candidate in the Individualized Program in Fine Arts at Concordia University. Carlisi's practice-based master's thesis, completed in 2013, surveyed artistic and experimental practices that emerged during the 2012 Québec student movement. Her doctoral research continues to examine the notion of the radical imagination and is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Carlisi has shown her work in solo and group exhibitions and has also collaborated on curatorial projects, events and interventions. Assembling only what is necessary, her work insists on minimalist forms to create a direct emotional impact in search of the poetic in the political and the political in the poetic.

www.tinacarlisi.com

WILLIAM BRERETON

THE VIEWER PERFORMS FOR EIJA-LIISA AHTILA

Performative Viewership in *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1*

Oscillating between reality and imagination, Helsinki-based artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila offers memorable opportunities for the viewer to find, and then let go of, one's self within *Ecologies of Drama*—a recent retrospective of her oeuvre at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo. The exhibition prompts the viewer to think, question, and imagine a 'different way of seeing.' As I encounter Athila's seminal work, *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1* (2014), an installation of four distinct cinematic projections, I wonder: If we could imagine and even embody a nonhuman existence, what constitutes our perception, and subsequently our phenomenology? The success of Ahtila's *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1* depends on the viewer's reflexive engagement leading them to imagine how different species experience sensory embodiment.

Initially, the viewer meets Kati: an actor who mediates, rather than guides one's experience of *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1* and whose lecture-presentation includes visual arts, cinema, literature, and theatre. The work implores the viewer to embrace new structures of drama and narrative that encourage ecological interdependence and stray away from anthropocentric points of view. In other words, all components of the landscape (trees, insects, animals) are vital performers in the scene. Kati also tactfully demonstrates different ways of seeing through case studies of dogs, birds, caterpillars and butterflies, etc.—which might seem like child's play at first, but becomes an opportunity to embody alternative modes of storytelling. Kati not only problematizes the ways in which human subjects represent nonhuman subjects in art, but also places the viewer at the centre of this ecology of drama. Throughout the different screenings, a group of drama students act out Kati's case studies, which echo in the body of the audience. By allowing the viewer to occupy a central placement in the physical space of the installation, Ahtila challenges the binary of performer versus viewer.

Kati's seminar negotiates how ecology, as a formulation of the performative, includes more than solely human subjects or elements. Laura Levin's description of the word 'ecology' highlights the relationship between ecology and performance, further clarifying the title of artwork and exhibition both. She writes:

> Derived from the Greek word oikos, meaning 'home' or 'dwelling place,' ecology refers to the interdependency of organisms and their environments. [Richard] Schechner redefines environment as ecology: 'to stage a performance 'environmentally' means more than simply to move it off of the proscenium or out of the arena. An environmental performance is one in which all the elements or parts making up the performance are recognized as alive.' (Levin 2014, 103)

Although Levin refers specifically to Schechner's theories on environmental performance, her definition nevertheless provides an apt segue to comprehend Kati's objective for dismantling the anthropocentric tendencies that compose mainstream drama or cinema, often reinforced by the cinematic apparatus.

On behalf of the artist, Kati criticizes cinema's fixation on 'human-made drama,' remarking that "with utter seriousness, we create a fiction that the world would be the same as this planet" (quoted in Chaffee 2015, 257). [1] The perception of the supposedly human viewer is meant to be altered, distanced from itself. Taking out a retractable easel, Kati compares 'dramaturgy' to 'drawn composition,' reinforcing this distance. She surmises:

The Finnish word for acting, näytellä, is derived from the verb näyttää, to show. If we therefore view acting as a form of showing, we expand the sphere of potential actors or performers and of the way of performing in a recorded image. . . .Therefore, in a story, a human, a rabbit, a bush, or frost can all have equal status as performers. This idea allows the inclusion of different creatures in the presentation of the reality of the planet. (260)

The Finnish linguistic context for this work supports Levin's notion that all human and nonhuman bodies are performers in an ecology. One shows, rather than tells, in complex environments that speak without language. Levin and Ahtila correspondingly reiterate that

the performative is about 'showing.'

