

There is Bread and Salt Between Us:  
Negotiating Subjecthood Through Gestures of Hospitality

by

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## ABSTRACT

Valentyna Onisko

*There is Bread and Salt Between Us:*

*Negotiating Subjecthood Through Gestures of Hospitality*

Master of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice

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This thesis investigates how those with complicated, conflicting, and hyphenated subjecthoods find expressions in contemporary art through explorations of nationality and identity, as well as cultural and historical entanglements. *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*, an exhibition installed at Open Space Gallery in March 2017, presents the works of four contemporary artists – Basil AlZeri, Ṭ̣ēma Igharas, Lisa Myers, and Dana Prieto – whose creative engagements with gestures of hospitality both invite and unsettle the viewer. In their works, new conceptions of “home” are negotiated and created: often a pastiche of memories, cultural practices, and ideas of what it means to belong. This analysis explores the artworks through a framework of hospitality, speaking to contemporary realities and anxieties surrounding constructions of subjecthood within the Canadian context. In doing so, it acknowledges the challenging philosophical relationships and ethical questions that arise from the intersection of individuals, familial structures, cultures, and nations.

**Keywords:** Contemporary art, exhibitions, curatorial practice, migration, colonialism, globalization, displacement, subjecthood, national identity, intersectionality, cultural entanglement, feminist and postcolonial theory.

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Figure 1. Basil AlZeri, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, 2017. Installation detail.

*“Astonishment...accepts the risk of being wrongly understood, wrongly interpreted, sanctified, demonized, or else interrupted point blank, and thus the risk that the discourse can be driven off its course, to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned. I would like to salute the audacity that leads a philosophical utterance to make us desert those dwellings of the mind where reason lives as master, when for an instant astonishment makes reason a guest.”*

– Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*

## PART ONE: CURATORIAL ESSAY

### Introduction

The sharing of bread and salt is a traditional welcoming ceremony in many European countries, and a ubiquitous ritual of hospitality in Slavic cultures.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in certain parts of the Middle East, the Arabic saying “*Fi Khobez wa meleh bainna*”, or “There is bread and salt between us” (turions<sup>2</sup>; Clezadlo 6), refers to an alliance based on mutual respect and moral obligation between individuals. While bread has predominately been associated with life and sustenance, perhaps since the beginning of agriculture, salt has both positive and negative connotations; it can represent both prosperity and hardship as well as denote a difficult relationship or history. This rich metaphor can be used to frame the conversation about what it means, for many, to call nations such as Canada home, and contemporary ideas of subjecthood.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (2008) where R. E. F. Smith and David Christian suggest that the Russian word for hospitality, “*hlebosolstvo*” is linguistically tied to bread (*hleb*) and salt (*sol*).

<sup>2</sup> Lowercase intentional.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper, the term “subjecthood” is often used in lieu of “identity” to emphasize the socio-political construction of the self, where individuals are “sites upon which various forces – psychological, sociological, economic, and political – act and intersect” (Ganim 225). My use of this term is based on the theories of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, which are further complicated by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault.

Canada is preparing to mark a significant milestone in 2017, the recognition that it has been 150 years since Confederation, when the British colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada (now Ontario and Quebec) were united to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867. While this event will be celebratory in nature for some, others may hold more ambiguous and conflicting feelings towards what this anniversary represents, and what national myths it perpetuates.<sup>4</sup> During such celebrations of the country's historical past, Canada's social framework of multiculturalism, and the conjectural inclusivity of Canadian society are often touted globally by political figures, at times glossing over the legacy of colonial violence and ongoing struggles.<sup>5</sup> The discourse around Canada's modern national identity also alludes to a particular understanding of the Canadian national subject, assumed by some to be stable and singular.<sup>6</sup> However, recent social sciences scholarship has charted

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<sup>4</sup> In the article "Confederation Comes at a Cost: Indigenous Peoples and the Ongoing Reality of Colonialism in Canada" (2016), Gabrielle Slowey discusses how at the time of Confederation, Turtle Island, or what is now Canada was "a land of many sovereign nations," all self-governing with unique social, political, and economic structures (33). The *Constitution Act* of 1867 gave the federal government jurisdiction over "Indians, and lands reserved for the Indians" (Section 91(24)), and acted as a precursor to the *Indian Act* (1876). Recently published news articles, such as "Telling Their Stories or Opting Out: Indigenous Artists on Canada 150" by Deana Sumanac-Johnson, and "Artists & Allies Resist #Canada150 Push on Social Media" by Leah Sandals, voice growing ambivalence and opposition that Indigenous artists may have in response to calls for their art during this time.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of how multiculturalism was strategically enacted through Canadian cultural policies and cultural institutions such as galleries and museums see Ken Lum's article "Canadian Cultural Policy: A Problem of Metaphysics" (1999), and Robyn Gillam's *Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public* (2001).

<sup>6</sup> In "Descent, Territory and Common Values: Redefining Citizenship in Canada" (2013) Elke Winter examines the growing trend among Europe countries of abandoning policies regarding liberal immigration and multiculturalism. Winter argues that in Canada, a country previously held as an example of successful multiculturalism, there is now a

how individuals and communities residing in contemporary Canadian society may now identify with several conflicting, fragmented, and hyphenated subjecthoods.

A number of contemporary artists who challenge or do not conform to precariously defined narratives of what it means to be Canadian – including those who may be affected by globalization, colonialism, migration, and displacement – respond to this quandary by exploring alternative ideas of nationality, multiple and conflicting identities, as well as cultural and historical entanglements, often through food and gestures of hospitality. In their works, new conceptions of “home” – often a pastiche of memories, cultural practices, and ideas of what it means to belong – are negotiated and created. This essay outlines the ways in which artists are grappling with these issues, by looking at how hospitality can be used to complicate the host-guest binary, and further problematized through feminist and decolonial frameworks.

In *There is Bread and Salt Between Us: Negotiating Subjecthood Through Gestures of Hospitality*, I examine the ways in which physical and metaphorical conceptions of the home, food, and hospitality are used by artists to expose and assert shifting constructs of subjecthood, ultimately opening up possible channels of dialogue. The works of these artists speak to painful histories, complicated

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similar push toward returning to identity-based citizenship. According to this model, the identity of the dominant group – in this case, a “White British and Protestant settler society” – is seen as “the only legitimate expression of membership of the nation” (117). Such a formation also echoes Daniel Coleman’s analysis in *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada (2008)* and his belief that Canada’s national identity has historically been centered around a “specific form of whiteness” that is conflated with the British model of civility (5).

relationships, and commonalities; and in doing so, they propose alternative collective futures for the viewers, and gesture toward other possible socio-political formations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the last few decades, driven by several global factors, the subject of hospitality (and its limits) has seen a resurgence in philosophy, politics, and the arts (Molz and Gibson 2; Shepherd 11; Still 1). Judith Still, professor of French and Critical Theory at the University of Nottingham, identifies three reasons for this trend: the grand-scale physical movement of populations brought about by voluntary as well as involuntary migration and hopes of greater economic opportunity, the growing body of scholarship drawing on the experiences of displacement during and after the Second World War, and the acceleration of globalization and recreational travel (1-2). In these contexts, hospitality does not necessarily refer merely to the generous reception of guests or strangers in domestic settings, but also to the philosophical and ethical questions arising from the encounters between various cultures and individuals, within diverse familial structures, and within or among nations. For Still, hospitality in the broader sense involves the crossing of boundaries and thresholds: “between self and other, private and public, inside and outside, individual and collective, personal and political, emotional and rational, generous and economic” (4). These intersections



and thresholds are not singular or discrete, but comprise layered networks of relationships and exchanges.

Hospitality's philosophical roots can be traced to the Greco-Roman concept *xenia*, or "guest-friendship" where hospitality was regarded as a spiritual duty, a moral obligation between parties (which may include individuals, families, clans, and states), and which could have legal and inter-generational implications (O'Gorman 142-146; Derrida and Dufourmantelle 23). Such early formations of the concept have been explored further in recent decades, perhaps most prolifically by Jacques Derrida, who was inspired by the works of Emmanuel Lévinas. Both French philosophers viewed hospitality as the foundation of all ethics and the social contract that shapes how we relate to ourselves and all others (Derrida *On Cosmopolitanism* 16-17; Derrida *Adieu* 50; Still 7-8) Significantly, born in colonial Algeria to Sephardic Jewish parents, Derrida's philosophy is deeply influenced by his childhood experiences of displacement, rejection, and his lifelong feelings of being an outsider.<sup>7</sup>

In *Of Hospitality* (2000), Jacques Derrida outlines his theory of the host-guest relationship, and discusses the challenges of conditional and unconditional hospitality, using the home as an allusion to larger social constructs such as states

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<sup>7</sup> See *Derrida: A Biography* (2014) by Benoît Peeters and Lynne Huffer's "Derrida's Nostalgia" (2006) where Huffer complicates the dichotomy of the colonizer/colonized subject while noting the problematic historical myth-making of colonial powers, and suggests that Derrida's writing appears to erase the historical and contemporary colonial and neocolonial violence and resistance in Algeria.

and nations. He proposes two key arguments that help make the distinction between conditional and unconditional forms of hospitality, and to inform the tensions between them: one of these arguments posits that to be a host, one must, in Derrida's words, be the master of one's house. The second stipulates that to be hospitable, the host must have some control over those being hosted, even though both parties have a moral obligation to ensure a fair exchange. For Derrida, these arguments are essential to understanding how the host-guest relationship is negotiated and how hospitality functions as part of larger socio-political formations. For example, at the level of nationalism, defining and often excluding constructions of the "other" may influence who is welcome to enter a country and under what conditions (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 55; Shepherd 6-11).

Unconditional hospitality, where control is relinquished ("to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition") is an impossibility, and perhaps undesirable, since without control and responsibilities, the relationship between the host and hosted dissolves (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 77). While purportedly an altruistic act, hospitality requires the enacting of power dynamics, as "without sovereignty of oneself over one's home," hospitality is impossible. In addition, for Derrida, the discussion of hospitality is tied to the contemporary "rigorous delimitation of thresholds" where boundaries are drawn between "the familial and the non-familial, between the foreign and the non-foreign, the citizen and the non-citizen, but first of all

between the private and the public” (47; 49). The performance of hospitality, therefore, involves if not necessitates, violence through the restrictions set by the host or through exclusion (55).

