

PAVED MEANT

Vol.1(2012-2014)



Foreward

Fostering an environment for open critical discourse within our community is an essential function of PAVED Arts. As attested to by the writing included in this anthology, PAVED's diverse programming continues to generate an equally diverse and rich interplay of ideas. Behind these writers' various insights and observations is a very real engagement with the artworks they're investigating. The feedback an exhibiting artist receives through such critical response is invaluable in evaluating and developing her practice. Revisiting these exhibitions in the writing and documentation included here provides us with the opportunity to experience an exciting array of art projects with fresh ears, through a new lens.

On behalf of the PAVED Arts Board of Directors, I would like to thank our staff for all of their hard work and dedication in making the exhibitions in this volume happen. Thanks also to our members, funders and partners for their important contributions and support. Special thanks to all of the artists who have exhibited at PAVED Arts for sharing your practice with our communities in Saskatoon. Finally, a big congratulations and thanks to all of the writers for bringing their own unique perspective in exploring our centre's programming and inviting us along for the ride.

Tod Emel

Chair - PAVED Arts Board of Directors



Top: Scott Massey, *Anti-Advertising*, PAVED Arts Billboard Project, 2014

Bottom: Jean-Sébastien Gauthier, *They Pulled the Wolves Over Our Eyes*, PAVED Arts Billboard Project, 2013. Photo credit: J.S. Gauthier.

PAVED Arts is a non-profit, artist run centre for production, presentation, research and dissemination of contemporary media arts. The word PAVED is an acronym signifying the integration of media art forms addressed by our mandate: photographic, audio, video, electronic, digital. PAVED exists to support artists who work in these media.

Our mandate is to support local, regional and national artists working in the 'PAVED' arts by operating an access and production centre for media and new media creation, while simultaneously operating a presentation centre that exhibits and disseminates contemporary visual, media and new media art in time-based, gallery, and off-site modes.

PAVED Meant Vol. 01

A Two Year Anthology of Critical Writing from PAVED Arts in Saskatoon

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1.

*The Shaman Exterminator:
On the Trail of the Woodcraft Indians
with the Buffalo Boy Scouts of America*

Glenn Alteen Interviews Adrian Stimson



2.



3.

November 2 to December 8, 2012.

The Shaman Exterminator: On the Trail of the Woodcraft Indians with the Buffalo Boy Scouts of America

It's hard to keep up with Adrian Stimson! You have to keep moving. Whenever you think you have a bead on him he shows up somewhere else doing something completely different. You never really know where you're headed. It's enough just to follow and keep up- if you can!

I've worked with Adrian three times in this past year: on the *Ghostkeeper Project* where he recreated a 1992 performance work of Ahasiw Maskegon Iskewew at VIVO/OnMain; last April on a project commissioned by grunt gallery; and (as of this writing) he is installing the exhibition *Holding Our Breath* at grunt- a show that reflects his stint as one of Canada's official war artists, which brought him to Kandahar a few years ago.

Lately it's *The Shaman Exterminator*, a project mounted both at Platform in Winnipeg and at PAVED Arts in Saskatoon. It starts out being about the Spirit Sands but quickly morphs in other directions, changing in scale and scope. We conducted this interview in the dying days of 2012, just as the Idle No More movement was in its genesis, providing an important counterpoint to Adrian's new work. As we email back and forth the movement gains momentum. There is round dancing in the malls before Christmas, along city streets, and there is the prolonged hunger strike of Chief Teresa Spence.

Glenn Alteen: I'm wondering where to start here. In the Spirit Desert? Burning Man? *The Woodcraft Indians? The Shaman Exterminator? The Return of Buffalo Boy?* It's a bit overwhelming! Can you take us through this rich landscape of contrasting ideas and images?

Adrian Stimson: I'll start at the beginning: Carberry, Manitoba. I really did not know how to proceed with this residency that Platform¹ created. Originally, it was going to be a *Buffalo Boy* performance in the Spirit Sands. Yet the logistics of that became a little daunting, so I decided that it would become a photo/video shoot that would later become performative. Collin Zipp (my assistant provided by Platform) and I headed out on a two day exploration of the Sands. Before we went to the Spirits Sands Park, we decided to stop in Carberry to look for accommodations for the night, which brought us to the Seton Centre, a small museum, art gallery, and gift shop on the main street, dedicated to the life and works of Ernest Thompson Seton. I had no idea that Seton had lived in Carberry. I have used a number of Seton quotes over the years, specifically his calculation that there were 75 million bison in the Americas before contact. This coincidence began the formation of the exhibition. The museum contained many of his writings. Titles such as *The Gospel of the Red Man* and *Woodcraft Indian Lore* excited me, they were totally ripe for the taking, or shall I say "re-appropriation" by Buffalo

Boy and the Shaman Exterminator. So the stage was set and, since this was a journey, I decided on the idea of *On the Trail*. Where that trail would take me I did not know but trusted that something would form... and it did.

We managed to shoot a lot of video and do a photographic shoot of the Shaman. I was thinking about mystery, the absence of the bison on the landscape, mythology and how stories are created. I was also thinking about the spirits in this land and how it was and is a visioning space where ceremony and quests happen. All these ideas started to form the narrative of my project and the journey.

Once we were out of the desert and I started looking at the video and photos, I began more research into the Woodcraft Indian movement and discovered all its branches, including the Boy Scouts of America. A narrative of colonization, appropriation and dressing up as Indian started to emerge. As I have done a lot of research on this topic over the years I started to form a thesis that the Woodcraft movement and Seton's books were part of the appropriation of Indian regalia, stories etc., but with an interesting twist: New Age spiritualism. I could see the tenets of religious practice emerging in the writings, yet they had an indigenous flavor-very weird. Anyway, the *Shaman Exterminators'* purpose is to bust up or interfere with New Age spirituality, so more of the trail was revealed. It really felt like I was on a journey that was unfolding itself and that I

was a vessel being guided somehow. As this was a journey of coming to know the history of the woodcraft and its various manifestations, it made sense that a performance in Santa Fe and my annual trip to Burning Man would be included in this exploration. Both locations are in deserts, which fit the desert theme, and both deal a lot with appropriation and/or the exploitation of indigenous life and material culture. In Santa Fe, I would dress up as a Colonial Ranger, Irish man, White Santa Fe woman stereotype, and finally Indian; appropriations and re-appropriations. It was great as the annual Indian market was on, where you could see the spectacle, white privilege, consumption, power and control. At the end of the performance, Terrance Houle, Jamison Chas Banks and I were dressed in loin cloths (car chamois) and fake kids' headdresses bought in the market, we circled each other then wrestled each other to the ground, an internal and external struggle. Are we fighting ourselves, each other or the colonial project? Again, it is the development of "Manifest Destiny," the taking of the hide but not the meat or the spirit of the animal.

I decided to include Burning Man as I have been going out into the desert annually for the past 12 years. Burning Man is also rife with appropriations, yet in some weird way it becomes acceptable in the desert. Well, it doesn't yet. We as a group suspend our judgement for that week and allow radical self

expression, which of course includes radical appropriation- I still need to think this one through as I am personally conflicted about it. I do realize that there are a lot of theoretical problems with Burning Man, yet it sure is fun.

So basically that was the journey. I videoed and photographed all these places, in hopes of somehow weaving a story together. Once back in my studio, I started to stalk the internet for regalia appropriations, to see how the Woodcraft could have manifested into other movements. This is where I started to make the connections to Germany, hippies, survivalists, Hollywood, politics and such. It just so happened that a number of fashion houses were being called publicly on their appropriations and had to make apologies – the timing was right as it seems to be a current trend. Several Facebook groups have formed to combat appropriations of indigenous culture. The journey was overwhelming as there was so much to work from; I tried to distill it, yet there are so many images to choose from. My use of the images is also an appropriation, without permission and blatant. Yet I hope it strikes a chord with viewers, so they understand the history and hopefully discover more, which of course is what being *On The Trail* is all about – discovery.

GA: One thing I do notice, though, is how your interests fit into a trend of recent work around the appropriation and

misrepresentation of First Nations in early 20th Century children's education and literature. Your piece is at least somewhat about Ernest Thompson Seton and his Woodcraft Indians, an early version of the Boy Scouts. Recently I read about Kent Monkman's work around Karl May's characters Old Shatterhand and Winnitou and just saw Terrance Houle's exhibition on Indian Leg Wrestling, a practice invented by the Boy Scout Movement. It seems like there's something in the air. I'm curious where that is coming from?

AS: I think it has always been there, simmering under the surface. All of our work has played with this subject and it also seems to be a big part of popular culture right now, with the emergence of the hipsters and the fake headdresses, and various fashion designers ripping off indigenous designs, as well as in the movies. It seems now more than ever that indigenous artists comment. I just saw a trailer for the movie, *A Glimpse Inside the Mind of Charles Swan III*, where white women are Indian warriors.² It just never ends...

GA: The way this switches into the Seton stuff seems amazingly serendipitous, providing an amazing focus for all these divergent elements. Though I do understand what you say about it simmering under the surface. It seemed an earlier generation of First Nations artists were looking at the "disappearing Indian" through artists like

George Caitlin, Edward Curtis, and Emily Carr, who were presenting a colonial narrative of the fading and assimilated First Nations. This work seems aimed at the childhood education of that colonial history presented through children's literature and different scouting activities. Both narratives present a romanticized and idealized vision of First Nations. Representations of the Hollywood Indian (or the Boy Scout Indian) seem to perpetuate heroic views of First Nations at the same time as legislators through the Indian Act are attempting their assimilation. And given the recent events this week around unilateral changes to the Indian Act by the Harper Government, those attempts at assimilation are ongoing. How do these appropriations play into these legislated attempts at assimilation and disappearance? It's as if by mythologizing First Nations they can hasten their extinction. I remember an article in *The Walrus* a few years back where these German *Karl May Indians* were flying to Canada and being met by Cree elders. The Germans got off the plane in full Plains regalia to be greeted by the Cree in jeans and cowboy boots. The German's questioned whether they were "real" Indians.

AS: I think in a weird way it legitimizes assimilation, kind of like we honour your culture by imitating it, therefore it's okay to take whatever we want, only "the good parts" (in the settlers' eyes) and the rest should be forgotten... especially the land and resources.

Yes, turning us into myths is a good way to promote extinction. When I think about what a "real" Indian is, I too have that colonial image seared into my mind, the first thing I think of is feathers and buckskin, the romantic ideal. I know first hand the tenets of brainwashing, I experience this every day, and it started in residential school. It's diabolical really, subtle and constant. It has taken me a life time to what I like to call "change my mind," kind of stalk it to notice when the colonial program kicks into action, then reprogram. This all kind of sounds like the plot of *The Matrix*, but I really do feel that we have all been programmed and duped into this Western experiment. Media is the pacifier and controller, constantly sending messages that keep us in our place, reinforcing colonial ideas, similar to the Borg, "resistance is futile," which most of us believe. This is where I see indigenous artists pushing back or reprogramming, maybe even inserting a virus to crash the system. This is where the *Shaman Exterminator* comes into play. While he/she has parallels with Plains tribes buffalo shaman and dancers, the *Shaman Exterminator* is a "virus" inserted into the program to mess things up, to confuse, to scare, to intimidate and ultimately to laugh at. To expose that everything is a construction within the mind and that there are many programs to choose from, not just the colonial project.

GA: And of course this all plays out in Santa Fe and in Burning Man. While your re-appropriations are skillful at turning these images on their ear, is there a fear that it's only the First Nations audience who get what you're doing? Given how unconscious most North Americans are to these representations in the first place, one wonders if they will get what you are doing and why you are doing it.

AS: For a while I was concerned that non-indigenous viewers would not get it, that I am preaching to the converted or an art theory savvy crowd. Then something happened... I stopped worrying whether people got my work or not. This happened over a period of time of hearing many views of my work, convergent and divergent. I realized that I have absolutely no control over what and how people think, nor should I. I have confidence that the viewer, should they be interested, will find out more about the work.

Hopefully my work will trigger something inside, confuse the program and result in a disturbance that ultimately "changes their mind". Yet I also know that the Colonial Project is a big monster that is relentless and that many people will never get it and that things will never truly change. I'm not naive to this reality, nor do I have delusions of grandeur that my work will change the world. I am but a small story in a huge memory board, and perhaps one day that story will join others to become an agent of societal

change. In the meantime, I will continue to play in my own way, and have fun doing it.

Notes

1. Platform centre for photographic + digital arts in Winnipeg hosted a residency with Adrian Stimson and co-commissioned this interview with PAVED Arts.
2. <http://trailers.apple.com/trailers/independent/aglimpseinsidethemindofcharlesswaniii/>

Images

1. Adrian Stimson, *Shaman Exterminator in the Spirit Sands #2*, 2012. 44 x 66 inches, digital print.
2. Adrian Stimson, *Woodcraft Indian Movement (WIM)*, 2012. Various objects, installation view, PAVED Arts.
3. Adrian Stimson, *The Shaman Exterminator: On the Trail of the Woodcraft Indians with the Buffalo Boy Scouts of America*, 2012. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
4. Adrian Stimson, *Buffalo Boy Scouts of America*, 2012. 44 x 65 inches, digital print.

ON MY HONOUR,
I WILL DO MY BEST,
TO DO MY DUTY TO THE SHAMAN EXTERMINATOR
AND THE LAND.
TO OBEY BUFFALO BOY SCOUT LAW,
TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES,
TO KEEP MYSELF PHYSICALLY STRONG,
MENTALLY STRONG, AND





1.