Levin supports my analysis of Ahtila's viewer – who is tasked with considering how nonhuman elements perform in our ecologies – when she writes that "the site emerges in a mode of perception open to the sensuous self-showing of the physical world and which, due to the limitations of human language, exceeds the spectator's ability to fully grasp it" (Levin 2014, 110). As one participates in Ahtila's extended cinema, there is a sense that the human subject encompasses a small position in comparison to the vastness of the installation (and beyond). Kati has a moment where she lectures beside a tree, and notes:

> There is a tree in front of me. When I stop here, the tree is at the left edge of the frame and we stand in correlation. In this picture, there are clearly two performers although their manner of performing is different. The composition in the picture gives a place for us both. (258)

She continues to subvert anthropocentric modes of thinking, and subtly hints to the viewer that we, too, are small in comparison to the vastness of the space outside the frame. Jane Bennett writes that "if matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated" (Bennett 2010, 13). Bennett echoes one of Ahtila's strongest takeaways for the artwork, where each elements' material composition supports and enriches all others', and their shared status as performer.

In terms of the viewer's performative engagement, the power of an artwork to elicit imagination requires more than a passive glance. Alison Butler writes, "What the viewer of Ahtila's work shares is not a self-effacing illusion, but a self-acknowledging illusion, which, nevertheless, may form a world. As [Victor] Perkins argues, the coherence of cinematic worlds depends, ultimately, on the viewer: . . . 'Our imagination of the world is impressively independent of the means of representation'"

(Butler 2015, 17). Together, Kati and the viewer participate in a 'self-acknowledging illusion,' which collides with perceptions of reality. The binary of fact and fiction, similarly to that between viewer and performer, is dismantled as Kati provides an overview of various animals' perceptions of environment. The twenty-eight-minute video(s) confronts the viewer to stand up (literally) and see the world from more than one vantage point. For example, Kati stands on her balcony and looks at the sky. This image encompasses one screen, while the remaining three screens show several common swifts (appearing small from a distance) in the sky. Kati points out that

> Up there, a flock of swifts is flying. There they go, swooping up and down. It is difficult to see them with the naked human eye because they are so high up in the light and a camera may record them even worse. There they are again, for these few summer months. (261)

Even if the moment of pause required for the viewer to adjust their placement in the space and respond to the movement on-screen is short-lived, Kati's sincere curiosity for the world-at-large continues to resonate beyond physical cues.

While the poetics of the work could suggest that Ahtila formulated *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1* from speculative, creative writing, the artist (along with her actor) demonstrates that a substantial amount of biological research was completed as a means for Kati to present nonhuman forms of storytelling. For example, when she walks across an 'airy' set design to present the life of the common swift, Kati states:

> It is one of the fastest birds in the world. For a bird, it is also long lived: it can live up to fifteen years or more. The swift spends practically its entire life in the air. When a young swift leaves the nest, it may spend the next three years in the air without landing even once. It eats, sleeps, and mates in the air; it feeds its young in the air; it catches its nest material in the air . . . (263)

As I enjoy the work's representation of air, listening to Kati's account of life in the sky reminds me of how the human experience could be considered leisurely in comparison to a common swift. Earlier, the installation features a slow-motion video of tall, bearded gentleman jumping on the trampoline. The accompanying text states, "When a human speed of jumping is 5km/h and a swift flies 100 k/h, then, if the time frequency of the jump is to be equal to the bird's flight, the slowing down needs to be twentyfold" (262). These comparisons not only continue to challenge the viewer's phenomenological observation, but also remind us to look outside of our own life experience. When compared to the swift, our lives could be deemed as slow, even though it might be commonly assumed that the human mind provokes quick living.

All human and nonhuman actors convey a sense of consciousness in Ahtila's work, supported by the emphasis on nonhuman performativity in Kati's conversation about narrative formation. Similarly in opposition to human exceptionalism, Laura Cull writes: "There can be no discrete identity for the human (which excludes all nonhumans) based on the possession of consciousness; rather consciousness is possessed to varying extents by all animals, making the difference between them a matter of degree rather than kind" (Cull 2015, 22). The strongest take-away moments in *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1* happen when one envisions phenomenological thought as encompassing the nonhuman. To this end, Daniel Birnbaum queries: "Is it this phenomenology of the experiencing subject that interests Ahtila, or is the multidimensionality only a means to an end that must be described in quite different terms" (Birnbaum 2015, 37)? As a response to his question, it is essential not only to highlight the phenomenology of multiple 'experiencing subjects,' but also to amplify Kati's most memorable case study, which demonstrates the true crux of her thesis investigation.