Derrida is perhaps best known for developing deconstruction as a method of semiotic analysis; therefore, his views of hospitality are deeply tied to the etymological analysis of the word, put forth by linguist Emile Benveniste, where “*hostis*,” can mean both “guest” and “enemy.”<sup>8</sup> In *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas* (1999), Derrida further complicates and abstracts the concept of hospitality by asking, “Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?” (51). Consequently, since the “other” can be construed as an alterity of the self, what does it mean to be hospitable to alterity, and welcome its interruptions? The work of contemporary artists, such as those presented in *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*, resonates with these ideas and questions in a multitude of ways.

Theorists such as Judith Still, Irina Aristarkova, Julia Emberley, Maurice Hamington and Mireille Rosello, have built on the work of Jacques Derrida, expanding on, complicating, and at times challenging his framework through social justice, feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Aspects of hospitality, including the sharing of food, host-guest relationships, and notions of home and

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<sup>8</sup> Emile Benveniste analyzes this etymology in great detail, breaking down the word “hospitality” into “*hosti-pet-s*,” where “*hospes*” or “*hostis*” in Latin can mean “guest,” “stranger,” or “enemy”; “*potis*” on the other hand, means an identity (from the Latin *pet*) that is linked to being “master of himself” or “master of the house” (73-77). For Benveniste, the etymology of hospitality recalls the complex interactions or reciprocal relationships that one finds in cultural traditions such as the potlatch.

domesticity, as well as the more abstracted conceptualizations of such exchanges, have been explored and reflected upon by contemporary artists such as Basil AlZeri, Ṭṣēma Igharas, Lisa Myers, and Dana Prieto.

### **Entangled Hospitality and Complications of the Host-Guest Binary**

Basil AlZeri is a Toronto-based interdisciplinary artist, who works with installation and performance art, public interventions, and food. His work also explores contemporary negotiations of identity, difficult histories, and universal commonalities, that address personal and social experiences.<sup>9</sup> Discussing his previous work, AlZeri asserts that he is interested in “issues of geographical and cultural relationships as a way to speak to the complexities of interpersonal relations between displaced bodies,” referring to people who have diverse histories of voluntary or coerced migration (AlZeri “The Death of Performance Art”). He also aims to “facilitate a space for empathy through gestures of inclusivity and generosity” (Personal Communication, March 18, 2017). In his art, the complexities of human displacement and relationships to land are often discussed through concepts of hospitality, the host-guest relationship, and the preparation and sharing of food.

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<sup>9</sup> Here, difficult histories can also be linked to the concept of “difficult heritage.” According to Sharon Macdonald, difficult heritage is “a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity” (Macdonald 1).

In his installation, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking* (2017), AlZeri occupies the small utilitarian kitchenette in OCAD University's Open Space Gallery. This shared space is used for receptions and food preparation by students and faculty of OCAD University's Inclusive Design Research Centre, located in the same building. For this intervention, AlZeri transported the entire contents of his home kitchen contents – cooking utensils, pots, pans, dried herbs, salts, spices, pickled foods, and jars of legumes – as well as other objects that make a kitchen one's own. By creating a space that many visitors can potentially relate to, the intervention makes public this often overlooked and at times neglected domestic area, and reestablishes it as a central space of communion.

This site-specific installation speaks directly to the Open Space Gallery's mandates, which set its objectives as: to act as a venue for experimental exhibitions, workshop and networking event space, and to function as “an open accessible laboratory space” (“Open Space Gallery”). Similarly, for AlZeri, the kitchen, while often labeled and overlooked as a site of invisible domestic – largely feminine – labour, is a space that acts as a “domestic laboratory”; it is a place of physical and metaphorical gathering, central to the maintenance and sustenance of a household or community.<sup>10</sup> It is also:

one of the most essential and universal spaces that we set up so we can prepare meals and sustain ourselves and our families. The kitchen (cooking areas) are established in the smallest corner of a refugee's

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<sup>10</sup> The kitchen's common association with invisible feminine labour has been highlighted and problematized in some of the most iconic works of feminist film and video, such as Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), and Alice Winocour's *Kitchen* (2005).

temporary living space, apartments, houses, etc... The kitchen is the HEART of every home” (Personal Communication, March 18, 2017).

While the ubiquity of the kitchen can contribute to it being perceived as a banal space, through reframing, it can become a site of critical reflection. Notably, AlZeri’s art practice has evolved from the mundane practices of the everyday “whether it is a clipping of my facial hair, Skype conversations with my family, or the dried herbs hanging everywhere in my kitchen” (AlZeri and Bamboat). His use of common perishable and consumable goods as art objects “obliterates the preciousness of objects in museums” in order to “invite more people into conceptual or intangible practices” (AlZeri and Bamboat). To extend this invitation, during the opening reception of *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*, AlZeri interacted with the guests, some of whom sat around the table that he moved from his home to the gallery space, and offered them bread and *za’atar*.. For AlZeri, translating one’s private life into art practice through the use of everyday objects reifies otherwise abstract or difficult to express personal and social relationships.

*Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking* is influenced by two evolving projects: *Most Prized of All Closets* (2015) and *The Mobile Kitchen Lab* (2011-2015). In the immersive work, *Most Prized of All Closets* (2015), shown as part of the *Protectives* (2016) exhibit curated by Vicky Moufawad-Paul at A Space Gallery, Toronto, AlZeri recreated a well-stocked pantry within the gallery space. In the work, as visitors enter the constructed room, they are surrounded by bushels of hanging dried herbs and peppers, rows of canned produce, and caches of

grains, as well as familiar and comforting smells. One is met by stashes of canning supplies, retro wallpaper, and commonplace miscellanea: collections of used elastics and other household items that we don't often consider. Strangely, the experience is at once very specific – perhaps you are transported to your grandmother's pantry – but also ubiquitous and cross-cultural. In this way, the installation speaks to common feelings of comfort related to traditional practices of food preparation. While the pantry can signify a space of comfort and protection, an alterity is implied: protection from whom?

In an interview with Toronto-based artist and writer Gina Badger, “The Archivist in the Kitchen” (2013), AlZeri explains how Palestinian cuisine has been shaped by practices of food preservation. In his view, it is not only a testament to renowned Middle Eastern generosity and hospitality – where a well-stocked pantry is indispensable to host guests at a moment's notice – but also a culinary bi-product of Israeli occupation, where one's family may be required to stockpile food in case they are unable to leave the home for days of being under siege. In these circumstances, the pantry becomes “the most prized of all closets.” For AlZeri, his work is a form of archiving and of preservation. AlZeri and Badger describe preservation as “a specific technique for cuisine and also for resistance. Both things come together: pleasure in the colour and flavour and the social history of food, and resistance to occupation. Together they make the character of Palestinian cuisine” (AlZeri and Badger 25). Preservation, in this case, holds multiple meanings: preservation of cultural identity, food, and the self.

For AlZeri, learning how to cook traditional Palestinian dishes for his peers from his mother acted as an “entry point” into Canadian culture and a means of expressing himself and his cultural identity in a way that was not overtly political. He began using food as part of a performative practice in 2010, during which he introduced his audience to the tradition of Palestinian *mezze* – several small dishes consisting of dips, spreads and other appetizers – at times served directly on his body. The intention was to bring people together “through acts of generosity and inclusivity” and to “invite people to break away from their daily routines for a moment to observe, interact and perhaps reflect” (AlZeri and Badger; AlZeri “The Death of Performance Art”).

The concept of *The Mobile Kitchen Lab* (2011-2015) – used as part of performances at several arts festivals in Canada, Mexico, and Chile – came out of a need for a mobile “stage,” where he could cook for the visitors. His mother, Suad, a Palestinian woman living in Jordan, instructed him through a live video feed from her home, in the preparation of traditional and culturally-meaningful dishes. Through its materialization, activities like the cooking of *mujadarah* – a simple lentil-based dish, signifying ideas of comfort, a shared connection to the land, and also austerity – and the making of *tabbouleh*, rebranded as “Israeli salad,” were transformed into contemplative events. Here, the dynamics and interactive nature of cooking for the host as well as for guests with different backgrounds offered the potential to disrupt cultural appropriation, nationalism, and colonial histories (AlZeri and Badger 18-24; McNamara).



In this project, the kitchen – the center of the home – is rendered “mobile,” and speaks to contemporary migrations. In *Of Hospitality* (2000), Derrida asks whether, in offering hospitality, “is it necessary to start from the certain existence of dwelling, or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of hospitality can open up?” Replying to this question, Derrida suggests that, “perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 54-56). As “one welcomes the other in to heal one’s own sense of homelessness,” in a nation such as Canada, often defined by multiculturalism and built on histories of displacement, mobile and ephemeral definitions of “home” and hospitality can alleviate feelings of alienation and placelessness (Emberley 166).

Due to the presence of contested histories, identities can be particularly difficult to untangle within Canada. In *Sort, Hang, Dry, and Crush* (2014), part of the *A Problem So Big It Needs Other People* (2014) exhibit at the SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art in Montreal, AlZeri stood at the head of a long dining table with seated audience members.<sup>11</sup> He began by marking off the space in two ways: first, he methodically prepared sweet grass and sage and lit a match; while the sage did not smolder, the act was evocative of Indigenous North American smudging ceremonies that are used for purification and blessing. He then spread Himalayan salt along the table, a gesture of hospitality referencing an Arabic

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<sup>11</sup> Maggie Groat’s *Fences Will Turn Into Tables* (2013) is an artwork where a table was constructed from found and collected fence boards. A central gathering point in the exhibit, it was borrowed by AlZeri for the performance.

saying that translates to “there is bread and salt between us” (turions). During the remainder of the performance, AlZeri meticulously prepared *za’atar* – a Levantine spread of herbs and olive oil – using his mother’s recipe, and invited the seated audience to have a meal together. This performance can be interpreted in a few different ways. While the smudging ceremony and the sharing of food are both cultural traditions linked to ideas of welcoming and generosity, AlZeri’s allusion to a smudging ceremony on traditional Kanien’kehá:ka territory<sup>12</sup> can alternatively be seen as a way of honoring both cultures, a reproduction of destructive power dynamics through cultural appropriation, or as complicating the relationships between the two. The way that this action is interpreted is largely based on AlZeri’s perceived identity: are his actions those of a colonizer<sup>13</sup> or a similarly displaced ally? Within the contemporary reality of accelerated globalization, migrations, and cultural entanglements, the two are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive.<sup>14</sup>

AlZeri’s performance of two culture-specific ritualistic gestures can be viewed as an acknowledgement of the complexity of identity formation in a place

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<sup>12</sup> The island of Montreal (Tiotia:ke) sits on the traditional territory of the Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) people, or “People of the Flint.” The area has also historically been a meeting place of other Indigenous nations (Abler).