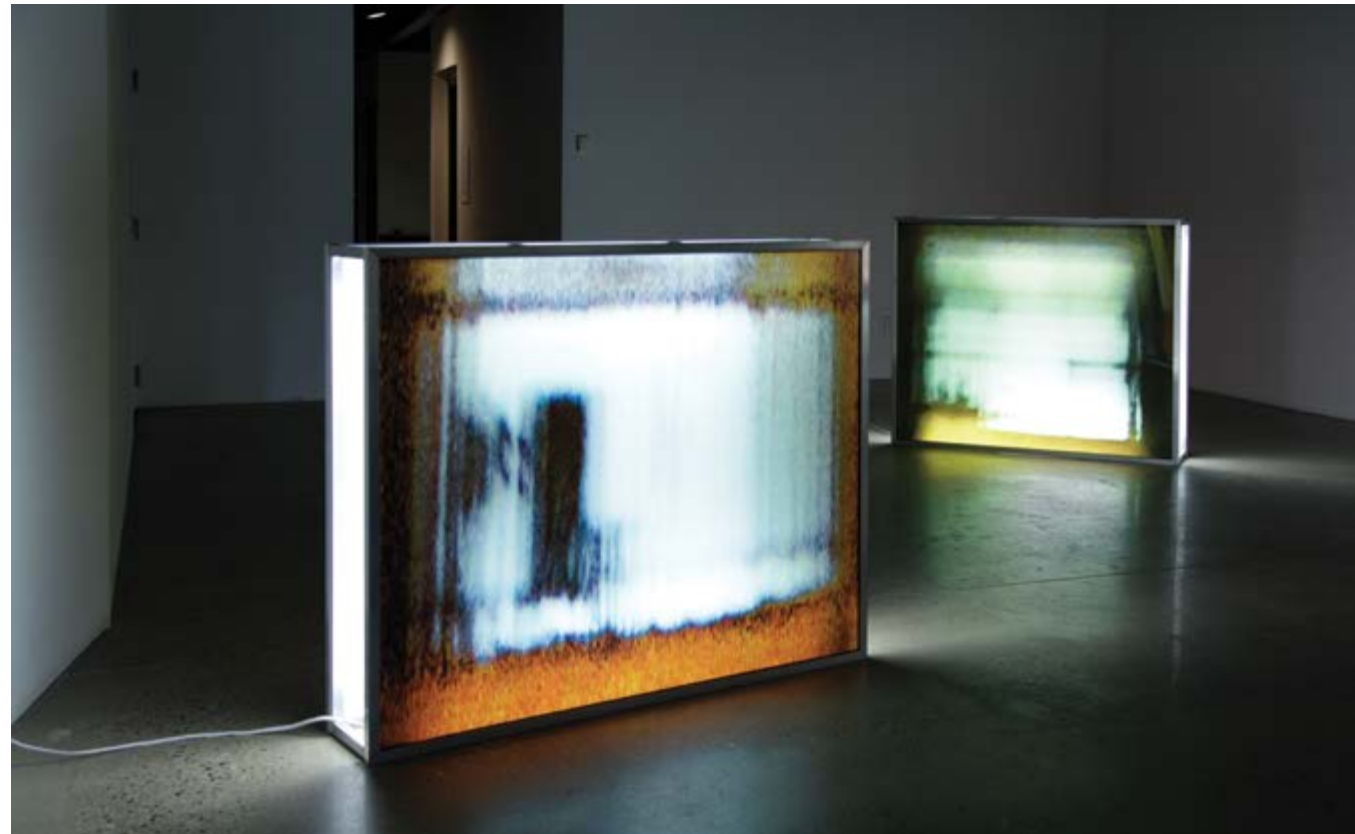
Quietly at the Window

Sasha Opeiko examines the recent work of Laura Dutton

3.



2.



Critical Text by Sasha Opeiko

Laura Dutton's exhibition *Quietly at the Window* is a humming tableau of temporal collapse. The word "quietly" is a likeness to silence, or absence, but as an adverb it also implies action, process, and presence. This is the kind of integrated duality that is embodied in this exhibition. Every "window" here is both an exposure and a fracture of that exposure.

The source images are cropped from larger urbanscape photographs. Low resolution and pixelated, it is as though the windows themselves were pixels of a larger whole, and likely the only origins of light in the source images. This residual imprint of light was digitally reversed into a negative and printed onto acetate, and was scanned and printed again on a larger scale. As a result, the enlarged pixels - now further deformed by the dots on the scanned acetate - become represented once more by a multiplicity of ink droplets. Because the sides of the "window" frame structures are exposed, the image becomes suspended, double-sided, and thin. It becomes evident that light was bent, folded, and collapsed over a duration of time into one palpable instance. However, this instance is not static, as it is again reactivated by the emission of light, while the light is again fractured by the objecthood of the printed microcosm.

The process of re-representing the image could potentially continue forever. It is a back-and-forth game of reciprocity. Every image may still be rephotographed, rescanned, reprinted, shrunk and re-enlarged. However, the curtains are drawn, and the operation is paused, for no other reason than to signify that nothing is ever complete. The act of perception is always in progress, always a spiralling, plicating shift from moment to moment. The window becomes a stand-in metaphor for this passage. The etymology of the word "window" speaks of this very process. It comes from a compound of "wind" from Old Norse *vindr* and *auga*, "eye"¹, intrinsically suggesting that visual observation is a framing of spatial transgression.

Our understanding of the function of light in this work may be enhanced through an example of James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic theory, circa 1873. Maxwell proposed that a light wave consists of oscillating magnetic and electric fields, perpendicular to each other and continually exchanging sides.² The two fields fluctuate in unison, as if shifting their weight so as to make room for the other, as if passing through each other, maintaining a constant balance. A ray of light acts as a trajectory of this liminality, moving ever forward through space-time. This phenomenon is not unlike the inconclusive nature of human desire, where the otherness in the desired object is virtually unattainable.

In effect, Lacanian psychoanalysis states that the imaginary identification with the "other" - the desire for something that is outside of oneself - is actually destructive for both parties. "The destruction is simply there in the form of transference", disguised under an invented artifice of otherness (thouness).³ Because the printed window is something that would not exist without the activation of light, it is possible to regard the ink as an object of light's desire. Of course, this also means that ink, as image, desires the light in order to be seen and confirmed as entity. Both sustain the other, as counterparts, and through their mutual annulment can be regarded as one object. The cancellation, the collapse, creates an opening for the next motion of fulfillment, which would potentially be transferred from the next object of thouness - the viewer. In this way, *Quietly at the Window* reveals the synthetic materiality of perception, and the continuous drone that is artificially delineated by the mechanics of desire.

1. "window, n.". *OED Online*. December 2012. Oxford University Press. 5 January 2013 <<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/view/Entry/229262?rskey=j0y2Rh&result=1>>.
2. March, Robert H. *Physics for Poets*. McGraw-Hill: New York, 2003. 66.
3. Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III. The Psychoses*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1988. 303.

Images

1. Laura Dutton, *Untitled*, 2012. 36 x 30 inches, photo mounted on light box.
2. Laura Dutton, *Quietly At The Window*, 2012. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
3. *ibid*.



1.



2.

The Performative Lens

Matthew Hall analyzes the photographic practices of Evergon & Bart Gazzola

3.



March 15 – April 20, 2013.

The Performative Lens

“People always venerate the wrong thing,” writes Louis Armand, in his recent novel *Breakfast at Midnight*. In a discussion about the ubiquity of suffering, Armand punctuates the acid noir landscape, remarking “The crucifixion’s beautiful because it’s ordinary.” I am given to thinking about this quotation for the manner in which life engenders rituals into our everyday processes, in which the performative gesture is unified with the origins of the act. In PAVED Arts’ exhibition *The Performative Lens* the viewer can begin to question the rituals and the origins of the act of creation in apperceptive bodies of work from Montreal’s Evergon and Saskatoon-based critic and artist Bart Gazzola. The works are apperceptive in that they seek to create a defined intersubjectivity which is constructed through the presence of an absent other in the body of the work. *The Performative Lens* combines three viscerally compelling images from Gazzola and eight photographs from Evergon, all of which demand that the viewer confront gradations of scale, a polyvalent layering of meaning, and the jouissance of bodily perforce, violence, and the queer politic enlivened by and captured as the commonality of flesh. The only of Evergon’s photographs in the show which is not a self-portrait is titled *Dickie Doo (Michael Venus)*, an image realised with impeccable formal constraints and which plays on the concepts of performed and assimilative masculinity. The image’s character broods while clutching a worn teddy-bear,

sitting awkwardly upon a child’s yolk-coloured “Power Wheels” car, which is balanced on two wooden platforms at the image’s lower level. The intentionality of highlighting the staging of the car, and the man within it, sitting as he is in crocheted shorts, performs a blending of masculine and feminine, and forces the viewer to address what must be a common criticism of Evergon’s work, that he is intentionally staging an infantilised version of desires. Moving beyond this, the photograph speaks more to the acquisition of social and sexual roles, wills and gestures. The abraded constructs of social roles in the image reflect a defiant criticism of masculinity as performed and hetero-normative, highlighting the acceptance and transgression of the assimilative modalities of masculinity in growth and development.

Five of the remaining images by Evergon stem from a series titled *Crossing the Equator, Going South, Pacific Rim #01-05*. In this series Evergon himself dominates the frame, wearing a grass skirt, often with a garland around his waist. Below a textured and toyed-with beard, a mermaid has been drawn across his chest and stomach, whose tail flits ponderously onto Evergon’s right leg, which occasionally and flamboyantly parts the weathered grass skirt. The copulative embrace of the mermaid painted over Evergon’s body, the garland, and the sailor’s hat all have connotations which speak to the plurality of identity, and preconceptions of

socio-sexual roles and characteristics of myth in image-making. The bodily contortions in the images reflect the eroticism of the camera, and the dominance of the gaze; they reflect an identity as repetition con différence, a gesture which is performatively instantiated, and which cuts across surface and deep agencies, performed and deferred subjectivities. The images collated for *The Performative Lens*, and specifically *Bottom Post Titania* and *Bully Bottom* bespeak of the artificiality and bestial revelry of the erotic gesture, a carnivalesque envisioning of the queer body politic.

The surface play in Bart Gazzola’s three untitled photographs *From the Prophet Series* return to terrain familiar to the artist. They refract notions of both the substantive and the consumptive, and express concepts of bodily wounding and the excesses of corporeality, intrinsic to Gazzola’s work from *Adam’s Second Wife* (1999) to the present. The monumentality of these three untitled self-portraits depicts the naked body of the artist glistening, exposed, and vulnerable, luridly draped in incarnadine flesh which reflects a sardonic bestiality. The images speak to notions of loss, of wounding, and of a reverence for loss which the artist tries to amend with lineated and wrapped compresses; pieces of dead animal skin are draped over, or pulled taunt against his body. The embodiment of animal flesh is at once a version of visceral armour and, at the same time, a return to animality as a means to

govern the depth of loss recorded. The return to a state of animality is expressed through the contiguities of animal flesh lying on human, the prevalence of hair, discord and scarring. The disseminated subject, cut mostly from the frame, leaves an open mouth expressing the wounded utterance of a loss of control, perceptive of and expressing the pain of belief.

Reflecting on the images’ title, *From the Prophet Series* has the artist poised as John the Baptist, “A voice of one crying in the wilderness”, in a position where he must bear the wilderness of sacral names. Stemming from the prophetic title is a precarious uncertainty, a bodily corporeality dealing with ontological loss. The images confront the viewer with a marked body: pierced, branded, wrapped in animal flesh-- which has also been marked, disseminated, torn from another body. The sensuality of the flesh-wrapped right arm, with its pleats and folds, luridly coloured and held across the chest, marks the images with the gravitas of a strained Catholicism. The concordant darkening of the genital in all but one image, expresses the pain of the performative gesture. The carnality of wrapping oneself in dead flesh-- and the ethic that an act of this type must entail-- shows the artist dealing with the materiality of familiar constraints, and expresses a groping interrogation of, and an incarceration within, performed acts of creation. In *The Prophet Series* the prominence of the open mouth, and the protrusion of the throat,

are details of the photographs that demand attention, and connote an apperceptive gaze on the failings and delimitations of subjective expression. The lesions on the mouth, the inexpressible words on the lips, bespeak of a performance of the wounded utterance. This unfulfilled evocation is matched in weight by the colouration, porosity, and immediacy of the hands in the images; hands which are grasping for remains, for armour, for a suture, for flesh. The title and the constraints of expression contain the deep play at work in the photographs by casting a self-interrogative eye on Gazzola's role as artistic and cultural critic within the community, and may even speak to the loss of officialdom found in his exit from the local university. It is not without pain and tempered reflection that Gazzola enacts this performance; it is the act of binding flesh on flesh with which he seeks to find redemption, a suture for the wounded utterance, which remains the most haunting characteristic of his latest body of work.

Images

1. Evergon, *Bully Bottom*, 50" x 39" and *Bottom Post Titania*, 41" x 32.5, both are Chromira prints, 2013.
2. Evergon, *Dickie Doo (Michael Venus)*, 2013. 50" x 40" Chromira print.
3. Bart Gazzola, *Untitled (From the Prophet Series)*, 2013. Two of three large format digital prints, installation view, PAVED Arts.
4. Evergon, *Crossing the Equator, Going South, Pacific Rim #01*, 2009. 50" x 40" Chromira print.





1.

Memories of a Naturalist

Curatorial Essay by David LaRiviere on the
work of Maria Whiteman & Clint Wilson



2.



3.

May 17 – June 21, 2013.

Memories of a Naturalist

How is it that the *Memories of a Naturalist* should relate to the work of artists Maria Whiteman and Clint Wilson? In order to address this question we will examine both of their respective art projects for a variety of concerns that pertain first to memory, then the soft science of the naturalist as related to the problematic¹ concept of “becoming.” In the first case, how do the general conditions of memory operate in relation to the pursuits of a naturalist? The initial assumption pertains to memory as a construction, one that serves as an organizing principle for much of the taxonomies of the *Naturalist*, call it the “knowledge-base.” The specimen only becomes knowable in the course of memory setting out an array of points that construct diorama, hence memory is the constituent element of its construction and, as we shall see, a point of departure for both of the artists concerned.