Kati and her volunteers set up sleeping bags on oak trees as an attempt to imagine the phenomenology of the caterpillar (whose physical body completely disintegrates in the cocoon to metamorphose into a butterfly). During the process, Kati muses,

> How would it be possible to understand a different kind of existence on this same planet? If our perception is limited by our own senses, how far can our understanding reach? . . . Let's enlist a creature whose life can help us understand this better. One of the greatest experts in changing one's point of view is surely the butterfly, a common insect whose species have spread around the world. (264)

While the viewer is surrounded by video projections of dormant sleeping bags at dusk, we are left to think about what would happen if we, the human subject, experienced a radical shift in our perception of time and space. If I could place myself in a sleeping bag and transform into an alternate being, the art gallery becomes a place of gestation. In other words, the viewer might walk into the artwork with one set of preconceived ideas that later evolve to form a 'new life' as a result.

Ahtila's artistic practice, as a catalyst for the viewer's performance, also encourages a de-autonomous avenue for the viewer to interpret one's surroundings . By 'de-autonomous' I do not mean to refer to the opposite of 'freedom,' but a plurality or simultaneity that blurs the lines of experience between life and art. Shannon Jackson aptly notes that "the de-autonomizing of the artistic event is itself an artful gesture, more and less self-consciously creating an intermedial form that subtly challenges the lines that would demarcate where an art object ends and the world begins. It is to make art from, not despite, contingency" (Jackson 2011, 28). The notion of contingency here is appropriate, because many of Kati's philosophical wonderings oscillate between lived experience and hypothetical scenarios. I recognize the power of Ahtila's artworks for encouraging a respect for contingency. Jackson's work proves especially insightful as the viewer sees how Ahtila formulates her oeuvre, opening room for the viewer to complete the work. The viewer thus performs by embodying Ahtila's intellectual haven.

As I near the end of my own ambling, I recall Kati's final scene when she discusses the infinite lifespan of a star:

> Here in the North, on a cold spring night, you can still see some stars in the sky although the sky is quite bright.
>
> It is possible that the star no longer exists although we still see it in the sky because it was so long ago that the light began its journey towards us that the star may have gone out. It's part of the essence of time. . . .
>
> The trace of light left by the star is like an event projected by light on a screen: a reflected, immaterial picture that nevertheless radiates a force that affects our reality. We necessarily imagine life - and the images in front of us play with existence and time. (267)

The star analogy reflects the lasting impact of this aesthetic experience. In a final performative moment, the group of drama students form a corporeal star in front of a beam light; the scene carries positive implications, which linger in one's mind.

In recollection, the viewer sees one's self within the totality of Ahtila's ecology and feels equal status amongst the performers in *Studies on the Ecology of Drama 1*. The ecology of drama, which might seem utopic at first, symbolizes the need to sensitize one's engagement with all living (and eventually non-living) matter. As the ecology seeps into intermedial discourses, the act of performance (in the case of showing) remains inherent to all interpretations of a scene. In recognizing that a different perception of time and space depends on the act of letting go, the viewer's performative gesture completes the piece. After all, it is only through phenomenological imagination that the ecology is always alive. Regardless of one's disposition, we have and always will perform in the ecology of drama.

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WILLIAM BRERETON'S

professional gallery experiences include work at the Art Gallery of Peterborough; Atlanta Contemporary (Georgia); the Art Gallery of Mississauga; the Museums of Mississauga; and the Art Gallery of York University. Brereton's scholarly research focuses on gallery viewership and the themes of memory, longing, and desire as represented in contemporary art. He is currently a M.A. candidate in Art History and Curatorial Studies at York University.

THE MICROBIAL SUBLIME

NICOLE CLOUSTON

We share the planet with trillions and trillions of microbes: life forms invisible to the naked eye, yet vital to the health of the planet and ourselves. They form vast, complex communities around, within, and on our bodies. In fact, we have ten times more microbial cells than human ones, and these microbes pass in and out of our bodies, permeating what we perceive to be the barrier between us and everything else. Our reaction to this microbial presence encompasses simultaneous awe and terror—an experience that has long been described in aesthetic theory as the sublime, and one I investigate through my practice-based research.