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Wolfe argues that settler colonialism is a specific social formation in which land is expropriated, and the local indigenous population is replaced by colonial settler society. Significantly, it is not a single event but an ongoing structure, which “destroys to replace” (388).

<sup>14</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write that within the ideological formations of settler colonialism “the decolonial desires of white, nonwhite, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism” (1).

characterized by contradictions and conflicting histories, such as Canada (turions). cheyanne turions, who curated the exhibit, asks: “Does one’s status as an immigrant to a place absolve them of settler status? Or, why resist identification as a settler? Why not articulate instead, as settlers, what we consider our responsibilities to be, given colonial histories, difficult realities and our potential collective futures?”. For turions and others, these questions are not easily settled, and while AlZeri’s work does not absolve history, it embraces contradictions and can open up a space for a more nuanced cross-cultural dialogue, and facilitate conversations about settler responsibilities in contemporary society.

Basil AlZeri’s work facilitates difficult conversations and negotiates identities in a way that invites people in. In his artist statements and interviews, he consistently emphasizes that he views the audience as “participants,” “guests,” and “emancipated spectators” possessing “free will and interest,” – empowered to contribute to the work of art or even to disrupt it (AlZeri and Bamboat). While for an artist, the granting of such agency to viewers mean accepting risk of one’s authority or artistic vision being challenged, a similar uncertainty is always present in a traditional host-guest relationship, where the host becomes the “prisoner of his place and his power, of his ipseity, of his subjectivity” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 125). Alternatively, as one cannot be a host without a guest, the relationship is in some ways symbiotic.

For Derrida, to be hospitable or to accept guests, requires one first to be the master of their “house.” While this condition sounds straightforward, the

contemporary reality is much more complex and ambiguous. In a nation steeped in a history of colonialism and chattel slavery,<sup>15</sup> while being a home to many First Nations, immigrants, migrant workers, and displaced peoples, who is the proverbial “guest” and who is the “host”? For many, responding to this question is not a purely semiotic exercise, when heads of state use labels such as “illegal aliens” to refer to immigrants or refugees, and when immigrants are treated as perpetual “guests” which “reminds them or ‘us’ that their status is more precarious than that of others.” Where “they might be told to ‘go home’ if they do not behave themselves” according to the rules of the “host” state, words hold power (Still 191). Within this context, contemporary art can delve into difficult questions, For instance, what does hospitality mean in a country where, historically, uninvited guests later asserted themselves as the masters of the house? And, how can we acknowledge difficult histories to allow for the possibility of generative host-guest relationships? While these questions are unlikely to be answered in any definitive way, art has the potential to represent their complexities.

### **Feminist Hospitality: Setting the Table**

Like AlZeri’s work, Dana Prieto’s performances use everyday objects in a way that has the potential to challenge alienation and open spaces for difficult

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<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the history of slavery in Canada (Indigenous and those of African descent) see Erica Neeganagwedgin’s “Chattling the Indigenous Other” (2012) in *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*.

conversations. An Argentine artist and educator currently based in Toronto, Prieto states that her work “circles around the mundane, through the creation of spaces, images and actions that propose uncanny experiences.” Using commonplace materials such as food, kitchen cloths, and human detritus as her medium, she explores political and cultural identities (Prieto “Dana Prieto”). Prieto’s practice is often community-based, and she participates in several collaborative projects, such as Critical Soup, a social justice initiative that uses art and food to create dialogue around the politics of food and the impacts of Canadian extractive companies in Indigenous communities locally and abroad. Similarly, as part of a collaborative artwork *Carnivora*, Prieto works with several artists, including Lisa Myers. She aides in hosting workshops that share land-based traditional knowledge to explore issues of “cultural, geographical, political, psychological and biological aspects of food” as well as food sovereignty (“We are Carnivora”).

Prieto found that food became a significant component of her art practice when she moved from Argentina to Canada. “Food,” she writes, “has given me ingenious and sensitive ways to speak about complex social, cultural and geopolitical issues while keeping me connected to my own identity and passions” (“Dana Prieto: Critical Soup”). Some of Prieto’s works do not use food directly, but look at refuse, and what is left behind hospitable and domestic experiences or the sharing of “bread and salt” – kitchen rags, stories, and shared histories. For example, *The Rags Between Us* (2016) is an ongoing collaborative, multidisciplinary art project that uses domestic textiles – rags, dishtowels, and tea

towels – donated by women of her family, as well as friends and strangers, to explore a Spanish proverb. “Los trapos sucios se levantan en casa,” which states that “dirty cloths are washed at home,” denoting a form of intimacy between individuals with whom one can be vulnerable. For Prieto, the cloths “exquisitely embody the remnants of our domestic practices and serve as an allegory of the ‘unclean’ stories experienced, shared and ‘washed’ in the company of women”; here, women allowing each other to enter a space of trust and vulnerability also suggests their partaking in a form of host-guest relations. She adds: “Allegories about washing or airing our dirty cloths suggest the longing to share messy, unsuccessful, intimate and at times traumatic domestic stories” (Prieto “Dana Prieto” Artist Statement). Another version of this proverb that has inspired much of Prieto’s work reads as “Los trapos sucios los lavamos entre nosotras” or “We wash the dirty cloths among us women,” possibly implying that it is often women who share difficult stories.<sup>16</sup>

Although such a statement resonates with many similar proverbs around the world, she notes that the common English idiom “you don’t air your dirty laundry” is much more restrictive and isolating. Her work is instead highly collaborative, where Prieto and over a hundred other women have worked together, sharing stories and sewing the donated textiles to form large-scale works. By foregrounding traditionally invisible domestic work, she “re-imagines,

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<sup>16</sup> From *Volver* (which translates to “go back” or “return”) a continental Spanish film released in 2006, directed by Pedro Almodóvar.

re-frames and reenacts these ordinary cloths into affective materials, actions, and spaces that embody female narratives of alliances and disconnections with cleaning and sustenance” (Prieto, *The Rags Between Us* 2). With this work, she also makes visible cross-cultural traditional women’s labour such as cooking and cleaning, necessary for the maintenance of the home and practice of hospitality.<sup>17</sup> For Prieto, there is an underlying narrative aspect to the work, as the rags link the present to the past, and one’s personal histories to those of other women. In particular, she states that:

Cloths function in the world of residues; their materiality physically and metaphorically embodies traces of our domestic creations, becoming sort of palimpsests of smells, stains and textures that may be added or cleaned, but never fully erased. The rags’ inherent pungent, abject and at times shameful qualities expose signs of lived experiences and felt memories that are often unaccountable...they hold a powerful and uncanny function: they connect us with our past (Prieto, *The Rags Between Us* 3).

The work emerges from a tradition of women using forms of visceral art, and common household objects such as textiles to explore women’s connections through shared stories, a practice that was perhaps most prevalent in the 60s and 70s conceptual and installation art.

For example, Prieto draws on historical examples of feminist communal art production, such as the seminal large-scale work *Womanhouse* (1972), which was organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, and explored ideas of

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<sup>17</sup> Judith Still notes that while women are often excluded from the host-guest relationship, they are seen as the “material ground of hospitality: the ones who perform much of the physical labour of hospitality (cooking and serving meals, cleaning houses and so on) and also provide entertainment” (122).

woman's work, community, and domestic roles predominately through textiles. Although *Womanhouse* was widely praised at the time, it has since then been subjected to criticism for portraying a narrow and exclusionary vision of womanhood. In relation to such responses, Prieto states that her work is grounded in her immigrant experience as a newcomer to Toronto, and aims to reflect on the intersections of "intimate and social-political issues around migration belonging, gender, and power" ("Dana Prieto") while problematizing an idealized unified women's community (*The Rags Between Us* 6). In an interview with Karina Iskandarsjah for *Site-Specific*, Prieto spoke about the need for community engagement, and its challenges, in working for social change; she cautioned that "it is necessary to discuss inside our organizations what we actually mean with 'communities' and, particularly, what we mean with 'building' them" ("Dana Prieto: Critical Soup"). For Prieto, projects such as Critical Soup do not necessarily "build" communities, but they "highlight a sense of unity in a previously existing community, giving time to strengthen its bonds, and facilitating space and resources to empower its capacities" ("Dana Prieto: Critical Soup"). In this way, Prieto "sets the table" for conversations to take place.

In the textile installation *Commonplace* (2016-2017), Prieto constructs a 9'x6'x6' textile structure, by stitching together rags and tea towels donated for the use of this project. The enclosure created with these textiles aims to act as an emotional and evocative space for self-reflection. Prieto explains that the work resembles "a hearth and the rectangular room can be seen as an abstraction of a



kitchen,” illuminated from within (*The Rags Between Us* 8). Through creating such symbolic spaces, she states that her work “hopes to make room for gaps and silences where the audience can potentially project themselves developing imperfect understandings of the female narratives.” Additionally, “the installation’s mundane, worn and pungent elements complicate the seeming representation of a utopian female community and create an experience that is at the same time ethereal, mesmerizing and abject” (8). For some, the work may evoke feelings of nostalgia, a longing for a home outgrown or left behind. This theme resonates with Prieto’s other works, such as *Back Home, Honoring Our Grandmothers* (2015), aesthetically resembling *Commonplace* but shaped to look like a cocoon or womb “a ‘home’ that everyone can potentially relate to.” Similarly, *Laying Down Roots* (2014), an installation of canvas, rope, and thread refers to a need to “ground” ourselves but “each knot unravels a story, a crisis, an opportunity, a choice, and a path” (Prieto “Dana Prieto”).

In the performance piece *Self Portrait with Family Rags* (2016-2017) Prieto sits in the corner of a room, with a bucket of soap and water, a pile of cloths, and a rope suspended between two walls or points. She meticulously washes each piece of material, and in different reiterations of the project, then washes her body, feet, face, or surroundings. After hanging the cloths on the rope, the process can begin again. Describing the work, she states that these textiles:

are embedded with vestiges of my own and my family’s domestic practices. Yet, what remains visible from our enjoyments and distresses are just traces of residues that would be pointless to interpret and are impossible to erase. This ostensibly futile ritual of washing and airing the

shabby, mundane and otherwise embarrassing rags deals with my process of migration, community remembrance and regeneration (*The Rags Between Us* 10).