The title for this exhibition, as with its curious appearance in *A Thousand Plateaus*— found amidst a broader discussion of “becoming animal,” is here invoked not as a support, nor as a key or solution, but rather as a complex and ongoing problematic. If the *Naturalist* constructs her system from memories, moving from point to point, can the model be a sufficient account to determine, much less anticipate, the outcomes of a given ecosystem? Is it tenable for scientific undertakings to encompass nature in this way? The artistic projects that comprise this

exhibition are mounted precisely upon the terrain that escapes such determinations, variously exploring the pathos of capture and the limit-case of knowledge.

Maria Whiteman photographs and videotapes various taxidermized specimens from within the vaults of Natural History Museums that she has gained access to. Her interest in this subject stems from an impetus to interrogate the scientific assumptions of Natural History with an intuitive and artistic procedure, one that implicates systems of knowledge that would subordinate affect to narrative. To be sure, a haunted sensibility cuts across both her photographic and video work, and it's not surprising given the base line fact that these are dead things positioned as living nature. Relative to her interest in diorama, the photographic series develops a theme of capture: vitality as it comes to be fixed in time. With each of the museological specimens, a snarling coyote, a lynx, an owl, etc., Whiteman prints onto acetate transparency that is positioned on top of such materials as bubble wrap and corrugated cardboard. These everyday office supplies impact the work by effectively immersing her subject onto a tactile, grid-like substrate, an aggressive but well observed use of common materials. The animals photographed and presented in this way take on a heightened sense of capture, frozen not in amber but in packaging. Bestowed animistic postures of each subject in turn promotes a sense of pathos that

carries throughout Whiteman's project, the snarling coyote is trapped in a moment of death after all.

A similar sense of bio-political pathos is explored with Whiteman's video work, both pieces entitled *I Saw You Standing There*. The title refers to the artist's recording of an encounter between herself and a series of larger stuffed mammals, specimens that are likewise kept in museum storage. Whiteman explained that a preliminary aspect of her process, before her performance, involves obtaining permissions, a matter that may be supported or justified by related academic and artistic activities, and one that entails navigating institutional authority. Suffice it to say that the project's critical bearing must be carefully disclosed. Even at that, the permission that is granted only goes part of the way. Whiteman obtained general access to museum storage in order to photograph various specimens, but she only touched them when no one was looking. The camera tracks over the the body and face of the static animal in a slow, fluid motion, always at close range and following the artist's hand (surreptitiously) raking with and against the nap of the animal's fur. Around the edges of this interaction we catch snippets of the metal cage upon which a deer, for example, is hanging by an s-hook from its rump. The importance of such overtly violent edge-work lies in the way that the storage context overcomes, even implicates commodity fetishism, as with the kind of

eroticism associated with stroking a fur coat. Especially where, for example, the grizzly's face is concerned, the encounter that Whiteman stages implies a haptic² communication, imbued as her action is with a close range, textural exploration. Empathy turns to pathos at the very moment that the intimate touch meets with an inert mass, an animal-become-prop for the memory of a naturalist.

Whereas Maria Whiteman contemplates the capture and pathos embodied by the natural history specimen, the counter-attack staged in Clint Wilson's project targets the what Deleuze and Guatarri describe as a “Royal Science,”³ the science of establishment and control. A case in point is Wilson's *Untitled (Series)*, a grouping of nine colour photographs that feature labelled specimens, each named according to genus or species. The dictates of a taxonomy, a science of classification that assigns points and fixes the specimen, is also operative in a process that reduces a given animal to little more than a mnemonic device. As with Whiteman's photographic series, Wilson deploys a shallow depth of field that mostly obscures its subject, drawing tiny areas into focus with a technique that resembles the tilt-shift lens effect. What is blurred in these photographs is precisely what ordinarily functions as an explicit relation, between the specimen and its corresponding name, the coordinates that locate this once-animal as genus and species. Wilson builds a tension between the label and the specimen,



playing with focus so as to posit a purposeful ambiguity, a kind of mystery seeded inside of the declaration. *Untitled (Series)* was mounted in solid black frames of identical dimensions, foregrounding modular and interchangeable properties in the work. In fact with prior installations Wilson has configured the series in a grid, and in some situations edited out images for space. Between the hard, regular geometry of the thick black frames and the blurry displacement of the subject photographed, another content emerges, that of an overwrought scientific determination, one that fails to grasp the complexity of the subject as a multiplicity, the mysterious subject that embodies an entire constellation of affects that enter into composition with an open, chaotic system. In Wilson's series, what escapes the taxonomic memory of the expert Naturalist is precisely this movement of becoming.

Up until now we have considered only photographs and videos of dead specimens, and as such both artists have imbued their respective frozen bestiaries with unexpected dimensions. In different ways, the diorama and other devices of museological "authority" are herein implicated as being little more than determinations that move from point to point, reducing a given animal to an established memory, a fully formed, even cliché narrative representation. With his video installation *Carousel*, Wilson turns his attention to the living specimen, timber wolves to be exact,

and to their corresponding, quasi-scientific institutional frame: the zoo. The installation is named *Carousel* on account of its odd configuration, involving two video projectors mounted on posts in the centre of the gallery space, each post outfitted with a motor that rotates the projectors and projected video clockwise and counter-clockwise. The tracking movement of the video projection has an obvious allusion to a fairground carousel. However, a more ominous association overshadows the relatively cheerful title of this work, as the arrangement likewise alludes to the Panopticon — the infamous prison design invented by 18th century British philosopher Jeremy Bentham. As with the Panopticon, Wilson places the "sentry" post at the centre. Consequently, everyone entering into the installation is compelled to adopt the warden's 360 degree vantage point in relation to the caged wolves. The projections themselves allude to cells, and their continuous back and forth tracking movements, which mechanically pan through a prison-in-the-round, double back at a certain point and intersect at times. Hence the movement of the video "cells" allude to the compulsive pacing of the wolves. With this work Wilson contests the fundamental assumption that in captivity we find timber wolves living, as it were, in a cross section of their "natural" habitat. The artist notes the pacing of the timber wolves fits a disturbing profile of animal mental illness sometimes referred to as stereotypy.⁴ Having said this, what is at stake in *Carousel*

goes way beyond a statement about animal rights. The wolves and their artificial habitat, like the museum diorama, are exposed as a Panopticism; a centralized form of surveillance and control, ultimately an expression of a disciplinary society that privileges a "Royal Science," and produces only the story of what is already established. In this way *Carousel* makes legible a counterproductive scientific expression of power, one that brutally subordinates that which is a chaotic and unpredictable to a mere representation.

In part two of the three-part BBC series *All Watched Over By Machines Of Loving Grace*, documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis traces a brief history of the Naturalist and the popular notion of the "Ecosystem." Within this recounting there are episodes of falsifying data and other byproducts of specious thinking, at one extreme leading to *The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts*⁵ and subsequently the apartheid system in South Africa. Perhaps more interesting than all of the skeletons in the closet, Curtis also recounts the challenges that are mounted from within ecological science, the projects that overturn controlling scientific orthodoxy. One such instance is the story of George Van Dyne, the first director of the "*Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory*." With only the best of intentions Van Dyne set out to build a comprehensive, cybernetic model of a complete ecosystem, painstakingly slitting open the bellies of insects, analyzing deer feces, etc. Upon entering an unprecedented volume of data Van Dyne discovered the

opposite of what he was looking for, namely that the consideration of such comprehensive detail did not lead to a more comprehensive model but rather an increasingly chaotic one. While it is true that the system is rife with feedback, it is decidedly not closed, and the lines of escape will always overwhelm the model, increasingly so when it is rigorous. This is the point of departure for the art work in question, whether through pathos and touch, or by counter-attack, Maria Whiteman and Clint Wilson engage is an artistic expression that is in excess of the diorama, of the zoo, in deference to a content and expression that overflows the semiotic bounds of the *Memories of the Naturalist*.

1. "Problematic" understood as the activity of a problem, or a problem that is in motion as opposed to a problem that is situated.
2. "With the haptic Deleuze argues that space becomes tactile as if the eye were now a hand caressing one surface after another without any sense of the overall configuration or mutual relation of those surfaces. It is a virtual space whose fragmented components can be assembled in multiple combinations." http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/crpl_art/entry/the_haptic/
3. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the concept of a "Royal Science" is opposed to "Nomad Science." Whereas the former procedure is based on defending what is "established," and is legislative in that its equations are invoked or privileged by the State apparatus, Nomad Science is predicated on "following" an uncharted course, inseparable from intuition, experimentation, and continuous variation.
4. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypy_\(non-human\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypy_(non-human))
5. Arthur Tansley, who coined the term "ecosystem," levelled this accusation of "abuse" at Field Marshal Smuts, who deployed a perverse version of ecological science to justify the institution of Apartheid in South Africa.

Images

1. Clint Wilson, *Untitled (series)*, 2012. Two of nine photographs, 16 x 16 inches each.
2. Maria Whiteman, *I saw you standing there*, 2013. Video still.
3. Maria Whiteman, Installation view, PAVED Arts. *Memories of a Naturalist*, 2013.
4. Clint Wilson, *Carousel*, 2013, video still, installation shot. (Pages 28-29)



1.

OUTER SPACE

Justin Pfefferle probes the work of
Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen & Ryan Park



2.

3.



Between 13 September and 19 October 2013, Paved Arts held *Outer Space*, a show that put Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen's multi-media exhibit, *Space Fiction and the Archives*, into dialogue with Ryan Park's video installations: *Rabbit* and *Dark is the Night (Voyager)*. United conceptually by the artists' similar concerns with relationships between imagination and space, the show invited gallery visitors to consider some of the most fundamental ways in which we interact with space, broadly conceived. In Nguyen's and Park's works, "space" didn't refer just to the deep, boundless "out there" of extraterrestrial planets and beings. That sense of outer space is obtained, but the show examined local, bounded spaces as well, from the disciplinary political space of the nation to the equally demanding formal and aesthetic space of the frame.

In *Space Fiction and the Archives*, Nguyen interrogates Canada's image of itself as a welcoming space by comparing how two different groups of aliens occupied the national imagination in 1967, the year of the Centenary. Her exhibit combines archival materials, including reproductions of government documents, cultural and historical artefacts, and kitsch objects, to tell a story about how the people of St. Paul, Alberta, celebrated the national birthday—by building "The World's First UFO Landing Pad." Nguyen uses this minor event in Canadian history to challenge the official national

discourse about immigration, the fiction of Canadian inclusivity and multiculturalism. Some aliens, her exhibit makes clear, are better welcomed than others. The Landing Pad, built as a monument to "western hospitality," was meant to provide Martian visitors with an ideal place to touch down in Canada. Aliens from within planet earth have no such place to land: their access to national space is considerably more circumscribed than that of their extraterrestrial counterparts.

Nguyen highlights the functional, symbolic, and economic valences of the Landing Pad in order to make a subversive point about how the State views those who seek entrance into Canada's so-called cultural mosaic. Prints of the *St. Paul Journal* underscore the multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways that the monument signified for the people of the town. The Landing Pad was counted upon to bring national, even global, fame to St. Paul. A headline from 25 May, 1967, reads: "St. Paul Landing Pad Receives World Wide Publicity." As a tourist attraction, the Landing Pad created its own culture industry. Mass-produced trinkets, bought and sold in the town gift shop, indicate the financial legacy of the event. *Pyramid*, a mixed-media sculpture that displays a souvenir plate bearing an image of the Landing Pad, and *The Centennial Star*, two inkjet prints that represent, in diptych, either side of a commemorative coin, invoke capital as the primary motivator of the "Centenary Idea."

So too, Nguyen argues, do economics govern how the State evaluates immigrants—as citizen-consumers, subjects who will (or will not) conform to the demands of capitalism. In *Immigration Policy (point-based system)*, she duplicates the 1967 "Norms for Assessment of Individual Applicants" on a series six large acrylic plates. Categories like "Education and Training," "Occupational Skill," and "Knowledge of English and French" determine the degree to which an individual might be expected to contribute to the Canadian economy. Once their files reach the desks of government bureaucrats, immigrants aren't people so much as they're investments. The number they're assigned corresponds not to the merits of their character, but to their capacity to buy and sell things like the souvenir plate.

The focal piece in *Space Fiction and the Archives* is a nineteen-minute video called *1967: A People Kind of Place*. Stitched together with footage transferred from Super 8, 16mm, and 35mm films, the video is, in part, a documentary about the Centenary and the unveiling of the Landing Pad. The disruptive form of the collage complements the subversive qualities of the narrative, which develops along a familiar logic of the alien invasion film. One scene, lifted from a singularly schlocky sci-fi movie, takes place in the office of an Immigration Agent, whom we see seated at his desk. Across from him (but, importantly, outside the frame), a Martian

invader wants to know whether or not he will be permitted into the country. The Agent describes the quota system of Canadian Immigration, telling him that although the country has room for a certain number of black, brown, and yellow people, "we don't have any quota at all for green people." The scene provides a key for understanding the satire of the exhibit as a whole. The notion of Canadian diversity operates according to a rigidly enforced ideology of racial and economic superiority, not some benign ethos of universal inclusion. The Martian says that he intends to stay in Canada "until mankind learns to love his neighbour." With his application denied, he returns home a casualty of a system of immigration that views some people as more desirable than others.

Ryan Park's video installations foreground different sets of relationships between discipline, imagination, and space. *Rabbit* and *Dark is the Night (Voyager)* combine philosophical reflections about outer space with performances that highlight the physical and formal demands of interior space—both the space of the frame and that of the gallery itself. In *Rabbit*, Park contorts his hands into the shape of the titular animal and holds them before a projector, casting a shadow puppet onto the facing wall. Over the course of the roughly twenty-minute video, he struggles to control the involuntary movements of his fingers and hands as his muscles cramp under the strain of trying to hold still. The image that

he creates, suggestive of the “moon rabbit” of East Asian folklore, is at once abstract and visibly corporeal. A gestalt that looks different to each viewer (and in each viewing), the rabbit draws attention to the living form as it writhes and crumples in on itself. As Park struggles, micro-details like the curvature of the fingers, even individual nail beds, become pronounced. The viewer’s focus is thus divided. On one hand, the video encourages us to think about the different, culturally conditioned, ways that we imagine outer space. On the other hand, it calls to mind the discipline required to maintain form within the circular boundary of the projection lens.