My conception of the microbial sublime has been informed by the bacterial sublime, a term coined by UK-based bio-artist Anna Dumitriu (2012). By moving from the bacterial to the microbial I am interested in shifting attention towards our symbiotic relationship with microbial life and the interconnected, permeable nature of our bodies. The microbial sublime includes bacteria, but it also refers to viruses, molds, yeasts and other life forms too small to see without a microscope.

The microbial sublime can be experienced through the visual presence of microbes, such as mold growing on the surface of coffee; physical symptoms, such as when we are infected with the rhinovirus (common cold); and new knowledge, such as learning that there are more microbes on the tip of one of our fingers than there are humans in the world (National Institutes of Health 2012). All of these encounters can result in the disruption of ordinary perception, triggering a deep, visceral understanding of the microbial presence within and on your body.

In my own practice I aim to contend with the microbial sublime by working with the ubiquitous bacteria, molds and yeasts that are in our bodies and

immediate environment. My most recent project *Normal Flora*, exhibited in the Art Gallery of York University vitrines in January 2016, made visible the consistently invisible microbial life already present in each space. A sheet of gauze dipped in nutrient agar—the medium used in petri dishes to grow bacteria and other microorganisms—was installed in each vitrine. When exposed, the microbial life present began to grow on the sculpture's surface, becoming visible to the naked eye. By revealing the microbes already in the space, I was able to provide viewers with an opportunity to confront the microbial presence in our environment in a physical and embodied way. For me, what is most interesting and significant about the microbial sublime is its potential to shift understanding by being experienced.

Psychologists Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt argue that awe is a powerful trigger for change in human behavior because it leads to accommodation: the process of adjusting mental structures that cannot assimilate a new experience. Awe challenges mental structures when they fail to make sense of what they are experiencing, prompting mental expansion to accommodate truths never before known (Keltner and Haidt 2003, 303). Keltner and Haidt (2003, 312) argue that experiences of the sublime can transform people and reorient their lives, goals and values, asserting that, "…awe-inducing events may be one of the fastest and most powerful methods of personal change and growth." When experiencing the microbial sublime, we are confronted with the knowledge that our bodies are not closed systems, but porous parts of our environment. By accommodating this awareness we recognize our interconnectivity with the world, the fact that we are enmeshed in our environment, and that any separation between our ecosystem and ourselves is arbitrary. It is possible that by acknowledging our deep, bodily connection with microbes, and by extension our environment, we may foster a stronger, more sustainable and empathetic relationship with our ecosystem as a whole.

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NICOLE CLOUSTON

is a practice-based researcher currently completing her PhD in Visual Art at York University. Nicole uses scientific techniques as artistic medium in her sculptural work in order to engage the ineffable aspects of scientific knowledge.

Her work can be found at **http://nicoleclouston.com/**.

DANIEL LISET

Floating Bodies/Falling Bodies.

Metamodernism and the Questioning of Post-Photography.

In the fall of 2015, Montreal was host to the 14th edition of the Mois de la Photo biennial, curated by Catalan artist and writer Joan Fontcuberta. Entitled *The Post-Photographic Condition*, the biennial invited visitors to consider a world where photography, once pronounced dead (Batchen 2002; 128), was reconfigured (or rather, reanimated) by apparatuses that could only be designated as post-photographic. In an introductory text for the biennial, Fontcuberta writes:

"We are at a crucial moment in the history of images. The proliferation of cameras and digital point-and-shoot devices, the incorporation of picture taking into cell phones, the Internet, social networks, new surveillance technologies, the development of virtual reality devices—all this and more is configuring a second digital revolution in which the identity of photography must be rethought. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, eBay and Blurb have become tools for experimentation and new creative processes. Today, how can we define photographic quality? Is it possible to identify the photographic canon arising from these new vernacular spaces of the image?" (Bors 2015)
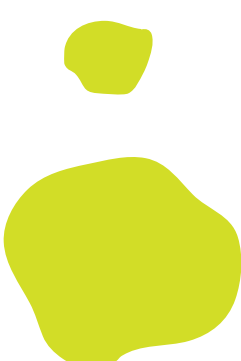
In Fontcuberta's reading, post-photography appears as a historically situated, technical reality of the image,
coinciding with the arrival of computer imaging in the late 20th century, followed by the widespread use of digital cameras and the omnipresence of social media in the early 21st century. But a second definition of the post-photographic precedes Fontcuberta and his biennial; this definition focuses not only on a technical reality, but a semantic condition of the image, conceived in opposition to the *photographic* (Krauss 1990).