Along with an offering of a meal and shelter, the ritualized washing of guests (almost exclusively by women or female servants) is central to hospitality in the Old Testament and Homer's *Odyssey*, both seminal texts constructing classical traditions of hospitality (Still 68). This ceremonial custom is still significant and present in many cultures as an act of hospitality and friendship.<sup>18</sup>

While not all of Prieto's works speak overtly of hospitality, she creates spaces with textiles where stories can be shared, and for the potential of existing communities to come together: Prieto writes that, "When we are invited to a place where food is not a commodity, where the dish is thoughtfully and carefully prepared and the 'table' is set in order to welcome us to a collective experience, time slows down, and we become more aware and thankful, opening chances for conversations to flourish" ("Dana Prieto: Critical Soup"). Works such as *Self Portrait*, in which actions create an affective response, use performance as a speech act, in a context where actual language may be inadequate. They help voice previously unexpressed feelings which may be shared by others – a longing to belong or nostalgia for a place one has never been to, for example.

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<sup>18</sup> This ritual has in recent years come to the forefront of public conversation when in 2013, Pope Francis washed the feet of twelve prisoners, including a Muslim woman. While popes have participated in this rite for centuries as part of Maundy Thursday, commemorating the Last Supper, this is the first time that the Pope has washed the feet of a woman (Alexander). Furthermore, in 2016 Francis washed the feet of refugees, from multiple religious backgrounds including those who are Muslim and Hindu, as a symbolic gesture against the anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric which followed the Brussels terrorist attack (Navarro and Winfield).

Here, it might be useful to note that while the home and domestic sphere have traditionally been conceived as feminine, Judith Still, professor of French and Critical Theory and author of several written works on hospitality and Derrida, explains that women may not feel “at home” in these spaces, as this requires “a sense of comfort, the feeling at ease in your own environment; it also implies being willing to receive guests” (Still 60). This underlying discomfort is just one of the aspects of hospitality complicated by sexual difference that Still explores in her book *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (2010). Derrida submits that the traditional model of hospitality is “phallogocentric” – a neologism that combines the phallocentrism and logocentrism that he sees within Western culture – and reveals its structural connection to violence. For example, Derrida states that “it's the familial despot, the father, the spouse, and the boss, the master of the house who lays down the laws of hospitality” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 149).

Cloth, in particular, has also been historically associated with women, with theorists such as Freud having suggested that “weaving is the one art invented by women – and that they invented it out of feminine modesty” (Still 88). Still suggests that weaving and textiles have also come to embody patriarchal notions of protection: “women can weave clothes, cloth acting as a shield between men and women” although “modest weaving...of clothes for the living or shrouds for the dead is not always enough to shield from violence” (61;124). This

understanding of cloth contributes to other possible connotations of Prieto's work, such as that of a protective instrument.

Judith Still believes that the question of sexual difference, which is intimately tied to violence, is critical to the discussion of hospitality, and has been less widely discussed than issues of race and nationality within this context (2). Common social conceptions of the "host" and "guest" are largely masculinized, while the feminine form "hostess" – "guest" does not have an equivalent – has been delegated to mostly commercial connotations: "the hostess implies hospitality offered by the master of the house, the true host, by *means* of his woman, the hostess" (21). Nevertheless, the female body (the maternal body, the erotic body) is "uniquely hospitable. . . . The body is the first sphere of hospitality, before the home, the city, the nation state or the cosmos, and inhospitality is often narrativised as rape" (21- 22). Strikingly, Levinas has indicated that feminine vulnerability *is* hospitality, as women are the ultimate "other," whereas Derrida infers that lacking the "transcendence of language," in which feminine alterity is "marked by a series of lacks. A certain negativity is implied in the words "without," "not," and "not yet" (Derrida, *Adieu* 36). Furthermore, for Levinas, an absence or invisibility of women is at times seen as desirable:

The other whose presence is discreetly an absence, with which is accomplished the hospitable welcome par excellence which describes the field of intimacy, is the Woman. The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation (155).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kim Meijer-van Wijk discusses and complicates the "discrete absence" of the woman figure in the chapter "Levinas, Hospitality and the Feminine Other" in the *The Routledge Handbook of Hospitality Studies* (2017).

Notably, in *Of Hospitality* Derrida speaks of women several times, but nearly always in the role of the “other,” as a stranger-foreigner. Near the end of the book, he puts forth two Biblical stories that for him exemplify the problematic aspects of unconditional Abrahamic hospitality: that of Lot and His Daughters, and Levite and His Concubine.<sup>20</sup> In both narratives, women are violently sacrificed to fulfill the law of hospitality, which is placed above familial duty. In these stories “hospitality is ‘set up’ as a relation between men,” women, on the other hand, are “part of the household, if not the goods, of the master or his guest, and sacrificed to consummate the sacred bond of shared consumption between men” (Still 67). *Of Hospitality* concludes with a question, where Derrida asks: “Are we the heirs to this tradition of hospitality? Up to what point? Where should we place the invariant, if it is one, across this logic and these narratives? They testify without end in our memory” (155). Some feminist scholars argue that the answer to Derrida’s question, for some and in particular for women, has historically been “yes” (Aristarkhova 67).

In *Toward a Theory of Feminist Hospitality* (2010) Maurice Hamington, Professor of Philosophy at Portland State University, suggests that through reading the works of feminist authors, an understanding of hospitality based on “issues of identity, inclusiveness, reciprocity, forgiveness, and embodiment can contribute to an alternative theory of hospitality,” can be put forth, subverting

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<sup>20</sup> In *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*, “Lot” (Genesis 19: 1-9) and “Levite of Ephraim” (Judges 19-21).

traditional patriarchal hospitality (21; 25). Drawing from feminist care ethics,<sup>21</sup> inclusive epistemological views, and a connected sense of identity, this alternative approach would focus on strengthening social bonds and a “nonhierarchical host-guest relationship,” bridging the personal and the political (21). For Hamington, the feminist movement is uniquely capable of succeeding in this endeavor because it has historically dealt with intersectionalities, such as those between gender, class, and race. Hamington states that while such an expanded theory is not in opposition to those of Levinas or Derrida, a feminist hospitality can complicate Derridean notions of conditional hospitality, which he believes are rooted in a mistrust of those unknown, and serves to maintain existing power dynamics (22). Drawing on Judith Butler’s notion of performativity,<sup>22</sup> Hamington argues that hospitality is a “performative act of identity,” and can, therefore, be changed to an identity that is more empowered (25). Finally, since feminist theory has also focused on concepts of inclusion, he suggests that the expansion of the notions of guest, as “whether it is a home, the city, or nation-state, hospitality operates at the border of membership, but it is precisely at the border where learning takes place” (28). Through this practice, feminist hospitality and feminist art can create spaces

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<sup>21</sup> The “Ethics of Care” is an ethical theory attributed to the writings of developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan, outlined in her book: *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1982); and philosopher Nel Nodding’s *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984).

<sup>22</sup> Philosopher and theorist Judith Butler proposed that gender difference is culturally and socially constructed through performative acts in her books *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993).

of “radical openness to the Other that is both disruptive and connective,” based on ongoing reciprocal relationships and care (31).

### **Embodied Memory: Storytelling Through Cooking and Food**

Lisa Myers is an artist, curator, and chef whose research interests include the interrelationships between food, memory, geography, and her relationship to the land. Based in Toronto, Myers’s art practice draws from her Anishinaabe (Shawanaga and Beausoleil First Nations) heritage, family stories, and the potential of cooking and food sharing as a critical methodology.

In 2015, Myers completed a residency at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto) where she created a body of work, a continuation of her series *Blueprints* (2012-2015), exploring the mark-making properties of blueberries. The residency was largely a participatory project, where she invited strangers and local groups to share food – in this case, blueberries – and stories. The connections formed between people during this process are the crux of the work, as the sharing of food has facilitated a conversation “about stories that have given us direction in our lives. That’s where the kernel of the conversation can start” (Myers quoted in Mierins). Throughout the process of inviting visitors to her studio to share stories, the blueberries were shared and eaten using wooden spoons. As the spoons absorb the juice, a “stain” or a form of memory is left behind. It is this “trace of somebody” that Myers finds interesting: “the idea is that stories are absorbed, as well as food, and that the things we learn, the things we

witness, make us who we are. They enable us to locate ourselves in society and in our culture” (Mierins). Like AlZeri, Myers does not see the participants as an “audience” but instead as “collaborators”: the process of invitation, participation, and sharing, is necessary as part of creating the piece of art, if not the artwork itself.

Myers has been working with blueberries since 2010. She was inspired by the story of her maternal grandfather who survived, over the course of a 250-kilometer journey by subsisting on the berries growing along the railway tracks that he followed as he was running home from the Shingwauk Residential School in Sault Ste. Marie (Wilson-Sanchez 357). Her work traces, metaphorically and through embodied practice, the path that her grandfather followed decades ago towards his home in Espanola, Ontario, as a way of locating herself within this history and reframing it within the present as a form of reclamation (Wilson-Sanchez 359; Cochrane). The *Blueprints* series “remaps” a family story of her grandfather’s journey and explores the links between memory, land, and food as a form of self-location as well as cultural and self-preservation. Although her process is drawn from this familial history in a significant way, the work succeeds in speaking to larger social and national narratives, such as those of residential school trauma and Canada’s colonial legacy, and contributes to the sharing of other important, and at times painful, stories (Mierins; Cochrane).

Lisa Myers has previously used blueberry purée to make screen-prints illustrating maps and paths that she has traveled or that were otherwise significant,



but later realized that the blueberries themselves have a story to tell, by letting the material “map itself and tell its own story” (Mierins). In the video project *Straining and Absorbing* (2015), Lisa pours blueberry ink onto a silkscreen and uses pressure to pull the ink across with a squeegee, over and over, until all of the ink is strained through the mesh. While the work documents the process used to create prints, it creates a narrative in itself. First, the blueberries must be collected, boiled, and strained through a sieve, and strained again in the action of printing: “the video reveals this process that I think links back to cooking and even the way I make the ink” (Mierins). The “straining” becomes apparent through the repetitive motion progressing through time. The metaphor of straining and absorption is richly layered and reflects how our bodies digest foods such as blueberries, and how we process stories and histories. For Myers, the process relates to “assimilation and colonization where you’re straining to survive.” In “Blueprints,” Myers asks, “What do you leave behind of yourself and what do you compromise to belong or fit in?” (Myers, quoted in Wilson-Sanchez 360). In recent years, other Indigenous artists have been reclaiming food and food-preparation to discuss difficult histories, a medium that is particularly poignant, as food was employed in the creation of the Canadian nation as a disciplinary tool and civilizing technology which aimed to “absorb” Indigenous peoples into the body politic. Using blueberries as material and metaphor, Myers explores a painful family story that speaks to larger narratives recurring in Canadian history.