Dark is the Night (Voyager) manages several vectors of discipline, imagination, and space. The installation – a roughly two-hour, continuous, single-shot video in which Park faces the camera and cranks a handheld LED light into the lens – disciplines the viewer at the same time as it functions as a performance of discipline itself. The physical turning of the crank generates light and sound: as Park gains and loses stamina, the light becomes more or less intense, while the soundtrack, comprised of music and sounds recorded for the Voyager space probe, comes in and out of audibility. Like *Rabbit*, *Dark is the Night (Voyager)* renders the human form visible and invisible. Intermittently, Park’s torso appears behind the glow of the light, then disappears into the blackened, seemingly limitless, space out of which the

light emanates. The viewer, standing or sitting in the pitch-black of screening room, occupies a similar space. With light shining into our eyes, we are immobilised and reminded of our immobility. What does it mean, Park asks us, to be singled out in (and of) the darkness, by someone – or something – on the other end of the light? What kinds of subject positions are available to those for whom the expansiveness of space becomes contracted to a single point of illumination?

For Nguyen and Park, the very notion of outer space entails an inner space within which things and people either do or do not belong. Whether imaginary or material, the boundaries that demarcate one space from another determine how we conceive of ourselves in relation to those on the other side of the divide. Access to space, perhaps the defining problem of our contemporary condition, carries certain privileges for some, and, of course, certain restrictions for others. To exist in space is to observe (and maybe to transgress) the limits of that space, to seek beyond where we are told not to travel. Some of us navigate space more easily than others. Those of us who attended *Outer Space* gained a new awareness of precisely how we move across and between the multiple, and multiplying, spaces that we inhabit.

Images

1. Ryan Park, *Dark is the Night (Voyager)*, 2013. 72 x 48 inches, video projection.
2. Ryan Park, *Rabbit*, 2013. 20 inches in diameter. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
3. Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, *Space Fiction & the Archives*, 2013. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
4. Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, *1967: A People Kind of Place*, 2011. Video still.





1.

Silence, Time and Dead Air

Ellen Moffat responds to Steven Bates's *Dead Air*



2.



3.

November 8 – December 7, 2013.

Dead Air

On the radio silence is not permitted. Dead air - the absence of audible programmed material - suggests instability and disorder: warfare (an attack on a transmission tower), loss of revenue (advertising), human or technical error. A radio performance in 2005 of John Cage's 4'33" required that the BBC disable a 'dead man switch' that would otherwise have launched recorded programming.¹

By contrast to Cage's 4'33" which frames silence to support listening, Bates uses silence to explore notions of time, transmission, silence/signal/noise, technological change, voice, authority, and the refusal to speak. Two short stories were influences: Walter Benjamin's *On the Minute* and Heinrich Böll's *Murke's Collected Silences*. Each story addresses aspects of silence in radio broadcasts. Benjamin depicts a scenario in which the demands for punctuality cause tremendous anxiety for the guest broadcaster who misreads the studio clock and cuts short a live recording session only to discover his error barely in time to prevent (too much) dead air. Böll weaves several subnarratives together - the dynamics of hierarchy and defiance within and between radio administration and staff, bureaucratic policies and the commodification of silence as physical units (celluloid tape).

The installation, *Dead Air*, includes four works: *A Minute for Walter Benjamin*, *Start. Stop.*, *To*

End, To Begin and *Beacons*. The first three works are video and sound documentation of connected performances. The fourth is a sound piece.

A Minute for Walter Benjamin uses 24 clock radios tuned to the same FM frequency for transmission. 'stop'... 'stop'... 'stop'... 'stop'... 'stop'... 'ok, that's enough'... 'ok'... is transmitted as polyphonic vocal sound. A period of dead air lasts for a measure of time equal to the sound. Then, the word 'start' breaks the silence spoken as a chorus followed by a lone 'start now'. Then, dead air again. The cycle of spoken word and dead air continue. In reset mode, the 24 clock radios accompany the broadcast as a syncopated rhythm of blinking red and green quartz light. Clustered on the gallery floor, radio cables and electrical wires intersect and overlap as a tech-organic rhizome.

Start. Stop. is a series of mediated performances of durational time presented as documentation. Participants are videotaped individually as they perform one minute of time for the camera using subjective awareness or guesswork as their internal timer. Performances range from 0'30" to 03'00" in duration. The video depicts varying states of concentration and psychological effort of the participants. Ambient sound from the recording sessions - music, coughing, and bodily shuffling - is the soundtrack for the video, heard on headphones.

The second video, *To End, To Begin*, is a projection, and its subject is the environment of the recording studio. The video is banal, subtle and (almost) monochromatic. Near-still images of walls, the texture of the wall surfaces, architectural details and peeling paint are accompanied by subtle shifts in light. The quietness of the video proposes a visual equivalent to the audible silence.

In *Beacons*, a snare drum functions as a signifying object and amplifier for recordings of radio broadcasts of international time beacons. The sound is low; audibility is difficult. As a symbol, the snare drum references colonization and the militarization of time and society.

"The art of our time is noisy with appeals for silence."²

In "*The Aesthetics of Silence*", Susan Sontag muses on notions of silence in relation to art, pedagogy, rhetoric and paradox, in particular, the extent to which sound is employed to articulate concepts of silence. She acknowledges the ability of art to enhance the quality of attention of a viewer, heightening the sense of awareness and consciousness. Silence allows for a more immediate, sensuous experience of art or a confrontation with artistic production in a more conscious, conceptual way. It provides time for an ongoing exploration of thought as punctuation, giving space for thought,

suggesting the absence or the completion of thought. Silence can indicate a determination to continue one's activity deviously as rhetoric.

Bates uses silence to reduce the information clutter that clogs the senses, giving (us) pause to hear-see sonic and visual silences and to reflect on aspects of our contemporary context. *Dead Air* points to issues of censorship and the militarization of global time and of society. But he also offers hope. The failure of the performers to perform time with scientific accuracy proposes that internalization of military time and regulation of human behavior is not (yet) complete.

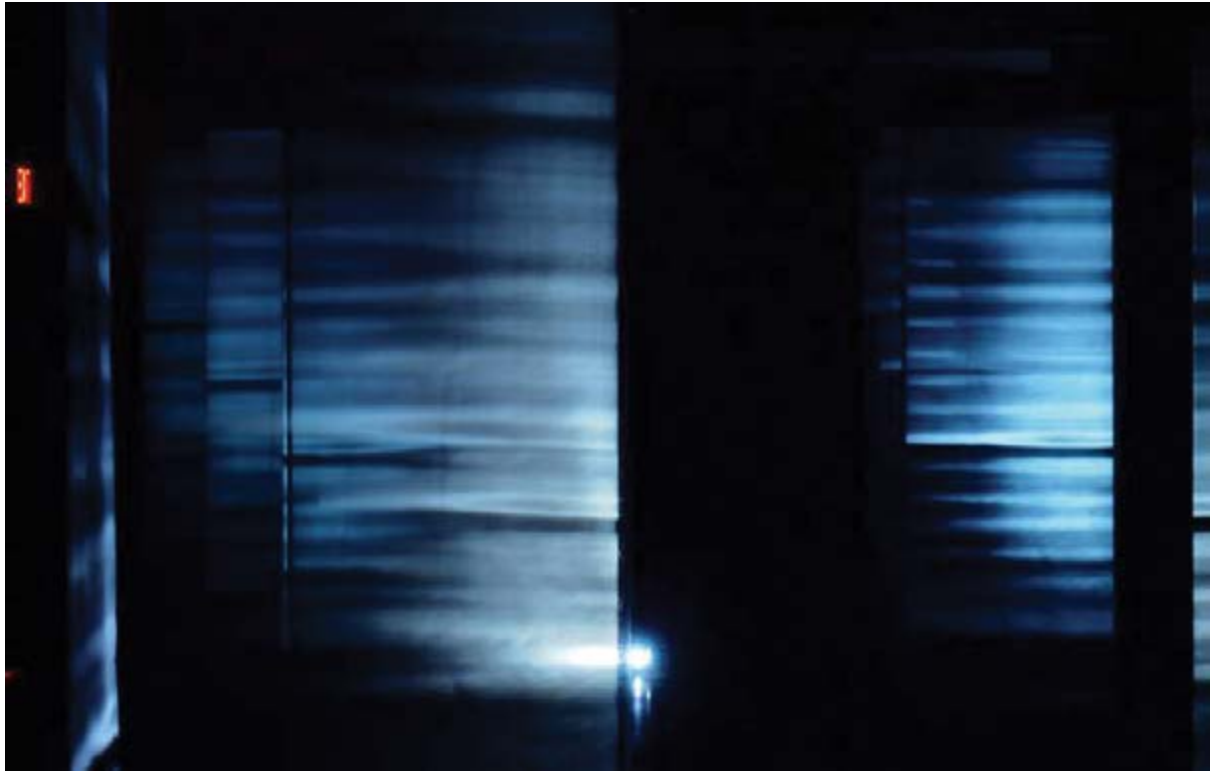
Dead Air is an open work that requires active engagement by the viewer to connect the parts. For me, the exhibition was best experienced alone in the gallery. My desire for solitude was not nihilistic. Rather it allowed me to hear the nuanced sound of dead air.

Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech... and an element in a dialogue.

1. (Re)Marking Time in the Audition of Experimental Music by Virginia Anderson, *Performance Research: On Listening*, 15(3), 2010, p 33
2. All quotations are from *The Aesthetics of Silence* by Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will*, 1969.

Images

1. Steve Bates, *Start. Stop.*, 2010. Video still.
2. Steve Bates, *Beacon*, 2013. Snare drum, speaker, electronics, sound.
3. Steve Bates, *A Transmission for Walter Benjamin*, 2010. CD player, radio transmitter, clock radios. Installation view, PAVED Arts



1.

Memorsion

Justin Pfefferle explores the work of Manuel Chantre



2.

3.



“Buildings are received in a twofold manner: by use and by perception.”¹

When Marshall McLuhan wrote his famous aphorism, “the medium is the message,” he could have been predicting a show like Manuel Chantre’s *Memorsion*, which PAVED exhibited between 17 January and 21 February 2014. A feature exhibit of the first annual Saskatchewan Prairie Light Photography Festival, *Memorsion* creates an immersive, interactive media environment through a highly technical coordination of image and sound projection. It invites visitors into a fractured and fragmentary space. When you enter, you’re enveloped inside a labyrinth of translucent screens, surrounded by flickering, semi-random images, caught in the light of the projector. *Memorsion* washes over you, but your experience isn’t passive: through movement, you inscribe yourself on the environment, both by triggering a PS3-eye motion sensitive camera that tells the master computer to reassemble the visual loop, and by writing your shadow, however fleetingly, upon the polyester screens.

The screens are portals into the world of *Memorsion*. At PAVED, Chantre suspended eighteen panels in a T-configuration of two columns. Four projectors – one on each point of the T and one in the middle of the room facing the terminus – cast images through the screens, creating a three-dimensional visual environment. There’s no predetermined way to navigate the space, but the effects

of optical depth encourage you move – or imagine moving – through the openings and corridors of *Memorsion*’s architecture. The panels are inviting and preemptive, points of access and barriers to motion. Just as they filter particles of light while allowing some light to pass, so they frustrate the illusion that you can enter the image-scape projected through them. You will have to contend, ultimately, with the materiality of the screens. Through physical contact, you’re given to recognize that your sense of immersion is a technological effect, an impression orchestrated by the media apparatus.

The content of the visual loop conspires with the structure of the installation. It promises, then reneges on its promise, to guide the visitor across the threshold of the screen. The images invite and prevent the identification of the viewer by registering as familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. Chantre’s footage, comprised of shots of human bodies and splintered architectural elements – concrete expanses, graffiti-covered walls, crumbling, abandoned buildings, and bridges – denote “what is normal for us,” what we take for granted “in our day-to-day lives.”² The fractured, non-linear quality of the loop estranges us from the images, prompting us to reconsider the built environment outside the lens of our regular experience. At PAVED, Chantre described choosing images that evoke a sense of timelessness: shots of a woman

eating, brushing her hair, and washing her face depict common, culturally and historically indeterminate behaviours that he intends to resemble those of the viewer.³ Shots of urban architectures, although specific to Montreal, conceal their actual locations in ways that make them translatable as part of what Chantre called the “nowhere place” of cultural imagination.⁴ When you move through *Memorsion*, you project yourself into the visual world just as surely as you’re projected onto the screens. Your projection can never be complete, however. The images disrupt any effort that you might make to follow them along a through line or narrative trajectory.

In his artist’s talk at PAVED, Chantre said that although he shot all of his footage with a video camera, he thinks of the images that make up the loop in photographic terms. Instead of presenting a complete rendering of the world, his images embrace the fragmentariness of photography—its necessarily partial apprehension of slivers of time and space. *Memorsion* activates what Walter Benjamin describes as the “optical unconscious” of photography, the new arrangements of matter that the technology of the camera literally brings to light. Superior to human eyes, cameras record elements of reality that exceed the “normal spectrum of sensory impressions.”⁵ In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin writes:

We have some idea of what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms),

[but] we have no idea at all what happens during the split second when a person takes a step. We are familiar with the movement of picking up a cigarette lighter or spoon, but we know almost nothing of what really goes on between hand and metal... This is where the camera comes into play.⁶

Memorsion updates a Benjaminian theory of photography for a new media world. It disrupts habitual ways of looking, making possible other kinds of connections between self and other, subject and object. For Benjamin, “the optical reception of architecture [...] spontaneously takes the form of casual noticing, rather than attentive observation.”⁷ Chantre makes inattention impossible. His installation overwhelms the visitor with the stuff of reality that tends to evade conscious experience.