The repeated use of "post-photography" as a term since the late 1980s makes unclear what about photography has been revolutionized by the coming of digital technologies. In the 1980s and 1990s, the digital revolution led to a rapid change in means of production of the image. Today, photography has seemingly re-entered a second revolution that implies another change in image production (from the digital camera to the smart phone, for example), but also in image circulation, which now relies on social media as a platform. This second revolution establishes a clear parallel with photographic practices of the 19th and 20th centuries—practices that were founded on a desire to produce and circulate images as widely as possible.[1]
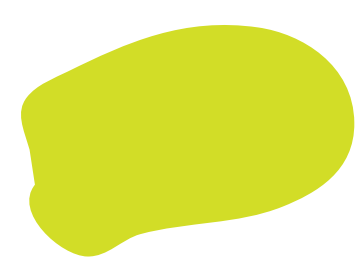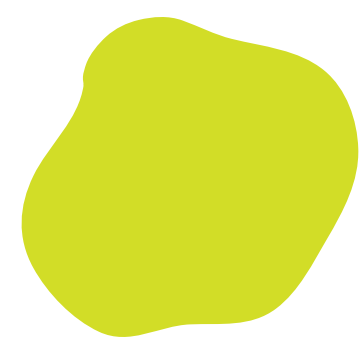
Therefore, it seems necessary to analyse the *photographic/post-photographic* schism established since the late 1980s when describing late capitalist—or *digital capitalist* (Schiller 1999)—societies' rapports to images. Metamodernism

is a choice tool for rethinking this founding opposition of contemporary photographic theory, insofar as it encourages researchers to think beyond classic oppositions that structure their field, namely: modernism/post-modernism, analog/digital, theory/practice, professional/amateur, or art/non-art. I'm especially interested in the idea that metamodernism, although a fairly recent concept, has been theorized since the mid-1970s; this mirrors my preoccupation for studying contemporary photographic practices by looking not only at recent writings, but also at historical texts. This cross-contextual methodology tries to counter what François Hartog (2012, 135) has designated as "presentism": a "regime of historicity" that is characteristic of our era, a "present that rises itself up against the past," and an obsession with considering the past only through the traces it has left in the present.

I believe current photographic practices must be considered in continuum with 19th and 20th century practices, not because these periods linger as indexes in our present, but because there is a persistant cultural and social flux that runs counter to the dynamic installed by post-photography. For example, post-photography suggests a clear distinction between a restrictive group of specialists and an extended network of amateur users. As the former group is able to posit the existence of post-photography, the latter is still considering their practice as photographic. The persistence of photography is evidenced by the ways social medias use the term "photograph" to designate the images that will be uploaded by their users. In the most recent version of Facebook's iOs app, users are invited not to share pictures or images, but photos; Flickr similarly asks its viewers to share *photos*. If current photographic practices call upon a reinterrogation of the distinction between artistic practices and amateur practices, this reinterrogation should also have an effect on the terminology used in our debates.

Post-photography, which should allow us to look back critically at the collective cultural construction of photography since the 19th century, is often only interested in a select group of theorists' critical reading of the situation.

Reflecting on photography's history alongside metamodernism can seem counter-intuitive here, as the concept seems to be a rather recent preoccupation for cultural theorists. The concept recently gained popularity through the wide circulation of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker's article "Notes on Metamodernism," published in 2010. Luke Turner's *Metamodernist Manifesto*, published in 2011 and also widely circulated, contributed to the growing interest in metamodernist discourse as well. The first three bullet points of Turner's manifesto read as such:

1. We recognise oscillation to be the natural order of the world.
2. We must liberate ourselves from the inertia resulting from a century of modernist ideological naivety and the cynical insincerity of its antonymous bastard child.
3. Movement shall henceforth be enabled by way of an oscillation between positions, with diametrically opposed ideas operating like the pulsating polarities of a colossal electric machine, propelling the world into action. (Turner 2011)

It is important to note that both post-photography and metamodernism rhetorically borrow from strategies of revolutionary movements, such as in Luke Turner's use of the manifesto-form, or post-photography theorists' insistence on proclaiming the death of the photographic medium (and the coming of a digital revolution). To this point, media theorist Kevin Robins (1995) notes that "the debate on post-photography has become obsessed with the 'digital revolution' and how it is transforming epistemological paradigms and models of vision." Robins points to the structural similarities between metamodern and post-photographic movements, which complement the three aforementioned bullet points of Turner's manifesto: recognition of a fact (the death of photography/oscillation), the possibility of liberation from historical shackles (an image revolution/a concept revolution), and the birth of a new image order (postmodern visual culture).