Similar themes are explored in her work *Old Spoons* (2012), where seven ceramic spoons and nine wooden spoons are displayed on a plinth. Interspersed with the glazed clay spoons, the wood spoons are stained from being soaked in tea, a reference to well-handled wooden spoons used for cooking. The ceramic spoons are made in the style of raku, a Japanese pottery tradition, where vessels are fired at a relatively low temperature using a lead-based glaze, and removed to cool in open air. Myers explains that the raku firing technique “absorbs smoke and different elements to achieve an aged look to the spoons, and expanding their signification to evoking a sense of memory and even freezing in time as their use value also shifts from utilitarian to representation objecthood” (Myers, personal communication).<sup>23</sup> Although traditionally used for ceremonial purposes such as Japanese tea ceremonies, the material is fragile, and like the wooden spoons, in raku ware the lead-based glaze remains porous, absorbing that which it is in contact with, while also potentially disintegrating or releasing that which it has absorbed (Branfman 26). Similar to other works that are part of this exhibit, the tactile nature of the piece seems to beckon the viewer, asking them to pick it up, but it holds many potential, and at times conflicting, modes of engagement.

In “Serving it Up: Recipes, Art, and Indigenous Perspective” (2012), Myers looks at the relationship between Canada’s colonial legacy and the

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<sup>23</sup> *Raku-yaki* (Raku-ware) has a distinct aesthetic, as the pieces are hand-shaped and not thrown and the firing of the glaze is unpredictable; they appear more “raw,” showing the ‘hand’ of the artist who created them. The Japanese word *raku* can be translated to mean “pleasure,” “enjoyment,” “comfort,” and “ease” (“Raku Ware” Encyclopædia Britannica; Audsley and Bowes 277).

symbolic function of food as it relates to cultural identity by “critically engaging with the issues of nationalism, tradition, and uneven power relations” (Myers “Serving it Up” 173). She believes that food symbolizes “visceral connections to the past” and has culturally affirmative potential as artists use food in a way that “engages the politics of place in relation to colonial history, which acknowledges the presence and absence of traditional food memory in their lived experience” (174). Within Turtle Island and Canada,<sup>24</sup> food and hospitality have meant different things to distinct communities and cultural groups, and has a particularly difficult history for Indigenous peoples. In Canada, early hospitality towards incoming Europeans was betrayed, through settler-colonialism and ongoing displacement from traditional territories by employing government policies such as the *Indian Act* of 1876 (Tennant). Through strategic displacement, traditional methods of food harvesting were replaced by systemic scarcity and government-issued rations, often low in nutritional value, and federal food programs and policies where food was used as an “assimilatory and disciplinary tool” (Burnett, Hay, and Chambers). Foods such as bread may have largely positive connotations for non-Indigenous people, but hold a conflicted history for the Indigenous peoples in Canada. Staples, such as salt, sugar, white flour, baking soda, and lard are some of the main ingredients of bannock (a flat quick bread) and have contributed to the disproportionately poor health of Indigenous communities

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<sup>24</sup> Turtle Island refers to the name used by some Indigenous nations to refer to what is now known as North America (Miller 307).

(Tennant; Myers “Serving it Up” 177). Therefore, bannock, a food that is strongly associated with Indigenous cuisine and “embodies memories of family, food, and home, and contributes to a sense of identity and belonging,” for some, continues to denote a history of colonial oppression (Myers “Serving it Up” 180). In “Breaking Bread: Bannock’s Contentious Place in Aboriginal Cuisine” (2017), Zoe Tennant calls attention to the fact that “to talk about food is to talk about land, and bannock occupies a conflicted territory” (Tennant). Although contentious, Lisa Myers also states in “Serving it Up” that:

the conversation about food, and particularly scone [bannock], gave us a sense of belonging and, for the moment, connected us to our grandparents, the reserve, hunting camps, and to our First Nations heritage. At the same time, the need for that conversation acknowledges the disconnection with these same people, places, and topics... the subject of food seemed able to patch up our fragmented sense of place (191-192).

Through embodied art practices such as those of Lisa Myers, food connects family, memory, identity, and place.

In his discussion of mourning, Derrida states that “there is no hospitality without memory,” by which he means that hospitality does not require a physical or geographical “place,” but can occur through recollection, memory, and stories (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 144). For those who historically did not have the power to control dominant national dialogues, the repetition of stories is particularly important. One cannot begin to envision a future while the stories of those that have been disenfranchised are continuously drowned out.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Coulthard points out that while in June 2008, prime minister Steven Harper issued an official apology to Indigenous survivors of the residential school system, framed as the

In her article “Epistemic Encounters: Indigenous Cosmopolitan Hospitality, Marxist Anthropology, Deconstruction, and Doris Pilkington’s *Rabbit-Proof Fence*” (2008) Julia Emberley attempts to complicate Derridean notions of hospitality and asks how we can “decolonize” European notions of cosmopolitan hospitality (148). Emberley proposes to re-position “the epistemological conditions of postcoloniality by taking into account indigenous epistemologies rather than focusing only on the exploitative and appropriative conditions and disavowals that attempt to marginalize and silence such epistemologies” (148). For her, storytelling is an “invitation” that can form the basis for social justice, where non-Indigenous people must also accept the invitation by listening to stories of Indigenous peoples while remaining accountable and open to necessary change and reciprocity (169).

The work of Lisa Myers is also deeply rooted in stories related to land, which can be particularly compelling in grounding communities that have been traditionally displaced. In *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (1997), Lucy Lippard states that “concepts of reciprocity – between cultural belief systems and between people and “nature” – inform most spiritual views of the land” (16). For her, artists are able to make these interconnections visible, re-linking the viewer to place. This is particularly

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first step in forgiveness and reconciliation, in September 2009, at a G20 meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Harper remarked that Canada has “no history of colonialism” and then continued to say “We have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them” (105-106).

important in remedying a society that feels increasingly alienating. The “lure of the local” does not necessarily call for a nostalgia to return to a physical “home” or place of origin “sometimes it is about the illusion of home, as a memory,” and “one can be ‘homesick’ for a place one has never been; one can even be ‘homesick’ without moving away” (23). Stories are what relates us to the past, supports communities, and root us to place. As Lippard points out: “When governments and education institutions can’t be trusted, historical authority shifts to grandmothers” (50). Therefore, art practices such as those of Lisa Myers, are a form of storytelling, where the sharing of familial and at times difficult histories can have the effect of grounding, as well as reestablishing social bonds.

### **Hospitality as a “Decolonial Gesture”**

Ṭṣēma Igharas<sup>26</sup> is a contemporary artist who examines the embodied relationship between land and subject-position. Through utilizing an interdisciplinary art practice and pushing the limits of traditional art media, she draws on her Indigenous experience to assert agency, and to challenge stereotypes and simplistic tropes of Indigenous Canadian identity. She states that her praxis is “sparked by strategies of Indigenous resistance to neo-colonization, the embodied knowledge and everyday acts of decolonization as ways to understand the imaginary Canadian true-north and industrial reverberations felt by those who live

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<sup>26</sup> Formerly Tamara Skubovius.

downstream” (“Artist Statement”). Similarly to Myers, her work is deeply rooted to the land, and is especially concerned with resource consumption.

Igharas challenges preconceptions through, what she calls, a “lived experience of multiplicity,” of being raised Tahltan, but outside of the traditional Tahltan territory. This complexity is also demonstrated by her unique perspective on land politics: where she has at times actively resisted the harmful development of unceded territories, and at other times worked in resource extraction. She describes herself as “a modern nomad who lives in and between urban and rural places” (Igharas 4). In Igharas’s scholarship and art practice, she aims to assert a “Native Space,” as theorized by Julie Nagam. An artist, curator, and academic who has worked with Igharas, Nagam’s work deals with “(re)mapping the colonial state through creative interventions within concepts of Native space” (“OCAD Faculty” Profile). Nagam defines this position as “a network of relationships akin to those traditionally navigated over waterways and across land” (quoted in Igharas 6), which for Igharas “transcend[s] a traditional or archetypal identity politics by assuming Indigenous bodies in city spaces” (Igharas 6-7).

In *Deposit* (2017), four ceramic vessels filled with water are grouped together, similar but distinct, almost anthropomorphic in their embodiment. Their shapes, cast from rocks, are organic, as if the openings were hollowed out through eons of water erosion, but show evidence of their fabrications. The lines where ceramic slip seeped through suggest seams of cloth or hide. The water inside

echoes and reverberates the sounds from outside them: *Khoh-k'āts-kets- 'mā*. The stone vessels invite us in, seemingly asking the visitors to sit around them like at a campfire or familial hearth, and listen.

As with Igharas's other works, the final manifestation is a culmination of a long artistic process, layered narratives, and metaphor. Meticulously collected, or "mined," rock "proxies" were cast in ceramic slip and according to Tahltan ontology symbolize mobility, nomadic identity, and as a metaphor for land "a vessel that contains us all" (31). For Igharas, rocks act as proxies for land; they are repositories of experience and cultural memory as well as representations of familial relationships. Igharas states that rocks are "living energy capable of transferring knowledge," and although they are seen as inanimate objects, they connect us: "stones are born, they move, age, breed, and return to dust. Some ask us to pick them up off the side of the road and carry them with us, and others invite us to stare into their surfaces to look for inner truths." (Hampton quoted in Igharas 27) For Igharas the human relationship to clay is inherently relational and performative in nature "through the act of making, and using to eat (together), have tea, store valuables or otherwise." For her, clay is also representative of natural lifecycles: "mud to fire to rock...rock to rock and dust to dust" (30).

*Khohk'ātskets' mā* means "when the Stikine River crashes on the rocks and makes bubbles" and is also Igharas's grandmother's Tāltān name. Igharas recording of her poem titled *Khohk'ātskets' mā*, was performed at her thesis



exhibit: *LAND/MINE*.<sup>27</sup> The poem was first written in response to protests aimed at Imperial Metals, a corporation responsible for the Mount Polley mine disaster in the Cariboo region of British Columbia in 2014, one of the biggest environmental disasters in Canadian history; when a copper and gold tailings pond spilled 4.5 million cubic meters of slurry and toxic mining waste into Polley Lake, it then flowed into nearby bodies of water (“Mount Polley”). While reciting the poem, Igharas recites her grandmother’s name, slowly, with intent, seemingly holding on to every syllable. This significance is echoed when Igharas explains that the embodied kinship-based relationship with land in Tahltan epistemology, as it is expressed through the traditional introduction: “de’eda en-tsu̇ kudethkake?” which translates to “where are the tracks of your grandmother’s fire?” (10). The connection between language and place is profound, as one’s language is “the home that never leaves us...a sort of mobile habitat, a garment or a tent”; it is a home we carry with us “from birth to death” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 89).