The images, projected onto and through polyester screens, don’t resemble photographs so much as they resemble photographic negatives. Relics of an analogue world, negatives are as obsolete as the buildings that Chantre captures with his digital camera. Given that the screens are legible on both sides, they have a structural affinity with negatives, which harbour inverted images in translucent space until they emerge, developed, out of chemical vats. Prior to their development, negatives exist in a kind of archival limbo: they are indexical traces that haven’t yet become icons. As well as being

visual echoes of one another, the screens share with negatives a common semiotics. In the same way that negative images occupy a moment prior to their incorporation into the larger visual environment, the shots that project through the screens of *Memorsion* resist integration into any explanatory context. In an allegorical sense, Chantre's images are undeveloped. They refer not to experiences but traces of experience, flash-moments that can't be assimilated into a coherent and continuous pattern.

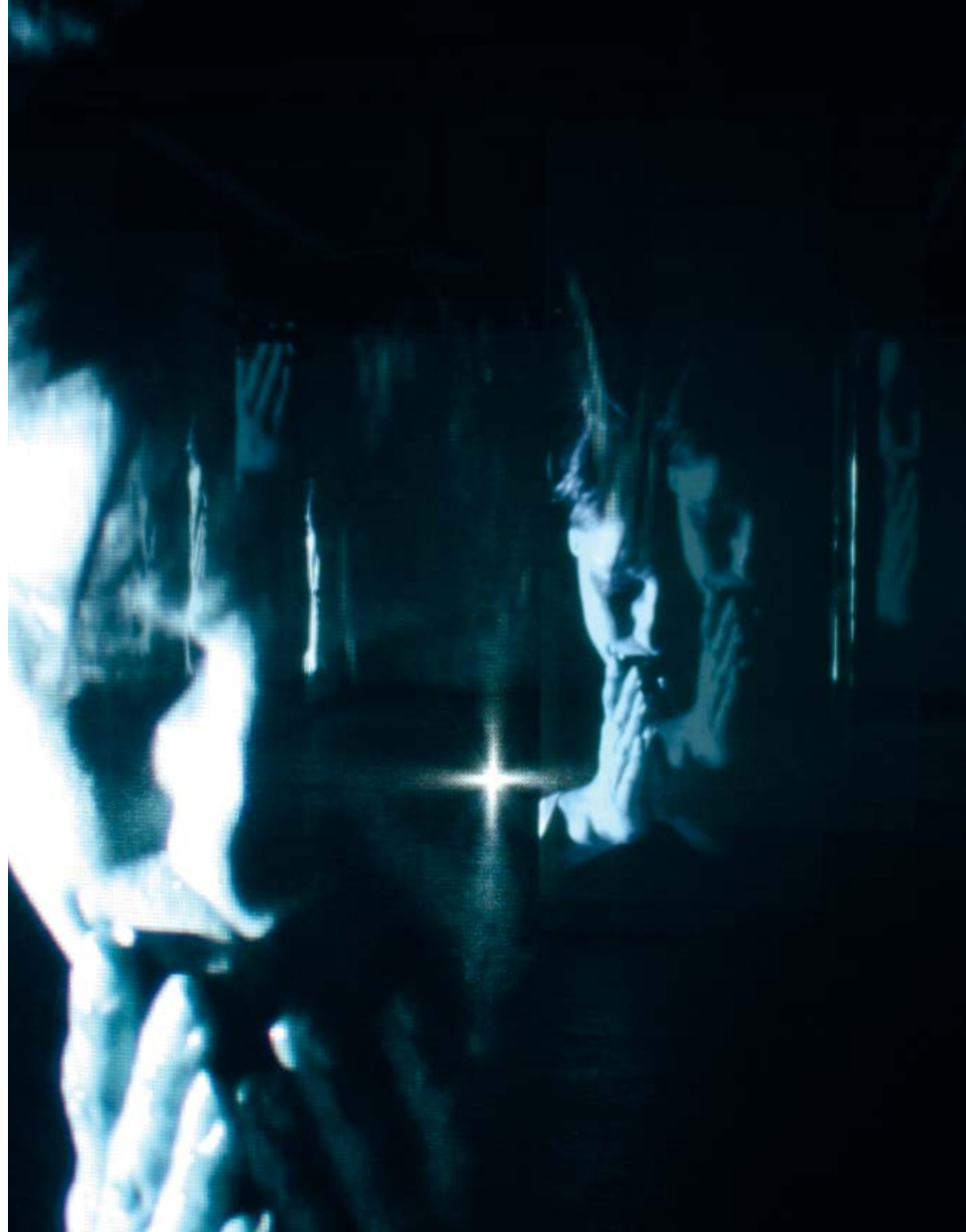
Memorsion adopts elements of photography to ask epistemological questions about images, memory, and subjectivity. The installation makes clear that the camera doesn't fracture our perceptions of reality or ourselves. Instead, and as Ulrich Baer argues, it "[discloses] the world – the setting for human experience – as nothing but atoms moving in a void."⁸ Photographs are aides-mémoire, but they also present history as unstable, a web of ruptures and bursts that undermines the notion of time as an uninterrupted, sequential, homogeneous flow. As the medium that bestows light waves and moving particles with an appearance of solid objects and events, photography embodies the psychic tensions at play when we stitch the flashes of images that comprise our memory into stories about our environments and ourselves. *Memorsion* frames reality as a jumble of isolated shards, which address the optical unconscious not only by drawing attention to what we might be inclined to ignore, but by doubling the psychological processes at work when we develop some experiences into memories

and sublimate others in the basements of our minds. Architectural ruins and abandoned buildings function within Chantre's media ecology as metaphors of personal and collective history. Evacuated of human inhabitants, they register as excess: part of and exterior to the lived experiences of urban dwellers. Instead of being blights on an otherwise pristine landscape, ruins become sites of projection, walls and girders that bear traces of contact, and upon which people write versions of themselves. Graffiti tags are material remnants of more ephemeral inscriptions—the psychic and psychological imprints left behind by human traffic. Because the buildings are abandoned, they make themselves available to modes of sensation and perception that exceed questions of use-value. As detritus, ruins disrupt the flow of bodies that cities aim to facilitate. They frustrate linear mobility. As allegories of experience and subjectivity, ruins describe what doesn't fit, what can't be contained within the perceptual apparatus, but which flash up every so often, demanding that we attend to them.⁹

1. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings, Vol. 3 1935-1938*. Ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. 120.
2. Alex MacPherson, *Shadow on the Wall*. *Verb Magazine*, Issue S277, 14-20 February 2014. 15.
3. Manuel Chantre, Artist's Talk at PAVED Gallery, Saskatoon, 18 January 2014.
4. Chantre, Artist's Talk.
5. Benjamin, 118.
6. Benjamin, 118.
7. Benjamin, 120.
8. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002. 5.
9. More needs to be said about the aural dimensions of *Memorsion*.

Images

- 1-4. Manuel Chantre, *Memorsion*, 2014. Installation view, PAVED Arts.





Town & Country: The Art of Consumption

Bart Gazzola enters the fray of
Anitra Hamilton's *Town & Country*



March 14 – April 18, 2014.

Town & Country

Boris Groys' writings on *The Art of Stalinism* have become an invaluable touchstone for much of my recent critical thought. Before I go yet again to his ideas to facilitate my own, let me explain that his insights into that period are easily applicable to other eras – like our own. We are, after all, doomed to repeat history like a failed grade. An idea he floats is that in those heady, uncensored early days of the Soviet revolution, artists eventually became overwhelmed by the endless possibilities. After all, to be able to do everything is almost to be unable to focus on anything. The scary thing that Groys points out is that many in the cultural spaces welcomed the stricture and rules of Stalinist socialist realism. Part of this is due to the aforementioned desire for a framework. It also could be seen as part of the still hopeful / delusional faith in that psychopathic mass murderer so many knew as “Uncle Joe,” a paternalistic Tsarist figure that we see revived in spirit by Vladimir Putin (ideologies, in art or politics, with their cults of personality, rarely die cleanly or easily).

So what are the rules of art making – and who says? Are there any? That word “meaning” is anathema to many, as bad a word as “rules.” And remember, many self designate as “artist” or “social prophet” whose response to your honest questions about that is to accuse you of being a Stephen Harper supporter. I could use the word “value,” but that’s even worse.... and art is so much like a religion that

to even question is to be branded a heretic and shown the door. Be pleased you didn’t get burned for blasphemy.

This is why I enjoy the installation by Anitra Hamilton at PAVED Arts, called *Town & Country*: it is delightfully heretical, the type of thing that offends in “unsafe” and “unsanctioned” ways. And it makes me think of manure, by intent, as opposed to incidentally, as many “artists” do....

The space is minimal: two walls, facing, have speakers blaring audio. It’s a clean installation: black, box like speakers, on shelves, with the black cords only adding to the antiseptic nature of the space. (I’m reminded of Rutger Zuydervelt’s *Stay Tuned* – and like that installation, the physical means serves the audible art).

One audio sampling is somewhat coarser in its origin, the other contrasting with a more cultured and moneyed voice. The artist’s voice is almost purely descriptive and neutral:

Town & Country consists of two companion audio digital recordings. *Country* features the sound recording of a “limousine cow auction” captured at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. *Town* is an audio recording of a Sotheby’s contemporary art evening auction in New York city, Tobias Meyer was the auctioneer. (...) They can be heard separately at either end of the gallery, however when the visitor approaches the

centre of the space the recordings begin to compete with each other and sometimes cancel each other out.”

Nothing is spelled out for you, but you’d have to be a dullard – or so ideologically stunted that you are unable to see anything outside your own frame of “artistic” reference– to miss the implicit sarcasm.

But there is nuance: perhaps this is a comment on the art market. It’s finally begun to “bloom” in Canada with the “values” (money wise, I mean) we’ve seen elsewhere (like the referenced New York Sotheby’s as a standard).

Perhaps it’s a comment on how never before has it been so competitive, whether to get a show, a job or a tenure position, and there is now an underclass whom will never be anything more than contract workers, waiting in holding pens for something better....

Never before have those that have gone before done so little, for so few, so often, while treating us like we’re being appraised for our parts to feed the system. I know I’m not the auctioneer in this scenario, I’m the beef in the abattoir – just like those who believe that the visual arts PhD program they worked so hard to get into, with strenuous inspections and grading and computerized ear tags, will guarantee them success. They don’t see that bolt gun leading them to the McJobs pen.

One might even postulate that the emptiness – the physical emptiness anyway, mimics the superficial façade of the “Art World.” Consequently, the space is rife with anxiety, like I’ve not seen since Steve Bates’ creeping army of LED clocks.

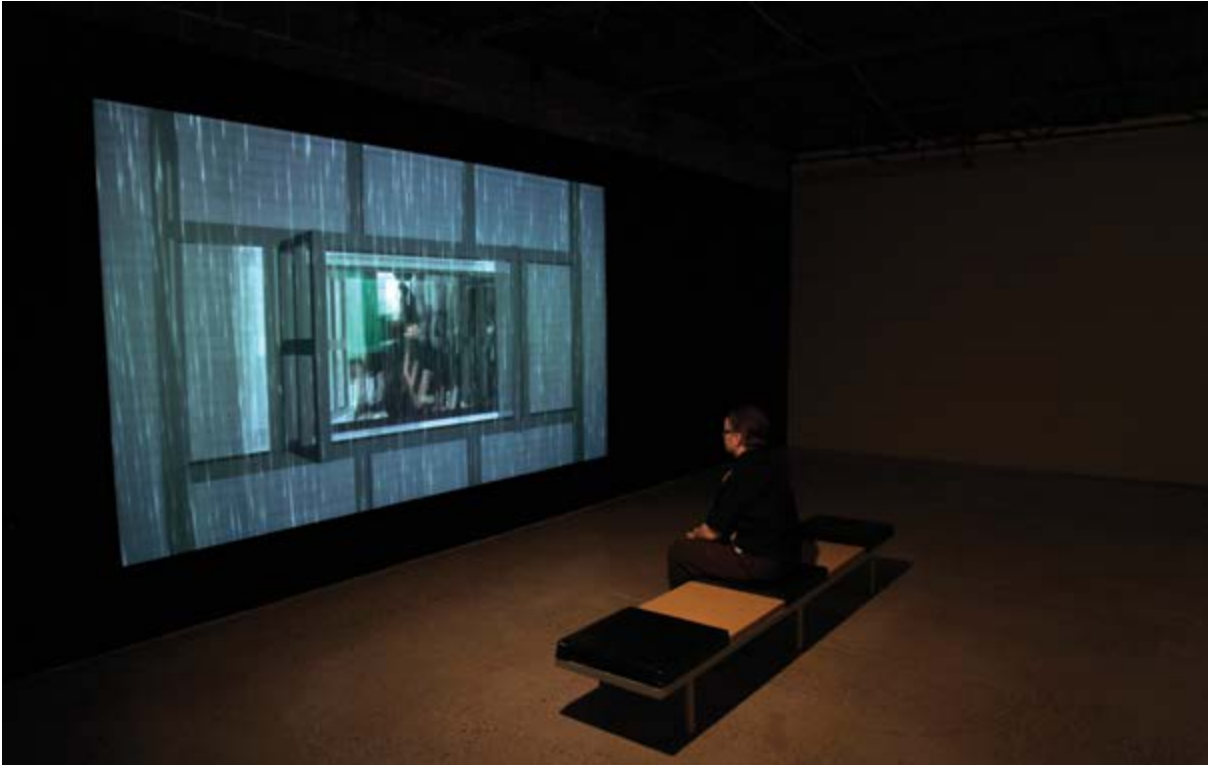
Groys also dangerously asserts how some see “the religion of the avant garde as false and idolatrous.” But we all know that a prophet is, of course, without honour in their own country.... and usually, when confronted with something genuinely groundbreaking or radical, most will fall back on the safe and secure haven that they don’t understand, and simply walk into the gallery space, and walk back out, not “getting it.”