There are interesting parallels between the new incarnation of metamodernism and the existence of post-photography. However, I would like to consider another theoretical stream of metamodernism in my analysis, based not on recent articles but on a contemporary rereading of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's 1975 article "The Apocalyptic Fact and the Eclipse of Fiction in Recent American Prose Narratives." In order to do so, I turn my attention to images, or rather *an* image, by French artist Yves Klein, entitled *Obsession de la lévitation (Le saut dans le vide)* [Obsession with Levitation (Leap into the Void)] from 1960.[2]

Obsession de la levitation is a photomontage that Klein produced by fusing two images taken by Shunk-Kender, a duo of European documentary photographers. Harry Shunk and János Kender started working first in Paris in the early 1960s, then moved to New York; they were instrumental in capturing several ephemeral art events of the time, like Yayoi Kusama's late-1960s Happenings or early 1970s interventions by John Baldessari and Vito Acconci. Shunk and Kender were invited by Yves Klein in October 1960 to document a re-enactment of a performance Klein claimed to have done a number of months prior, in which the artist had been able to levitate after jumping from the roof of a building. He re-enacted this "performance" by jumping from the second-floor window of his art dealer's house on Rue Gentil-Bernard, in the Paris suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses.

Evidently, Klein was only metaphorically levitating in this picture. The illusion of the levitating body is created by superimposing two different negatives to create a photomontage. The first half of the picture shows the artist jumping and removes the artist's entourage posted on the street, ready to catch the artist with their net. The second half of the picture is a street view, probably taken after the jump, with the camera in the same po-

sition as for the documentation of the jump. Two versions of the photomontage were created by Klein. In one version, the street is left completely empty. In another version, there is a bicycle on the street. Klein chose the version including the bicycle to put on the cover of his self-published newspaper *Dimanche—Le Journal d'un Seul Jour*, of which he printed only one edition, on Sunday November 27, 1960. The newspaper was printed in the exact same format as the *Journal du Dimanche*, the Sunday edition of the well-read newspaper *France-Soir*. Klein's *Dimanche* was sold throughout France, on newsstands.

Dimanche contains, along with *Leap into the Void*, a sort of manifesto written by the artist called "Theater of the Void." In this manifesto, Klein borrows from Berthold Brecht and Antonin Artaud's competing definitions of avant-garde theatre to propose a theatre of the future, a "spectacle enacted without actors, without stage design, without a stage, without an author, without an audience" (Vergne 2010). Philippe Vergne (2010) highlights one of the theater projects proposed by Klein, where the artist "[hires] passersby as actors but does not ask them to do anything besides just sit, unnoticed, amidst the crowd while the audience was in the theater. The theater would be closed the night of the 'premiere.'"

Yves Klein's image—and his art practice generally—exemplifies a number of photographic practices that could be identified as *metamodern*. Daily experience, and our perception of it, is theorized by Zavarzadeh (1975, 83) as something that "simply is," and the removal of art's obligation of being either "significant" or "absurd." Klein's image involves both the everyday and the significant, the ordinary and the extraordinary by juxtaposing the floating body with the use of documentary photography, the repetition of a gesture, and the use of mass media. The fairly straightforward use of documentary photography as a means to prove the veracity of an event, even if only to trick the viewer of the image, is proof of Zavarzadeh's position that "fact-dependent metanarratives continue to exist," but that they are "necessarily unstable" (Abramson 2015). There is an indeterminacy between the falling body and the floating body that's noted in Klein's two-part title for the photos: the intentionality of levitation matched with the

unpredictability of a leap into the void.