For *Khohk’ātsk̄ets̄’mā (Reverbs: Sound Seeds)* (2017), T̄s̄ēma Igharas collaborated with Julie Nagam. The final sound installation is a composite audio

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<sup>27</sup> Igharas’s MFA thesis exhibition and related paper were presented in April 2016 at OCAD University. In the abstract accompanying her paper, Igharas states that “*LAND|MINE* actively deconstructs and (re)constructs linkages to the LAND that connects city spaces to the constructed wild, materials to mine sites, and bodies to the LAND.” She uses the capitalized “LAND” to make a distinction between the common Western understanding of land as an area with specific boundaries and property rights, versus “the ideologies and place of spiritual foundation for cultural practices based upon the research for *LAND|MINE* and my Tahltan personal experience on the LAND” (6).

recording that is so richly immersive to be almost multisensorial. Within the space, the viewer can feel the reverberations of the layered sounds: sounds of industrial machinery, a weaving factory and the sounds of moving water, rain and thunder overlay a drum heartbeat rhythm. *Reverb: Sound Seeds* was further enriched by Julie Nagam's recording of the sounds made during a performance of *Khohk'āt̄skets'mā* in Santiago, Chile. In this installation, the gallery white cube is quickly left behind as one is seemingly carried to a busy city street, where one feels surrounded by the sound of traffic, women singing, children crying, with the sounds of Riot Rock Rattles being played and the crisp sound of steps, and feeling as if the artist herself is walking around you.

In the performance, T̄sēma Igharas begins with her Riot Rock Rattles in a circle – rock “proxies” filled with glass and ceramic beads, pennies, and dentalium. Igharas welcomes others to join in a performative ceremony by shaking the Rock Rattles to embody these relationships as well as to represent the relationship we all have to land and industrialization. Resembling Lisa Myers's *Old Spoons*, the rattles are representative of a tension: “The objects inside can have the potential for riot or ceremony– seeds, shells, bullets, shrapnel” (64). As the performance continues, and more people join in the circle, the sound grows louder, and the performance culminates with a reading of *Khohk'āt̄skets'mā*. Igharas then pulls out a pouch and a small pair of scissors, and approaches each participant, exchanging the Riot Rock Rattles with a button cut away from her

button blanket<sup>28</sup> (Tahltan ceremonial regalia), bringing the relationship to balance, evocative of her ancestor's tradition of leaving a gift for the mountain when harvesting obsidian (70).

The performance can be seen as embodying aspects of the host-guest relationships, as seen in the reciprocal gift exchange of the Potlatch ceremony, which continues to inform Igharas's practice.<sup>29</sup> In *LAND/MINE*, she writes that: "leaving a gift for the mountain establishes my place on the land as someone who takes respectfully but also gives back. Teaching future generations to actively engage in politics of Land through Potlatch methodology is my gift to the world" (70). The concept of performance acting as a gift is also rooted in the tradition of the Potlatch itself, for "Every performance in Potlatch is a gift (artwork, songs, ideas, territories, food)" that affirms "one's position on the LAND" (16). T̄s̄ēma adds that the Tahltan Potlatch:

considers every performance as ceremony that affirms and solidifies relationships to every thing and body. Artworks are created for gifts, function as containers for food, decor and most spectacularly as regalia, signifying an individual's creative expression to their lineage, clan association and self-recognition. In Potlatch, every act is relational (16)

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<sup>28</sup> In preparation of the Potlatch where she received her Tāltān name, T̄s̄ēma ritualistically prepares her button blanket, which she states "pushed my threshold for understanding Indigenous systems, in particular Potlatch cultures, collaborative pedagogy and my capacity for creating new objects that symbolized my Tahltan and artistic identity, which, like other identities is always in the process of becoming" (15-16).

<sup>29</sup> A Potlatch is a gift-giving feast that is prominent in most Northwest Coast Indigenous traditions, which takes place to mark important social events, and functions as an economic system of wealth redistribution that maintains kinship, band, and national ties (Gadacz). The sharing of food and exchange of gifts holds social and political implications, for example acting as compensation for the witnessing of oral documentation (Igharas 16).

In her artwork, Igharas is interested in a “Potlatch methodology,” the inquiry sparked by receiving her Tāltān name “Tṣēma” (“Rockmother”) at a Potlatch. She realized that “everyday relationship to space, people and the LAND could be seen as through the lens of the Potlatch system. This revelation enabled me to employ Potlatch as a methodology, in order to foster more meaningful, relational artwork and the curation of space” (16). Her art practice, informed by a Potlatch methodology, can be seen as highly political, due to the ceremony’s history in Canada; the Potlatch, an important cultural practice where the sharing of food and gift giving carry social and political significance, was disrupted during the Canadian Potlatch Ban (1885-1951) as part of Canadian assimilation policies. For Igharas, the use of “Potlatch methodology” is a “decolonial gesture,”<sup>30</sup> as theorized by Walter Mignolo, re-centering Indigenous epistemologies as a form of resistance (Igharas 69). The seeds, contained within the instruments can also represent both the feasting practices of the Potlatch and the conception of new beginnings. Igharas’s artworks, created through a Potlatch methodology, demonstrate the political potential of hospitality as theorized by several scholars.

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<sup>30</sup> Walter Mignolo defines the “decolonial gesture” as “any and every gesture that directly or indirectly engages in disobeying the dictates of the colonial matrix and contributes to building of the human species on the planet in harmony with the life in/of the planet of which the human species is only a minimal part and of which it depends. And that would contribute to planetary re-emergence, re-surgence, and re-existence of people whose values, ways of being, languages, thoughts, and stories were degraded in order to be dominated.”

French linguist and semiotic theorist Émile Benveniste proposed that the Potlatch is hospitality *par excellence*. The Potlatch ceremony, which parallels the deconstruction of the word “hospitality,” implies a code-based reciprocity and exchange between two equal peers; two individuals, families, or communities linked together, and at times inter-generationally, by the obligation implicit in gift-giving (Still 15-16; Benveniste 77). Likewise, in *The Gift* (1950) French sociologist Marcel Mauss looked at the social, economic, political, and legal relationships that emerged from reciprocity and gift exchange. Mauss proposed that worldwide, the practice of gift-exchange establishes alliances and builds communities through the creation of ongoing reciprocal moral obligations. Researcher and writer Emma Feltes proposes that in Canada “the gift that was given to non-Indigenous fur traders by the interior nations was, and continues to be, guest-hood” (473). The gift of being accepted as a “guest” was premised on an ongoing political relationship; such accompanying obligations included the respect for Indigenous sovereignty and local customs.

In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014), scholar, activist, and member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Glen Sean Coulthard argues that within Canada, the settler-colonial project is no longer overtly coercive, but is reproduced “through the asymmetrical exchanges of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation”(15), he also states that Indigenous resistance is “a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land* – a struggle not only *for* land in the material sense, but also

deeply *informed* by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relationship to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms...” (13). While this obligation has been ignored in the past, gestures of reciprocal exchange based on the strengthening of communities and mutual obligations can potentially model a way forward.

## **Conclusion**

Derrida asks us to imagine a radically unconditional welcome:

Let us say *yes to who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 77).

Derrida’s hyperbolic deconstruction “articulates the *impossible* nature of the future. Refusing to be closed off, shut down, foreclosed, or reduced to the horizon of the Same”; it is a philosophy or “radical openness” (Shepherd 52). While conditional hospitality is a limited notion, it depends on the idea of unconditional hospitality, motioning towards a more radical form of openness.

In contemporary society, where capitalism and fear have created an atmosphere in which “doors are shut, and so are hearts” and where greater connectivity exists at the same time as greater alienation – hospitality becomes uniquely important (Still 28). However, challenging the exclusivity of national identities or borders takes difficult work and time, and Still draws from Aristotle

in suggesting that “you cannot get to know each other until you have eaten the proverbial quantity of salt together” (121). To be hospitable requires a vulnerability to let others in: “it is invasive of the integrity of the self” (Still 13). It can also mean for us to allow ourselves to become the “guest,” the “stranger.” The confrontation with the “other” or any alterity – a guest, host, absolute stranger, or an unknown place – is an incursion, an interruption which brings a moment of liminal sublimity. Both individuals are interrupted.

According to Derrida, one cannot have a habitable home without openings for “there is no house or interior without a door or windows” (*Of Hospitality* 61). Absolute hospitality is an absolute porosity; although it is an impossibility, we can strive to become more open to others and the unknown. Gestures of hospitality can create physical and metaphorical spaces where this can take place. Artists, in particular, have the ability to shape and share physical manifestations of experiences, stories, and histories, that are difficult to articulate with language alone. *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* proposes that by paying attention to the use of gestures of hospitality within the works of select contemporary artists, we can better understand current practices of identity formation and assertion within an increasingly mobile world marked by globalization, migration, and displacement. By exploring more difficult notions of hospitality, such as those put forth by artists such as Basil AlZeri, Dana Prieto, Lisa Myers, and Tsēma Igharas, a more honest and generative discourse about our past, current challenges, and potential future identities, can take place.

## PART TWO: SUPPORT PAPER

### Introduction

This thesis research project and resulting exhibit looks at how aspects of hospitality – tangible aspects such as the home, domesticity, and food, as well as the less tangible concepts of reciprocity, porosity, and the host-guest relationship – can offer a useful framework to analyze ways in which contemporary artists are exploring changing constructs of subjecthood and identity. This line of inquiry is guided by questions such as: how can theories of hospitality be used to problematize traditional ideas of subjecthood? How does contemporary art complicate or contest the Derridean formulation of the “host” and the “other”? And, for artists who feel fragmented, or “in between” locations and identities, how does hospitality help achieve a form of existential reconciliation?