Adorno highlighted this disturbing trend years ago. *Town & Country* can help you decide if that concern has been supplanted by Fredric Jameson’s *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, where an object of “value”, available to a select few, judged on its exclusivity, is now all that matters. His ideas of “late capitalist modernism” are more aptly described as “late modernist capitalism.”

Anitra Hamilton’s *Town & Country* deserves a bit more consideration than the dismissal Adorno laments, and I’m hopeful it will get that. Or maybe I can’t see the holding pen I’m in, either....



1.



2.

A Well Fitted Suit

David LaRiviere reflects on Yam Lau's
Inaugurations (Two Instances of Illumination)

3.



May 2 – June 6, 2014.

Inaugurations (Two Instances of Illumination)

I first met Yam Lau in the second year of our respective undergraduate studies in Fine Art, some 28 years ago at the University of Alberta. Reflecting on those early years seems like contemplating another life, and as with so many of the students and faculty in Edmonton at that time, we eventually went our separate ways. To be sure, Lau has since developed many formative artistic experiences, just as he has initiated important collaborative projects and artistic alliances from points elsewhere. It would be fair to say that Lau has traversed an expanse, having completed graduate work, later becoming a faculty member in the Fine Art department at York University, and most importantly having continued his pursuit of an artistic practice in rigorous ways, along both formal and conceptual lines. It is to be expected that Lau's experience has intensified his artistic concerns, and yet at heart there remains a certain quality in his projects, a remarkable consistency that I recognize from all those years ago, a kind of sensitive yet exacting temperament that made him an inspiration to many of us who enjoyed the privilege of studying with him. In the context of his artistic development these qualities have indeed served him well, lending to his interest in media art, and building upon an encounter with the French philosopher Henri Bergson, in turn a philosophical project that combines qualities of rigour and sensitivity.

Entering into Yam Lau's exhibition at PAVED Arts, entitled *Inaugurations (Two Instances*

of Illumination), one is immediately reminded of the precise intuitive method developed by Bergson, a procedure that works towards a complex understanding of differences that live within composites. For Bergson all of experience is bound up in composites, variable compositions of perception and memory, space and time, and of past and present. Without being illustrative, Lau's work shares certain pronounced affinities with this philosophical method named intuition. His approach to media art is one that expounds upon the time of the image, drawing out or delineating elements of the composite. For Bergson, in a like manner, the important role that intuition plays has to do with drawing out differences in kind that exist within composites, qualities that are often conflated in experience and thereby mistaken as mere differences in degree.

Thus intuition does form a method with its three (or five) rules. This is an essentially problematizing method (a critique of false problems and the invention of genuine ones), differentiating (carvings out and intersections), temporalizing (thinking in terms of duration).¹

In order to better understand the play of forces that constitute experience, an exacting, precise analysis is required, one that Bergson contrasts to a sloppy (over-generalizing) dialectic and conversely likens to "a well fitted suit." In thinking about Yam Lau's project the image of the "well fitted suit," which the artist cited during his talk at PAVED Arts, seems

well formulated to relate to both "instances" contained in *Inaugurations*.

Of the two discrete, single channel video works on view, the earlier work, simply entitled *Room* (2008), holds up for consideration a furnished apartment space with its occupants, notably the artist himself, engaged in a quotidian moment. As such the work operates on a rather intimate level, privileging the quietest of moments rather than any kind of dramatic flourish, crisis point or building narrative device. The feeling of intimacy is further enhanced by the (literally) transparent nature of the "walls" that inscribe the space, underscoring the generalized context of *Room* as that of the artist's own lived space. While *Rehearsal* was presented as a large projection that dominated the majority of the gallery space, *Room* was positioned near the entryway of the gallery on a flat screen monitor. As with an earlier presentation of *Room* at the Musee d'art de Joliette, the "furniture" of the 36" flat screen monitor was covered and thereby neutralized by a plinth-like wall construction with a cut-away hole placed directly over the screen. This was undertaken not only to tidy up the monitor, but to heighten or emphasize the planar aspect of the screen, an element that is mirrored by the "walls" of the ever-rotating room. In fact the cubic nature of the rotating room is not due to the shape of the architectural space that is captured or represented, but rather by the planar screens that take up the quadrilateral

and rotating vantage points onto an otherwise irregular architectural space. It is a rotating cube of screens that we peer through, capturing the same figure moving through the same time but from different yet overlapping perspectives. One might venture at this point that Lau's interest in the planar has certain affinities to the cubist program of examining the object from multiple perspectives at once. However, where cubism is ultimately concerned with extension, in particular the intersection of perspectives as they reiterate the extension of a canvas surface, towards a kind of flatness that is decidedly static, Lau's construction is entirely open to the possibilities of duration. In Lau's *Room*, everything that is expressed as a spatial extension is in perpetual movement, always in a process of becoming different even from itself. This is the very capacity of time, philosophically considered apart from space, drawn away from the composite of "spacetime," that is traced in order to apprehend that which is ever-changing.

In contrast to the video screens of *Room*, the large scale single-channel projection of *Rehearsal* is drawn much more aggressively out of 3-D imaging software. Many of the elements of *Rehearsal* retain the undisguised look of computer generated imagery. Virtual rain, itself an overt computer graphic, veils all of the parts of this video as it unfolds within an inscribed space. Two considerations immediately come to the fore in framing

Rehearsal as a project that occupies “virtual” space: first there is the formation of abstract “potential,” and then, with this potential, the development of a composite (assemblage) as it comes to occupy a duration. To begin with Lau gives us the term “rehearsal,” denoting a practice run that eventually comes to produce a certain potential. The video begins with component structural parts that look like ubiquitous framed sections of a wall from before it is sheeted with drywall. Revolving around a sheer (virtual) table top, pieces fly in the rain as if caught in a spiral vortex, eventually self-organizing into an ordered architectural space, then a living space, and ultimately a window onto a very particular interior space, one that reveals a small but intimate drama. Moving more slowly onto the frame of the window, Lau integrates actual video that he captured of a woman within a typical dwelling from Beijing, China. Potential is produced on a couple of different levels: first as raw structural components which, operating very much as would a diagram, constitute abstract forms that may be carried off in any direction; and second in the coalescing development of virtual potential that becomes a certain reality, and in this movement an entire social and cultural assemblage is conjured. There is a woman at the window, anonymously observed in a private moment, quietly smoking a cigarette and weeping only to herself. Almost as soon as the subject is developed and given a certain time, she is whisked away and the assemblage disintegrates back into its

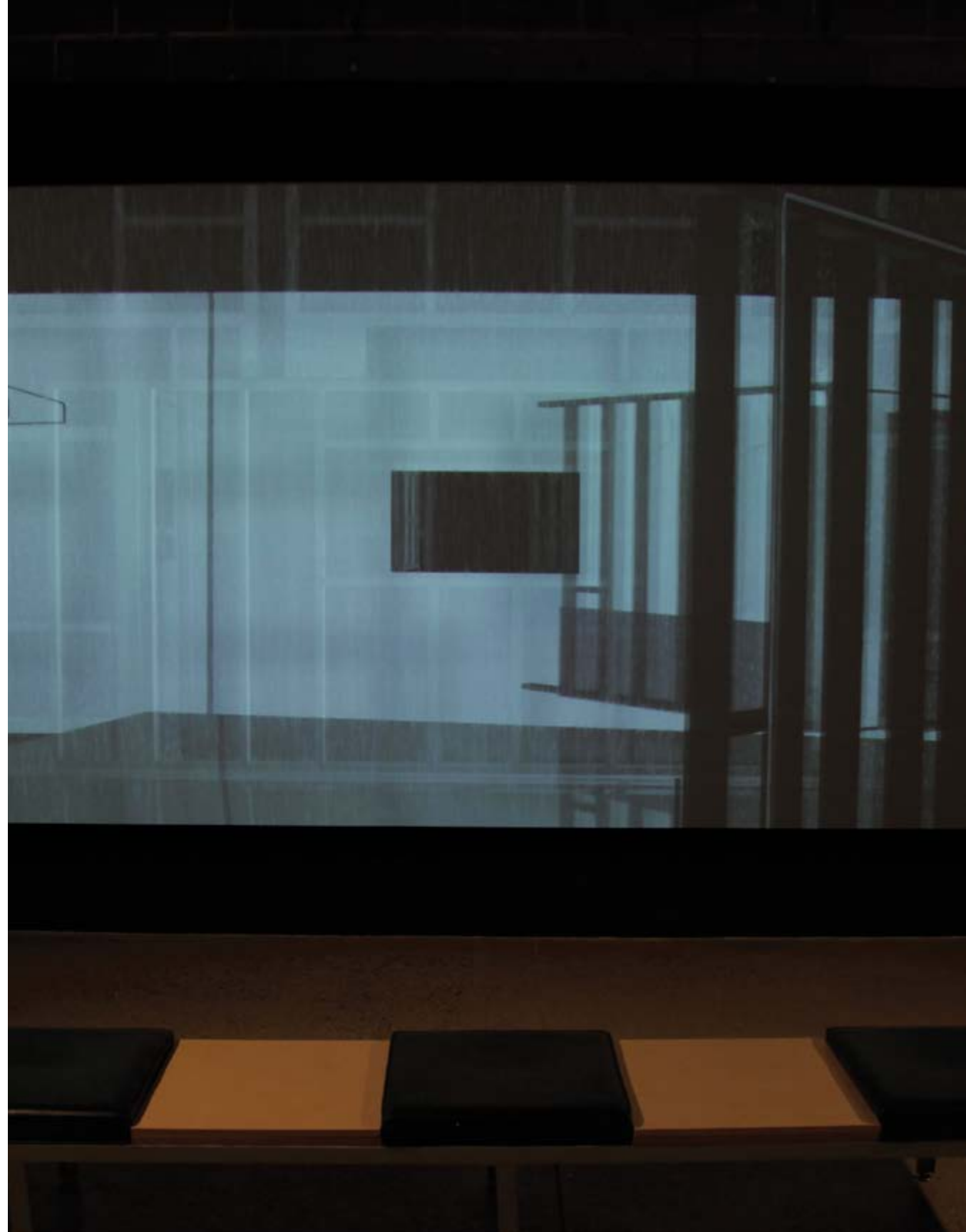
abstracted component parts. As with *Room*, the drama that is produced in *Rehearsal* is restrained to a sense of the everyday, but also as with *Room*, the architectural space and the rigidity of its component parts give way to an assemblage that is subject to a duration. The table top exercise of *Rehearsal* (all rehearsals being exercises) occupies a creative space that ultimately, inevitably becomes involved with the real.

Lau’s exhibition juxtaposes presentations of *Room* and *Rehearsal* as two discrete instances that illuminate the artist’s ontological interest in the “image.” Whereas *Room* expresses a time that unfolds around interleaving perspectives, lending its quotidian subject multiple simultaneous dimensions, *Rehearsal* exercises the integration, coalescence and disintegration of the image in time. Both cases lend a virtual metaphysics to space and time that corresponds to an image in movement. Ultimately it is the coalesced image of the woman in the window that haunts us, as but one instance of a multiplicity set into motion but never concluded.

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (Zone Books, Brooklyn, NY. 1988) Page 35.

Images

1. Yam Lau, *Room*, 2008. Flat screen monitor mounted in wall construction, 72 x 48 x 8 inches.
- 2–4. Yam Lau, *Rehearsal*, 2010. Video projection, installation view, PAVED Arts.





1.

Going Off-Route

Justin Pfefferle contextualizes
Amanda Dawn Christie's *Off Route 2*.



2.



3.

September 12 – October 17, 2014.

Off Route 2

What does it mean for a film to reveal its apparatus and betray the constructedness of the illusions that it projects? What's at stake in moments where you see the image in process, as with Amanda Dawn Christie's film installation *Off-Route 2*?

What kind of pressure does such an incursion of the technological put on the frame? Indeed, on the very concept of the cinematic?

Exhibited at PAVED between 12 September – 17 October, 2014, *Off-Route 2* refers implicitly to a history of filmmaking that wonders if self-revelation might be integral to cinema as a media and form. Yet while the installation invites being situated on a lineage of films that reveal themselves, it also occupies a contemporary moment in which cinema's past is being resuscitated through new media. The evolution of cinema, its increasing translations from celluloid material to digital immateriality, hasn't necessarily shifted the ground beneath what qualifies as cinema qua cinema. When we encounter Christie's installation, we're confronted with a harbinger of cinema's future and a disclosure of its earliest iterations.

When cinema reveals its technological underpinnings, it does more than remind the viewer that the world depicted onscreen has been mediated by equipment, including the camera. As well as locating the film object as a product of human labour, cinematic

self-revelations have tended, historically, to underscore the stillness at the heart of motion pictures by foregrounding the photograph as a precondition of cinema. In Dziga Vertov's agit-propaganda film *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929)¹, for example, the editing room, where the director's wife stitches together still images before running them through the projector, occupies pride of place. Here, relationships between stillness and motion, between human effort and industrial technology, define the cinematic apparatus. A similar dynamic prevails in Albert and David Maysles' documentary *Gimme Shelter* (1970)², when the filmmakers disrupt the conventions of American direct cinema and take the viewer behind the scenes to view the death of Meredith Hunter—first in slow-motion, then in freeze-frame. In the editing room, Mick Jagger has Albert Maysles hit the pause button at the precise moment at which the knife of a Hells Angel enters Hunter's ribcage. The move literalises the metaphorical alignment between death and the stillness of the photographic image. According to Mary Ann Doane, "photography is inevitably in the past tense, evoking the recognition of a 'having-been-there,'" while "the cinema makes an inexorable appeal to the present tense³." If this is the case, then the cinematic image frozen onscreen occupies a temporality poised uncertainly between the irrecoverable past and its filmic enlivening.