As Seth Abramson proposes in a recent article (2015), if we were to properly identify a metamodernist gesture, we might fare better with "juxtaposition" than with Vermeulen and van den Akker's proposed "oscillation" or "metaxy." Abramson's interest in /juxtaposition/ lies in its frequent appearance in metamodern theory. We could push further the idea of juxtaposition in Klein's work by considering the practice of another artist, Japanese photographer Yasumasa Morimura. Morimura is well known for a project entitled *A Requiem* that consists of a sprawling number of photographic re-enactments of images taken from the art world and visual culture at large. In the third chapter of the *Requiem*, entitled *Theater of Creativity*, the Japanese photographer re-enacts Klein's image, complete with a bike circling the street under his levitating body (Tate 2016). This possibility of re-enactment, facilitated by the availability of digital manipulation technologies, confirms the idea that Klein's image is best considered

not as a fixed image, but a set of instructions for a repeated performance.

We could consider Klein's photograph as a precursor for a number of photographs accumulated on blogs and social media platforms that show bodies levitating in unremarkable conditions. Flickr counts more than 63,000 uploaded photographs in which the subject is shown levitating, either through digital manipulation or by photographing a body in action. In an opposite (or simultaneous) fashion, we could also consider Klein's photograph by studying its historical predecessors, such as amateurs in the 1880s that used the instantaneous gelatin-silver process to produce images of bodies that appear to be either floating or falling. In a sense, this reading of photographs renders visible Klein's theatre of the void, the delimitation of a space where everyone/no-one is an artist, everything/nothing is a stage, everything is spectacle and its opposite. What unites these pictures are common subject matters, certainly, but also a broader definition of photography that is essentially a zone of reconcillia-

tion between opposing forces: neither fact nor fiction, neither document nor work of art, always-already being re-read through a number of variants. This recalls Zavarzadeh's "world-as-it-is," a world where cultural products are liberated from "imposed schemes of meaning" (Zavarzadeh 1975, 69). Moreover, current photography recalls Zavarzadeh's account of metafiction and non-fiction novels, described as "enactments of a refusal to reduce the puzzling multiplicity of the contemporary experience into a monolithic fictive construct" (Zavarzadeh 1975, 83): the main difference here is that, while in Zavarzadeh's view artists conserve a certain form of authorial power, new ways of indeterminately circulating photographic content transfers this refusal of the monolith to all cultural producers.

The "mistrust of the epistemological authority of the fictive novelist" and the fading away of the "dividing line between fact and fiction" Zavarzadeh describes in his essay (1975, 69) echoes post-photography's theory that "no one now believes that a photographic image represents an event that has happened at a given time and at a given place" (Lipkin 2006, 9).[3] Kevin Robins (1995), noticing that instability in contemporary image production, distribution, and consumption, writes: "The significance and implications of the 'image revolution' have already been discursively fixed and contained. The certainties of the photographic era have been deconstructed, and we are now ready, it seems, to come to terms with the fragility of ontological distinctions between imaginary and real."

But a metamodernist reading of photography does more than reinforce a recurring doubt in the truth of the image, or offer a chance for artists to reinvent an authority troubled by new means of circulating images: metamodernism allows a reconsideration of every actor's position in the chain of production of art, moving away from a deterministic categorization of photography as either art or non-art. Borrowing from Michel de Certeau's essential distinction between strategy and tactic (1984, xix), metamodernism would be considered here a *juxtaposing tactic*—meaning that it is

not necessarily the work of art in itself, through the reactivated authority of the author, that contains the movement of the world, but the objects in relation to one another, their positions and dynamics constantly shifting, that constitutes the true originality of our epoch. This hypothesis considers that objects are not "beings," but "beings-with-one-another," as Jean-Luc Nancy would say: that they cannot be conceived of on their own, that they are constantly redefined by their juxtaposed interaction, that "there is no other meaning than the meaning of circulation" (Nancy 1995, 3).

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DANIEL FISET

is an art historian, educator, and curator based in Montreal. His research, funded by SSHRC and FQRSC, is interested in the links between contemporary art photography and visual culture, which he analyses using a methodology that allies technology studies and philosophy of photography. Fiset currently works at DHC/ART-Foundation for Contemporary Art, where he collaboratively oversees public and educational programming.

WITCHBODY:
a rambling & poetic autoethnography of western occult magic as a pathway for environmental learning & advocacy

SABRINA SCOTT

WITCHBODY: a rambling & poetic autoethnography of western occult magic as a pathway for environmental learning & advocacy is a 72-page talismanic, risographed comic book about ontology and city magic. Magic, through practice, can shift the dominant estrangement between human and nonhuman bodies to the extent that humans often only see themselves when the word 'body' is referenced or notions of agency considered. Instead, magic can effectively open up notions of world, body, agency, and action. Magic is (literally) in the doing.