The broader goal of this project is to support the dialogue of existing critical post-colonial, feminist, and identity discourses in hopes of contributing to the contemporary scholarship that aims to “unsettle the settler within,” as guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s “Calls to Action.”<sup>31</sup> This research is also guided by the impetus to honour the work of those who came before, while acknowledging the limitations of my lived-experience and subject position. The project aims to challenge simplistic and exclusionary metanarratives of Canada’s

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<sup>31</sup> As a “Settler Call to Action,” Paulette Regan proposes that “the pedagogical potential of truth-telling,” witnessing, and the dismantling of historical myths, is central to the reconciliation process and the rebuilding of Indigenous-settler relations (11-16).



modern national identity, and rethink what it means to call this land home. Due to the current increase in nativist nationalism, political discourse based on populist xenophobia in North America and Europe, and the growing international refugee crisis, this research is particularly relevant and timely. The research presented in *There is Bread and Salt Between Us: Negotiating Subjecthood Through Gestures of Hospitality* also advances understanding of how artists with diverse backgrounds and experiences explore issues of identity formation and performance as well as subjecthood within the current socio-political environment. Finally, this research aims to highlight the ways in which artists' responses can be generative: through the opening up of spaces where this discourse can take place, strategic disruptions, and through conceptualizing possible alternative social relationships.

### **Social and Aesthetic Context**

In recent years, several national and international cultural movements have destabilized hegemonic narratives and challenged exclusionary definitions of national identities.<sup>32</sup> The Idle No More movement, founded in 2012, has brought the ongoing struggles of Canada's Indigenous population and issues of sovereignty to the forefront of public consciousness. More recently, the completion of the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of*

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<sup>32</sup> In Marxist philosophy, cultural hegemony refers to the ways in which ideology (historical perspectives, cultural values, mores) of the ruling social group becomes dominant and naturalized in order to replicate the socio-political status quo.

*Canada* (2015), and government commitment to The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have shed light on Canada's dark history and the ongoing impact of colonialism. The international Black Lives Matter movement, which came to prominence in 2013, is exposing similar legacies manifested in day-to-day racism and violence, both overt and systemic. At the same time, the global refugee crisis and Canada's commitment to resettling Syrian migrants have spurred a nation-wide discourse about our identification as a humanitarian nation, and our future cultural identity (Alam 2016; Lingley 2016). While such a commitment is important in alleviating global suffering and is in congruence with Canada's adherence to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it also raises the question of whether the country can open its doors to migrants and refugees settling on largely unceded land and still honor Indigenous sovereignty.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the ongoing process of reconciliation with Canada's colonial past, and a more socially just way of moving forward requires thinking about host-guest relations in a multi-faceted way. Additionally, as in the context of similar historical periods that have challenged social stratification, the current socio-cultural destabilization and change processes have allowed national and global anxieties as well as reactionary xenophobia to

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<sup>33</sup> "Unceded" refers to lands and territories not covered by land surrender treaties, such as the majority of British Columbia. While historic treaties had "surrender clauses," it has been widely argued that the understanding of those treaties differed greatly between settlers and Indigenous peoples. For more on this, see *Indigenous Writes* (2016) by Chelsea Vowel and *Drawing Out Law* (2010) by John Borrows.

surface, and this requires further analysis. The thesis exhibition *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*, supported by this document, is meant to contribute to the conversation about these issues and offer perspectives from artists with diverse backgrounds that speak to the various forms of subjecthood experienced in Canada in the twenty-first century. The exhibition which took place in March of 2017, is also in part a response to the commemoration of Canada's sesquicentennial.

While outwardly Canada is positioning itself as a leader of multiculturalism and inclusivity, and many Canadians do hold these values, a brief review of news coverage in recent months shows growing anxiety about Canada's future identity, greater conservatism, nativism, insularity, as well as a growing nationalist movement (Coulson; Hepburn; Drummond; Wente; Smith). Others hold a more hopeful view. Toronto author Stephen Marche has stated that Canada is the "last cheerful nation," one with a political identity committed to multiculturalism which is now rare in the Western world (Dunham). Charles Foran, CEO of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, asks whether Canada is the world's first "postnational country," contrasting Canadian's positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, the acceptance of refugees, and immigration with those of other countries who are increasingly growing fearful of such values (Foran). Foran's article refers to the *New York Times*'s interview with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in which Trudeau suggests that Canada is the first "postnational state," since there is "no core identity, no mainstream in Canada" (quoted In

Lawson). Foran seems to agree with this celebratory assessment of the contemporary Canadian zeitgeist and adds his own evaluation of the country's national history. Upon their first arrival to North America, Foran writes that Europeans "were made welcome by the locals, taught how to survive and thrive amid multiple identities and allegiances." Furthermore, Foran acknowledges, but perhaps does not give enough weight, to the fact that this "welcome was often betrayed" with ongoing repercussions, and states that "if the imbalance remains, so too does the influence: the model of another way of belonging" (Foran).

The city of Toronto is an especially meaningful location for conversations about multiculturalism and national identity to take place. With a history of being home to many First Nations,<sup>34</sup> it is now widely considered one of the most multicultural and diverse cities in the world.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, with the current prevalence of national and international dialogue relating to identity, subjecthood, and social connectivity, many contemporary artists are currently exploring different forms of belonging through multidisciplinary and multi-sensory works that aim to reach out to the viewer.

The artworks in *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* are diverse in both style and media, but could all be described to some extent as being influenced by

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<sup>34</sup> Toronto originates from the Kanienkehaka word "Tkaronto" and translates to "the place in the water where the trees are standing" and has been home to many First Nations including the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Anishinaabe (Rayburn).

<sup>35</sup> The Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey found that 51% of Toronto residents were born outside of Canada, and identified more than 230 countries as their place of birth (*Toronto's Vital Signs Report 2016*).

contemporary social practice or relational art. While somewhat controversial, the term “relational aesthetics” as proposed by art critic Nicolas Bourriaud has been suggested by critics to describe art that grew out of earlier conceptual and installation art and focused on social interaction. In his book, *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), Bourriaud describes what he sees as a new phenomenon of the 90s as a “set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (113). For him, this form of art can challenge what Guy Debord described as the alienating “society of the spectacle” of late capitalism (9). Bourriaud’s theory has been contested and complicated by theorists such as Claire Bishop, first in her article “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” (2004) and later expanded on in *Artificial Hells* (2012). Bishop suggests that the relationships created by relational aesthetics are not inherently democratic or emancipatory; rather, they are of a social nature that needs further questioning. She asks: “If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?” (65). In the spirit of this line of questioning, artworks based on “relational antagonism,” which shed light on repressive divisions instead of relying on the artificial creation of “microtopias” for an idealized and unified subject, can “provide a more concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one other” (79). While rooted in social practice, the artworks in *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* similarly do not impose a

scripted interaction by the viewer or gloss over socio-political differences and antagonisms; instead, they allow for a more nuanced and honest dialogue on subjecthood and the negotiations of contemporary identities.

### **Literature Review**

By highlighting the common themes and artistic threads that run across their works, this essay examines how artists are dealing with issues of identity and belonging in a current political climate of increased suspicion of difference, as well as growing nativism and xenophobia. This research, grounded and conducted within the Canadian context, acknowledges this country's colonial history and unique global positioning as a multicultural nation. The literature review reflects these interests, and is influenced by intersectional theory, especially as it is formulated in Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's in her influential essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989). In the essay, she argues against a "single-axis analysis" of experience and instead suggests that multiple layers of identity – race, gender, class, ability – act on one another in the creation of a complex whole (139). Another primary source of influence is Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality.

While hospitality's philosophical roots have been traced to Ancient Greco-Roman and Abrahamic traditions, Jacques Derrida is widely credited for the resurgence of critical approaches to this concept in recent decades. Therefore, this paper draws from an extensive literature review of Derridean hospitality, most notably the book *Of Hospitality* (2000), which is based on a series of lectures on

hospitality given by Derrida in 1996 and a response from Anne Dufourmantelle, where Derrida establishes his key theories regarding hospitality. Other texts by Derrida elaborate on his theory, including but not limited to *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998), *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1999), and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001). Two essential works have also assisted in understanding the formation of Derrida's theory: Emmanuel Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* (1961), which Derrida later describes in *Adieu* as a "treatise to hospitality," and Émile Benveniste's *Indo-European Language and Society* (1973), which features a chapter on the etymological origin of the word from which Derrida drew his deconstructivist analysis from.

Other theorists have responded to Derrida's work and expanded on its implications within current global trends, notably: Andrew Shepherd's *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality* (2014), which grounds Derrida's writings in the theories of Emmanuel Levinas and speaks to contemporary realities of violence and displacement. Jennie Germann Molz and Sarah Gibson's in *Mobilizing Hospitality* (2006) analyzes the global response to the increased movements of people. Among the literature that explores the contemporary Canadian context through the lens of Derridean hospitality, Peter Nyers's essay "Human Hospitality/ Animal Animosity: Canadian Responses to Refugee Crises at the Millennium" (2006), and Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko's "Hospitality and Sovereignty" (2012) have been most pertinent.

It is important to note that while doing the research for this paper, it has been harder to locate analyses of hospitality that do not privilege Western notions of hospitality, and find works that explore non-Western forms of hospitality, such as those signified by gift-exchange and reciprocity, specifically within the Canadian context. Although Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (originally published in 1925), is often seen as a definitive account of cultural practices of gift-exchange such as the Potlatch, his analysis is deeply Eurocentric and colonialist in that it looks at Indigenous societies through a primitivistic lens. Scholarship presenting alternatives is sparse, as in the case of Nicholas Thomas's *Entangled Objects* (1991), which complicates Western notions of gift-exchange; by focusing on global forms of reciprocity, through an exemplary study of the cultural practices in the Pacific Islands. Additionally, Christopher Bracken's *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (1997) is a critical and compelling analysis of the colonial history of the Canadian potlatch ban and its significance, but is highly specialized and might prove to be inaccessible for most readers not familiar with Western philosophy. While the scope of this paper does not reach as far as filling the gap of scholarship in this area, it highlights the need for acknowledging it, together with issues such as gender and sexual difference in hospitality theory.

Derrida's analysis of hospitality, discussed earlier in this paper, has been criticized for its lack of analysis of the role of gender and sexual difference as it relates to the host-guest relationship – as gender neutrality often pre-supposes a male “host” and a male “guest.” Building on the theories of Derrida and



advancing them through feminist theory, Judith Still's *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (2010) indicates that it is possible to respond to current concerns, such as the backlash against immigration and the refugee crisis in Europe, by addressing the patriarchal nature of hospitality and what it means for women, which she feels is largely glossed over in contemporary conversations. Similarly, Irina Aristarkova illustrates the violent consequences of the paternalistic and patriarchal history of hospitality in her essay "Baiting Hospitality" (2016). The essay deals with the violent death of Italian artist Pippa Bacca who attempted to travel internationally in a wedding dress to symbolically promote world peace. The essay poignantly illustrates the very real dangers that female artists working with hospitality may face that male artists may not. Echoing Judith Sill, scholar Maurice Hamington proposes the need for a new discourse on hospitality based on the works of feminist theorists and that reflects a feminist ethic of self-care, in the essay titled: "Toward a Theory of Feminist Hospitality" (2010).