Cinema's tendency to reveal itself—its foundations in technology; its embeddedness in networks of labour; its dialectics of stillness and motion; its obsession with death and the body as a site of duress—gets articulated in *Off Route 2* in ways that reiterate and complicate extant notions of what constitutes the cinematic. For although it situates itself as part of a tradition of films that disclose the apparatus behind their various fabrications, it does so in the context of an art gallery, not a movie theatre. A semiotics of exhibition displaces attention from the individual screen as the sole object of spectatorial regard, while the loop mitigates the kind of surprise that typically accompanies revelations of the machinery of filmmaking in linear narratives. Shot in 35mm before being transferred into digital, the installation belongs to both an old and new media world. Despite not calling attention to its celluloid composition and photographic pre-history, it uses contemporary technologies to re-invoke cinema's past: the viewer who enters the loop mid-way through, even past the moment of the climactic reveal, participates in the kind of spectatorship that prevailed in movie theatres until Alfred Hitchcock insisted that audiences show up "on time" for *Psycho* (1960).

If the automobile occupies a special place in cinema because, like movies, it enables a specifically modern (not to mention mechanical) contraction of time and space, the image of an inert vehicle, flipped upside-

down in the aftermath of a crash, represents a challenge to the fetishising of movement that provides motion pictures with their *raison d'être*. In contrast with the tracking shot that begins the loop on a note of boundless mobility through uninhabited space, the car that greets the viewer raises the spectre not only of human encroachment, but of a stillness that carries with it connotations of death. Motionless, the body inside the car invites the kind of concentrated attention to which Maysles and Jagger pay the body of Meredith Hunter when they freeze the frame at the moment of his death. In this instance, the camera frustrates the viewer's desire to prolong the look by scanning past the body, as though it were merely one object among many in a dense visual field. The return to the body comes in the form of an extreme close-up of the woman's eye, which indicates micro-movements that reveal she's still hanging on to life. A biological double of the mechanical lens, the eye addresses the viewer in the act of viewing and reminds him that looking sometimes entails being looked at.

The conflation of subject and object of the gaze culminates in the moment at which the viewer understands that "Amanda," the character within the fictional narrative, is also Christie, the director of the film. As the team of firefighters who've arrived on the scene work to extract her from the vehicle, the camera dollies out to reveal what we have, in fact, known all along: that behind the cinematic

world must exist a technological apparatus and network of human labour that combine to make what we see and hear available. There's no magic in cinema, no projection—however fantastic—that isn't bound to the media and conditions through which it was produced. When Amanda exits the car and reclaims her real-life identity, she inverts the familiar trope of woman in trouble; she is, manifestly, woman in control. But in the same way that Laura Dern's character Nikki Grace struggles to recover from the ordeal of portraying Sue Blue in the film within David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006)⁴, Christie leaves Amanda behind with difficulty: visibly weakened by the physical exertion that her endurance performance required, she stumbles out of the vehicle with the assistance of the firefighters. One of them asks her: "You all right?" The question registers in the fictional and non-fictional narratives simultaneously. It's a genuine expression of concern, predicated on Christie's having adopted a role, yet motivated by a sense of the actual perils involved therein.

Immediately following Nikki's scene on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, she enters a nearby theatre where she watches herself performing the role of Sue Blue. Like a traumatised patient, she seems compelled to return to the site of a traumatic occurrence and repeat the event in order to provide it with a meaning within narrative. For Nikki, as for many of Lynch's female characters, there's no getting

outside the loop that connects real life with its various mediations and fictionalisations. In *Off Route 2*, Christie, after discussing the next shot with her assistant director, tells the camera operator: "Alright, you can cut. That's good." Instead of releasing her from the narrative in which she's at once in trouble and in control, the loop begins again; through media, she's doomed to live and relive the fictional car crash and her re-emergence into actuality over and over again.

According to Walter Benjamin, "the most important social function of film is to establish equilibrium between human beings and the apparatus. Film achieves this goal not only in terms of man's presentation of himself to the camera but also in terms of his representation of his environment by means of this apparatus."⁵ The radical political function that Benjamin assigns to motion pictures renders unimportant any question as to whether they record the world or create a multiplicity of worlds. For him, the crucial point is that all films occupy social, political, and economic contexts, and that to obscure this fact is to misunderstand the role cinema ought to play in culture. Any meaningful experience of cinema entails being aware of the technologies and networks of labour that tend to reside off-screen. *Off-Route 2* suggests that what defines cinema—whether fictional, documentary, or some hybrid combination of both—is that it must reveal itself in the act of revealing us to ourselves.

1. *Man With a Movie Camera*. 1929. Dir. Dziga Vertov. Kino International, 1997.
2. *Gimme Shelter*. 1970 Dir. Albert and David Maysles. *Criterion*, 2000. p. 117
3. Doane, Mary Ann. *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. p.143
4. *Inland Empire*. 2006. Dir. David Lynch. Paradox, 2007.
5. Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938*. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. 101-33.

Images

- 1-2. Amanda Dawn Christie, *Off Route 2*, 2011. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
3. Amanda Dawn Christie, *Off Route 2*, 2011. Video still.



1.

Testimony

A Curatorial Statement by Felicia Gay on the work of
K.C. Adams and Terrance Houle



2.

3.



Testimony is a powerful way in which Indigenous groups can speak to difficult knowledge, taboo or subverted topics, exposing them to air.

When engaging difficult knowledge in curatorial praxis, – such as Canada’s missing and murdered Aboriginal women, a topic in which PM Harper has publicly stated is not high on Canada’s priority list – the primary goal is to allow space for visual testimony and, within that, a voice. As an Aboriginal woman I wanted to speak to this topic in a multi-faceted way. Missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls goes beyond a societal issue, it is not a civic or provincial issue; it is entrenched in all facets and inner workings of our country and needs to be addressed in unique and powerful ways. *Testimony* featured artists K.C Adams and Terrance Houle; their work marked a declarative visual statement concerning difficult knowledge, with a focus primarily on the testimonies of Indigenous women. Both artists, through the mediums of video and photography, narrate experiences, worldviews and the reality of how violence against Indigenous women come to be borne from acts of subtle silences – the murmuring and whispering of who Indian women are in Canada, and defines who they are and what they represent.

With her cyborg series, K.C. Adams skillfully speaks to current and historical labelling

that contributes to the marginalization of Indigenous women. Her Cyborg units wear and display on their T-shirts stereotypes which are lateral types of violent naming that Indigenous women face on a day to day basis. The Cyborgs are not a reality; the “half human and half machine” represents the disconnected reality of Indigenous representation in Canada. The glamour shots of the Indigenous cyborgs reflect the glamorization of the woman as image and not as an actual person. She is far from reality, beautifully labelled and ready to use. The Canadian government has a long and sordid history rendering Aboriginal people as both a commodity (land and resources) and a strain. No matter how long and hard the media pegs Aboriginal people as a fantastical race, the fact remains that there is always resistance from those who require change to survive.

The women who modelled for K.C. are primarily highly respected women involved in the arts community or cultural workers. When they don t-shirts with stereotypes beaded on, with sayings like ‘welfare mom,’ ‘F.A.S.,’ or ‘dirty little Indian,’ it shows the viewer that no matter who the woman is in her community, or in society, when she wears the label she is not real, she is fantasy. The disconnect between label/stereotype and reality contributes to how Indigenous women are treated by those in power and how they are treated by the West as a whole. It is why, for many generations, women have disappeared

from society, often forever lost, and why there is, more often than not, little justice for women murdered by predators.

Within this exhibition I wanted to have a male perspective in relation to testimony and women. Terrance Houle is a talented artist who works through many mediums, but this particular work went beyond humour or colonial naming via visual testimony. Terrance looks to testimony through a Blackfoot worldview and represents it through the medium of video. For me personally, the work reveals a gentle reverence and respect that Houle has for his matrilineal past and for those females in his clan that come after him. The video performance, *Aakaisttsiiksiinaakii: Many Snake Woman, The Daughters after me*, touches on many topics and begins with his Grandmother May Weaselfat, who was once painted and interpreted in the romantic European style by Reinhold Reiss. From that portrait Terrance begins to ‘talk back’ through the use of performance and video. In Linda Smith’s, *Decolonizing Methodologies* she says testimony is a form in which the voice of a “witness” is accorded space and protection. In the gallery space all who enter become witnesses to their testimony, and in doing so there comes an opportunity for change. Along with Houle’s grandmother, his mother Maxine Weaselfat-Sacred Soaring Woman, sister Jolane Houle-Three Suns Woman and daughter Neko-Peace Keeping Woman are all situated to sit as if for a portrait; just as Terrance’s grandmother would have been asked to sit for Reiss. The politics behind creating Indian Portraits in the States

and Canada during May Weaselfat’s youth becomes necessarily associated with the colonial trope of the ‘vanishing Indian.’ Many Indian portraits and souvenirs were collected in order to preserve the memory of the “noble savage.”

Viewing Houle’s video brought to mind the artist Edward Curtis, and his famous black and white portraits of Indigenous North Americans. What is not widely known about him is that he had with him a wide array of costumes and props to which he had Indians model for his photographs. During the time period he was creating his work, many Indigenous people adopted westernized clothing and did not wear the traditional type of clothing he had them dress up in. The video alludes to someone faceless directing and posing the women who all model the same blanket. A blanket is a popular signifier of Indian culture and can also allude to other meanings which I will not go into. Each woman represents a different generation in Houle’s family. Each woman is representative of a particular generation and time but always depicted in the same costume. They are relegated to a particular point in time from someone in a position of power. The same can be said for Indigenous people as a whole within the media. Once a people are deemed static they cannot exist in the present time.

Images

1. Terrance Houle, *Aakaisttsiiksiinaakii: Many Snake Woman, The Daughters after me*, 2014. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
2. K.C. Adams, *Cyborg Hybrid KC (Bariff)*, 2005, and *Cyborg Hybrid Niki (Winnipeg)*, 2006. Both prints 14 x 20 inches.
3. Terrance Houle, *Aakaisttsiiksiinaakii: Many Snake Woman, The Daughters after me*, 2014. Installation view, PAVED Arts.
4. Terrance Houle, *Aakaisttsiiksiinaakii: Many Snake Woman, The Daughters after me*, 2014. Billboard project. (pages 68-69)



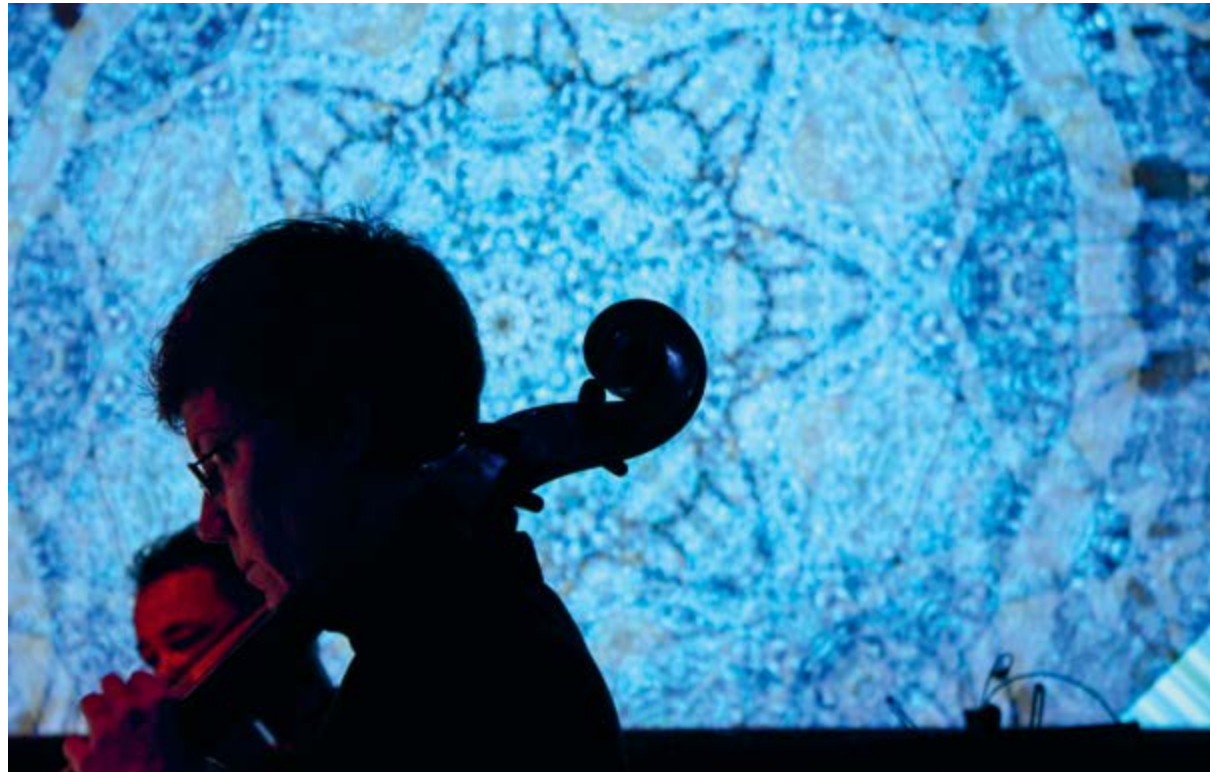
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aka
bathers

PAVED ARTS



NO
LEFT TURN
ON RED



1.

The Core Series

November 23, 2012: *Hear, See, Think*

March 22, 2013: *Surround Sound*

November 29-30, 2013: *Process/Failure*

April 4-5, 2014: *Re-Imagined*

November 7-8, 2014: *In Transformation*

March 20-21, 2015: *Futures Past*

An interview between composer Lia Pas and series co-founder Erin Brophy



2.



3.

The Core Series

An interview between composer Lia Pas and series co-founder Erin Brophrey

Lia Pas: So, tell me a bit about how the idea for the Core Series came about.