The work appeared to me at first as tendrils of thought and daydream, emerging almost as if on its own accord and with considerable force. It has never been my intention to create a conventional academic product; I didn't want to produce a PDF or Word document that would live only on the computer screen or printed out, double-spaced and double-sided, read by a handful of people and eventually lost to bookkeeping and bureaucracy. I wanted to let something flow forth from my bones, unabashed: like a breath, an exhale, the spit of excess saliva onto the sidewalk. This project is nothing if not personal, and I wanted it to read like a peek into my brain, my flesh, my soul, rather than words strung together by citation upon citation. I wanted to dive deep into the tactile materiality of artworks made within ritual, and participate in a creation process vital to many occult pub-

lics. When studying magic it is not enough to simply read and write. One must manifest: situate oneself within the practice and *engage* rather than observe from afar.

So what did I do? I made a thing. Or rather, *we* made a thing—my human body, five different types of india ink, mechanical pencils, white gum erasers, my ancestor spirits, a diverse selection of cheap professional paintbrushes, endless triple soy lattes, a few choice songs, table salt, opium incense. Years of collaboration with plants, animals, garbage bins, the energetic current of intuitive witchcraft, and the lumpy three-headed body of knowledge that is Object-Oriented Ontology, Speculative Realism, and Science Studies culminates in this project. We come together and we make. We manifest. Together, we do philosophy. My muscles remember how to draw, and animated by ephemeral collaborative force I feel, channel, medium. What materials are used to channel? Human bodies, india ink? Who is the channel, who channels? Who is using whom to speak? Sometimes, I'm not sure.

My practice as an artist and illustrator is inseparable from my magical practice. Whatever the context, I view my collaborators in much the same way, and invite them to manifest with me. This book, too, is Bogostian carpentry. We *make* philosophy. Theory and pedagogy is not only in

the end product: it is in the *doing*, in the relating, in the ugliness and alienation and chaos of the building. Letting go, becoming, allowing, and unfurling. Magic may not manifest quite the way you imagine it will. You're not the only one making it; it is only as strong as your weakest relationship.

This book is both *about spirits*, and *contains spirits*. It is a talisman. I won't tell you how, but if you're called to it, it will change you. Some spirits will massage themselves into your life: you may notice them, you may not.

Each copy of *Witchbody* is an original print—a collaboration between artist, printer, ink, and machine. It is printed with risograph ink, which is unique in that it never really dries. After extended reading you may find your fingers stained just slightly, and on each creamy page, if you look closely, you'll be able to see fingerprints: inky, yours, barely noticeable. It will show you your relationship to it, where you have touched it and where you have been. It will draw your attention to the marks you are always making. It will show you that it can mark you, too. Over time, the marks become darker, images and words smear. This printing technique is meant to highlight the tactile dialogue between assemblages of objects and humans and bodies in between.

It is of the utmost importance to me that I centre objects in this work. I wish to centre how the objects we exist alongside push back on us, how they shape our bodies, create our forms, and curate our spaces. I invite you to think about how you co-act with other bodies, how you co-produce with beings whose agency you may have left unnoticed. And yet still, they act with you, or maybe within you.

You may notice the sun anew—see the grass, leaves, office buildings, and cubicles changed. You may begin your morning with a cup of tea, and as you sip, you may find yourself wondering what it is like to be a cup. What can that wondering mean for the environment, or for education more broadly? What can it mean for art and creativity today?

As a sensory autoethnography, my work cannot help but be about me – but it's about you, too. You, too, are entangled. I invite you to move with me on this journey. Maybe fast, maybe slow.

I hope you'll accept my invitation.

SABRINA SCOTT

is doing their PhD in Science and Technology Studies at York University in Toronto. Their research concerns magic, books, and activism, but has shifted to interrogate the relationship between magic and science. Sabrina is a lifelong witch and Spiritualist, and works as an illustrator, designer, and tarot reader.

You can find them at:

WITCHBODY.COM
sabrinadraws@gmail.com
INSTA: @witchbodystudio / @immateriality