Erin Brophrey: I guess it was sort of twofold. When I first moved to Saskatoon, I was looking for things in the city to do when I wasn't working, and one of the things I love is New Music. So I was looking for some New Music concerts and I was sort of puzzled as to why there wasn't really a New Music scene here. It seemed like there were a couple of concerts a year with the composer's society but that was the extent of it and there wasn't anything really happening at the University. Then I discovered PAVED Arts and started going to their programming and I really enjoyed what they were doing. I thought they were pursuing some really innovative programming, and I just really enjoyed going to their events. That's also how I got to know Billiana Velkova, who was the Executive Director of PAVED at that time. So, one time I was at an event and I said to Billiana, "You know, we should do something!" and she said, "OK." and that's exactly how it started. The idea of taking all the cool things that PAVED was doing, trying to get the Saskatoon Symphony involved, and playing New Music just seemed a really natural fit.

LP: How did you come up with the idea of pairing film and music?

EB: I knew that having New Music concerts would really work in the PAVED space but

there needed to be a reason why they were involved. There's been such a long marriage between the visual and the aural and it just seemed like a really good fit, to play interesting music with interesting action.

LP: How do you go about curating the music and the visuals for each show?

EB: In the spirit of collaboration. There are two people involved with the curation: there's one person that chooses the music and one person that chooses the visual. Every time we've started with the music. I'm trying to turn the relationship between visuals and music a little bit on its head. Especially in film, usually the music is there to serve the visual, and in this circumstance we wanted the relationship to be more equal so that each medium in the performance was as important as the other. I felt that the way to achieve that was to start with the music. Once the music is selected we have a timing, and whoever is selecting the visual will take the timing of the piece and find a visual that works. That's the tricky part of it. In terms of selecting the music I find that it's easier to work within limitations. I find that more creative. We can only use ten players so we're limited with orchestration: five strings, five winds. Finding a concert where everyone is involved and has music that has a thread that sort of runs through it—that's a good limitation to set!

LP: When you are choosing the music, do you think about some of the music in terms of aesthetics?

EB: Yes, I try to think from the perspective of the audience. I want to have equal measure interesting and beautiful. A lot of New Music can be downright ugly and that is kind of its point – which is great, and I love that music – but a whole concert of that is difficult to digest. So it's a matter of finding a balance between things that are interesting and things that are beautiful. I also loved being able to get to know Saskatchewan composers because before we moved here I wasn't really familiar with the New Music scene here. So that, for me, was really awesome. To get to know, for example, you, and I didn't know who David McIntyre was before I moved here, or Janet Gieck, and all of the other composers I've had the opportunity to meet since I started exploring the New Music scene here. We have a tendency - in the arts - to think that everything that's interesting is happening elsewhere, and that's not the case.

LP: Especially when we're in Saskatchewan!

EB: Well, it's a small town thing. I grew up in Northern Ontario and it's the same thing. It's a small town thing. "It must be more interesting in Toronto." And having worked in Toronto and played concerts in Toronto, it's not. [Laughter] You know, it's just not. I think there are really interesting things happening in all

pockets of Canada, and I think it's important to highlight people that are creating art in your community, and in some ways can reflect your voice as an audience member. That's the whole point of art, of new art.

LP: Once you've chosen the music, does the visual curator hear the music before they choose the film?

EB: Yes, yes. That's another limitation. All the pieces we chose had to have a recording of some kind - whether it be a MIDI recording or whatever - so that the artist and curator could get a sense... for some of the concerts we were commissioning stuff so obviously the artist needed to hear what was about to happen.

LP: Yes. You mentioned working with some Saskatchewan composers, and I've noticed that most of the programs are mainly Canadian composers. Was that a conscious choice?

EB: Yes, that was very important to me. I wanted to play mostly Canadian music and have some masters from outside of Canada. But yeah, we should be playing Canadian music. It was something that the orchestra was not doing a lot of, so I felt it was really important that we do that.

LP: Yes. In terms of the visuals, most of the visuals have been film, some of it made

before, some of it commissioned for the concert, some of it adapted. Have you worked with different curators?

EB: Yes.

LP: Can you talk a little bit about what it has been like to work with different curators?

EB: It's been so fascinating! It's been really interesting to see what each one came up with, and also how they interpreted the music. The most fascinating thing was that as a musician I'm so inside of the art form that sometimes it's difficult to have perspective, and it was really interesting to speak to someone who didn't necessarily have the musical language and the musical words. They would observe things about the music that were really interesting to me. Like what they would take away from listening to the piece and then apply to a visual was really fascinating. What I found really interesting was how each curator had a different spin on how time worked with each piece. Some curators felt the aesthetic was more important than the rhythm of it. They would take the mood of a piece rather than trying to line things up. I found that fascinating; how they all weighed different priorities. Also, personality wise, who each person values is very different. I mean we all like artists for varying reasons, so it was really interesting for me to see a cross-section. I mean, there were some pieces where I was like: "I don't really think

that works." But then I would listen to other people talking about it and I would think, "Oh, you know what? That really worked!"
[Laughter]

LP: There have been a couple of collaborations. There was the collaboration that I did with Ellen Moffat. There was the collaboration that W.L. Altman did with David LaRiviere. Can you talk a little bit about those?

EB: I felt that one of the things that the Core Series should be doing is creating opportunities for artists to work together, both composers and artists. I think the opportunity for collaboration was really important, to actually create some new things. It was really neat to watch the process of two artists from very different mediums come together and put something together. That's when I feel like a lot of great art happens, like *The Rite of Spring*. It was really cool to watch what people would come up with and also interesting to pair people together. We did a call for compositions where we discovered W.L. Altman, and once we got to know his work it was Billiana who came up with the idea of pairing him with David. They never met, but it was like they had the same brain. Yes, it was like two kids in a sandbox! It was so cool to watch them do something together. It's very funny.

LP: I know there was the piece of mine that was done with Jennifer Sparrowhawk, and

that was more of a traditional collaboration. I mean, the piece of music was already composed but a bit...amorphous. Then Jennifer went and did the film. That film!

EB: She is beautiful. It is gorgeous. I think that was another thing that was interesting: often the personality and the aesthetic character of the composer would very much match the personality and the aesthetic of the artist. In the end if I had the opportunity to interact with both of them, I would think: "Wow. It's like these are the same people!"

LP: [Laughs]

EB: And they're creating very similar art just in different media, and we put them together, which is really neat. And different ages, and different experiences, (...) but there was something that was a common element between what they value as being beautiful, you know. It was really interesting to watch that come together. There were some collaborations where it was like: "You guys should go and have a drink and become lifelong friends because there is something between you two that you understand."

LP: How do you feel about the response from the community with regards to the series?

EB: Oh, that's what I think has been the most gratifying part. I feel like there was a hole in our scene here that the series has filled. It's so

awesome how people have responded and come to the concerts! To me, yes, it's great to create art but I think that as two organizations, we are honestly serving the community and that, I think, is what we're supposed to do. If we were creating these really cool concerts and four people were coming- although that would have been worth it on some level- I don't think it would be as gratifying. I think it also speaks to the open-mindedness of the artistic community here in Saskatoon that they are willing to come along on the journey. Not every concert worked, and not every piece worked, not everything was perfect, you know. But to come in and just be willing to be open, to suspend that level of... disbelief?

LP: Yes. That's it exactly. I've also noticed that, in terms of the audience, there are often a lot more writers and visual artists than musicians or music sort of people.

EB: That's right. It's not the orchestra audience member that usually has been to our shows. Which, I think, is great. Because it's clear that there is a community here that craves new, interesting art. As a musician, I want to be part of that, I want to serve and help that happen.

LP: There is one more concert in the series planned right now. Future plans?

EB: Oh yes! Well, we're in the planning stages of what we are going to do next because this was a three-year project. I think what we've

come away with is that there is a need for it in the community. That being said, we don't want to just keep doing the same thing. So there are some plans for projects in the future. I think that we would really like to focus more on the creation aspect of the project. It's yet to be determined what that would look like. I'd really like to have there be an education aspect, in particular with the high school generation. So we're going to see how that all works.

LP: High school or even University.

EB: I think eventually with the University, absolutely. But right now I think high school is where we can do something. There is a real gap in who we're serving in the orchestra. We do a lot of education shows in primary schools and nursery schools, but we don't do anything in high school.

LP: I find that very interesting because I got into New Music in high school and it really shaped who I am as an artist.

EB: I also think that this YouTube generation are so used to the visual with music. They are so much more open to New Music than someone in their forties. In fact, I think they prefer New Music to listening to Mozart. It just makes more sense. Especially with the things that "youth" listen to in terms of what their soundscape is, with video games and such. A lot of my students are really into things like

Korean Pop or Japanese Techno. It's not like what's on the top forty, it's the things they're discovering on the Internet. They are a lot more open minded about New Music. I'd really like to help explore that with them.

LP: Yes, definitely! So, you talked about high school students. Any other ideas you'd like to explore?

EB: I would love to do more concerts, and continue to focus more on the creation side. However, we need to be able to pay people more. We've gotten to a point where we've used a lot of preexisting work, which has been really interesting, but to keep it progressing we need to be creating work. I'd really love to be involved with putting artists together, of bringing in a third art form too. Like involving dance, involving theatre. It would be really neat.

LP: In terms of either the whole series or just specific concerts or specific pieces, what really worked for you and what did not work?

EB: What really worked, I felt, were the moments when we would take two completely separate art forms, completely separate pieces of art, and put them together. There were moments when it would seem like the music, through sheer serendipity would line up perfectly with what was happening visually. Those moments, to me, were just totally magical. What I found really interesting

is that those moments were different from performance to rehearsal, and that each time we performed there was different magic involved. It would be different because the musicians were not watching the visual or trying to line anything up. The music would organically move differently from night to night, and it would inform the visual and the overall performance in such a beautiful and interesting way. I loved being able to see the same pieces performed together four or five times. I never tired of watching them! For me it was really interesting to see when this particular swell would coordinate with this moment, or the intensity of the rhythm would coordinate with this intense moment in the visual. It would take my breath away. It was so cool to watch that happen. What didn't work for me was that I had to perform in some of the pieces. [Laughs] There were some visuals that I did watch without any sound, but I didn't get the same experience because I was busy performing. So that didn't work for me!

LP: Well I've noticed that - because I am a performer and a composer - sometimes I'm performing, sometimes I'm outside the performance but I am still in the piece because I'm the composer, and for me that's a really interesting space. Especially the one piece that was improvisational, which was totally different every single time.

EB: Yes, it was completely different every single time.

LP: But, like you said, there were those moments when everything would totally line up beautifully.

EB: Yeah, and it was magical when it happened. And there were other moments that didn't work at all. There would be something happening in the visual that clearly needed something from the music, and it'd be silent because we'd be between movements or something.

LP: Is there anything else you want to mention or talk about regarding the Core Series?

EB: Yeah, I would love to sincerely thank both Billiana Velkova and Alex Rogalski for doing such an extraordinary job of administrating the project. I felt like I had all the fun parts, and they had the challenging task of putting things together. The amount of energy and time required- it's not in their job description, so it's really great. Really great.

- Images
1. Music by Gareth Cook, Video by Joanne Lyons. *Songs of Woods, Rock and Water*. 2013.
 2. Music by WL Altman, Video by David LaRiviere. *RePresent*. 2013.
 3. Music by Jeff Morton, Video by Carrie Gates. *The Old Cause*. 2013.



PAVED Meant Vol. 1 (2012-2014)

Publisher: PAVED Arts
 Editor: David LaRiviere
 Designer: Lindsey Rewuski
 Proof Reader/Intern: Emilee Lopez
 Printer: Friesens Corporation, Altona, Manitoba.
 Printer Associate: Donovan Bergman
 Printed in Canada

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Acknowledgments

PAVED Arts would like to acknowledge the support of our members, volunteers and partners who have made this volume possible. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of our principal funders: the Canada Council for the Arts, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture/SaskLotteries, and the City of Saskatoon. Due to the vision and dedication of cultural workers in these sectors, PAVED Arts is able to support CARFAC and offer its exhibition programming free to the public, and further to offer the majority of our production workshops free to PAVED Arts members.

For their inspirational work in promoting and developing contemporary visual arts discourse we offer our sincere thanks to our colleagues and frequent collaborators at AKA Artist-Run. In addition we wish to thank Tribe Inc., the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra, BlackFlash Magazine, The Mendel Art Gallery/Remai Modern Art Gallery of Saskatchewan, Kenderdine/College Galleries, the Gordon Snelgrove Gallery and the wider artist-run network. We would also like to acknowledge past support from the Affinity Credit Union, the National Film Board of Canada, Sask Tel, Business for the Arts, Lucky Bastard Distillery and Prairie Sun Brewery.

Photo documents of artwork in exhibition were taken on site in the PAVED Arts gallery spaces. All photo credits belong to PAVED Arts staff: Devin McAdam and David LaRiviere. Photo-based artworks that appear outside of a gallery context are courtesy of the artist. Photo credits associated with "Town & Country" are "The Chrysler Building" by David Shankbone and "Cows" by Erik Degraaf.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

PAVED meant (vol. 1), 2012-14 : an anthology of critical writing from PAVED Arts / foreword by Tod Emel ; Glenn Alteen, Sasha Opeiko, Matthew Hall, David LaRiviere, Justin Pfefferle, Ellen Moffat, Bart Gazzola, Felicia Gay, Lia Pas and Erin Brophay.

Summary: An anthology of critical essays that analyze contemporary visual and media arts exhibitions and events that have transpired at PAVED Arts in Saskatoon.

ISBN 978-0-9689334-7-3 (bound)

1. Art, Canadian--21st century. 2. PAVED Arts. I. PAVED Arts, issuing body

N6545.6.P39 2015 709.71 C2015-902354-8

PAVED Arts is located at 424 20th Street West, Saskatoon SK. S7M 0X4
 First floor exhibition spaces and second floor production facilities are barrier free and open to the public Tuesday through Friday, Noon until Six, and Saturdays Noon until Four.

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