In addition to Derridean and feminist theories of hospitality, a third source of influence for this paper is post-colonial theory. When considering subjecthoods, belonging, and hospitality within the context of nations that have a deep colonial history, a literature review of post-colonial theory, as well as critiques of settler-colonialism and nationalism, is important. The term 'post-colonial' is often critiqued among theorists as it inadequately describes the ongoing practices of the colonial project and its legacy, especially in countries

such as Canada where Indigenous lands have not been repatriated.

Acknowledging its limitations, I use it throughout my paper to describe the historical periods of nations (colonial versus post-colonial), and not to suggest a break or dichotomy between the two terms (Still 3-4).

In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014) Glen Coulthard expands on Fanon's seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) by speaking directly about colonialism in the contemporary Canadian context. By drawing on Fanon's theory of colonial subjectivity, Coulthard asserts that the dominant Canadian political focus on reconciliation and recognition acts to contribute to subjectivity that furthers the goals of the colonial state. Coulthard outlines his "Five Theses on Indigenous Resurgence and Decolonization," where similarly to Tuck and Yang (2012), he stresses that genuine decolonization is uncomfortable, messy, and does not aim to build false utopias. This perspective has fundamentally shaped the nature of *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*: while hospitality can quickly become depoliticized and utopian, the exhibit aims to shed light on the more challenging aspects of hospitality. Adam J. Barker in "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State" (2009) further asserts that Canadian society "remains driven by the logic of imperialism" where neo-colonialism is established not through overt violence but through mechanisms such as economic coercion and the creation of cultural myths. This analysis can be viewed as an examination of discursivity in the spirit of Michael Foucault's

*Security, Territory, Population* (2009), which expands on his theory of biopolitics.

Works such as John Borrow's *Drawing out Law* (2010), and Paulette Regan's *Unsettling the Settler within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (2010) have proposed strategies in which lasting social transformations can take place, whereas "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" (2012) by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang warns against empty gestures of reconciliation ("settler moves to innocence") such as settler nativism and colonial equivocation. Additionally, Mireille Rosello's *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (2001), Julia Emberley's "Epistemic Encounters: Indigenous Cosmopolitan Hospitality, Marxist Anthropology, Deconstruction, and Doris Pilkington's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*" (2008), and Amar Bhatia's "We Are All Here To Stay? Indigeneity, Migration, and 'Decolonizing' the Treaty Right to Be Here" (2013) have considered what post-colonial hospitality might mean, especially in regards to respecting Indigenous sovereignty and epistemologies. Such literature offers interdisciplinary approaches and rich contexts to post-colonial hospitality that have been instrumental to my research and curatorial practice.

This paper also takes hospitality into consideration through the perspectives of national identity and curatorial practice. While a full analysis of nationalism and nationalist critique is outside of the scope of this paper, Canadian contemporary national identity and the construction of the Canadian subjecthood

are addressed throughout. Scholar Ieva Zake considers how nationalism as an ideology is constructed through embodied nation-building and public control, following the inquiries of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser in “The Construction of National(Ist) Subject” (2002). Theorists such as Nathan Kalman-Lamb in “Untangling the Tapestry” (2011), Daniel Coleman in *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2008), and Garry Sherbert in “Canadian Cultural Autoimmunity: Derrida and the Essence of Culture” (2007) offer an analysis of contemporary Canadian cultural identity, arguing that although we are a multicultural nation, this proclamation is often used to erase cultural inequalities, and Canada’s colonial history, if not to re-center whiteness. Focusing on Canadian art, artist Ken Lum explores the history of Canada’s cultural policy as a strategic projection of Canadian identity in “Canadian Cultural Policy: A Problem of Metaphysics” (1999), while Robyn Adams Gillam’s *Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public* (2001) explains how this cultural identity has been promoted and shaped by cultural institutions.

The history of museum practices relevant to this subject has also been investigated. Tony Bennett suggests in *The Birth of The Museum* (1995), that the museum is capable of operating like a Foucauldian *carceral archipelago*, and acts as a disciplinary technology, which supports state power. In *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (1995), Carol Duncan also discusses the history of the museum and how art can be displayed in service of ideology, institutions, and

nations. These works illuminate the possible problematic aspects of the museum and gallery space, which further informs my curatorial practice.

Other works have reflected on the past failings of Eurocentric and imperialist cultural representation and have written about the need to “decolonize”<sup>36</sup> or “unsettle” the museum and gallery spaces. Some of these texts include Ivan Karp’s “Culture and Representation” (1991) and “Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums”(1996) written with Fred Wilson; Mari Carmen Ramirez’s “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation” (1996), Moira McLoughlin’s “Of Boundaries and Borders: First Nations’ History in Museums” (2015); Diana Nemiroff’s “Modernism, Nationalism and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations’ Art” (1996); Gerald McMaster’s “Creating Spaces” (1996) and “2020: Creating a New Vision for Native Voice” (2011), and Meagan Gough in the “The Changing Relationship between First Nations Peoples and Museums” (2008).

Roger I. Simon in “Afterword: The Turn to Pedagogy: A Needed Conversation on the Practice of Curating Difficult Knowledge” suggests that cultural institutions must critically engage with their past histories while realizing that objects in a museum are not neutral and sovereign from their history (130). The curator must, therefore, practice a “pedagogy of witness” to confront these histories directly, as “curating difficult knowledge cannot be a neutral enterprise”

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<sup>36</sup> Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang problematize the use of this term in “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1.1 (2012): 1-40.

(199). I take this to mean that if cultural institutions remain committed to social change, an intersectional cross-disciplinary approach could inform a more just practice, and open up new possible dialogues.

### **Exhibition Review**

Although the concept of hospitality has seen a philosophical resurgence in the past few decades, it has held a prominent place within the contemporary art tradition for much longer. A broad overview of the sharing food, as a method of social and critical engagement throughout modern and contemporary art history, has been taken in the expansive traveling exhibit *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* (2012-2015). Curated by Stephanie Smith and organized by the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, this survey exhibition included the work of more than thirty artists and groups, including: Marina Abramović and Ulay, the Fallen Fruit collective, Mella Jaarsma, Allison Knowles, Tom Marioni, Ana Prvacki, David Robbins, The Italian Futurists, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and many others. The exhibit and accompanying catalogue trace the history of artists who have used food and hospitality as part of their art practices since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This exhibit aims to “offer a radical form of hospitality that punctures everyday experience, using the meal as a means to shift perceptions and spark encounters that aren't always possible in a fast-moving and segmented society” (“Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art”).

Several exhibitions that have also linked aspects of hospitality – such as food and ideas of home – to current events, social justice issues, and identity have been influential and speak to the contemporary zeitgeist. Two recent Canadian exhibitions exemplify this: *A Problem So Big It Needs Other People* (2014) and *Protectives* (2016). After completing the year-long SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art (Montreal) Focus Program on Sovereignty, independent curator cheyanne turions mounted an exhibition titled *A Problem So Big It Needs Other People*, featuring several artists including the work of Basil AlZeri, as well as Daina Ashbee, Maggie Groat, Susan Hiller, Maria Hupfield, Tiziana La Melia, Tanya Lukin Linklater, Annie MacDonell, Gabrielle Moser, and Chelsea Vowel. The exhibit aimed to explore the manifestations of the negotiations of sovereignty through the relationships between the participating artists and their artworks. Ultimately, while the complexity of contemporary challenges requires for people to come together, within the context of this exhibition, sovereignty lies within each individual. As turions observed, “sovereignty is the work of mediation in recognizing the irreducible sovereignty of another, like one’s own, and the corresponding legitimacy of another’s claims on one’s self” (“A Problem So Big It Needs Other People”). The exhibit *Protectives* (2016), featuring the work of Basil AlZeri and Swapnaa Tamhane, explored similarly difficult contemporary global issues such as violence, climate change, and the refugee crisis. In *Protectives*, curator Vicky Moufawad-Paul invited the participating artists to consider the “transhistorical and transcultural impulses to protect one’s body, one’s family, and

other perceived forms of community” within the current global geopolitical environment and an “age of anxiety” (“Protectives”). In several cases, the resulting “protective gestures” reflected ideas of welcoming and belonging, themes that have been problematized by others within the Canadian context.

*Canadian Belonging(s)* (2016), guest curated by Ellyn Walker at the Art Gallery of Mississauga, challenged simplistic dominant portrayals of Canada, which ignore its history of settler-colonialism and white supremacy, and offers a more nuanced perspective of how artists view themselves as “belonging” within this nation. The artists in the exhibit – Basil AlZeri, Pansee Atta, Sonny Assu, Cindy Blazevic, Vanessa Dion Fletcher, Cheryl L’Hirondelle, Kristie MacDonald, Meryl McMaster and Abdi Osman – represented their relationship with the Canadian state through material belongings related to identification, such as passports, postcards, and scrapbooks. Walker asserts that “through their use of the photograph and its function as documentation, a site for intervention, and an archive ripe for appropriation, the artists in *Canadian Belonging(s)* make visible multiple understandings of the self” (“Canadian Belonging(s)”). Similarly, *Ways of Being Here* (2016), curated by Barbora Racevičiūtė at OCAD’s Open Space Gallery and featuring artists Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna, explored the negotiations of identity of Canadian immigrants that may feel a connection (or disconnection) to several places. Through challenging dominant discourse of simplistic multiculturalism, the artists explore the multiplicity of ways to experience location, migration, and belonging.



Additionally, several local social justice focused community initiatives and events that encourage critical dialogue through food and hospitality have informed my practice and this exhibition. These include Critical Soup, organized by Dana Prieto, Community Meals, held monthly at The Theatre Centre, and the Buffalo Stew lunch organized by the Indigenous Visual Culture Program at OCAD University.

As issues engaged with in *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* are significant and timely, aspects of them have been looked at in recent exhibitions to which I owe an intellectual debt. While several exhibitions have explored similar topics of identity and subjecthood as it is tied contemporary realities and the specific history this country, they did not deal with the theme of hospitality directly. *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* aims to address this subject in more overt ways, as I believe that the visceral response that people have towards signifiers of the home, food, and hospitality has the potential to reach a broad audience and to contribute to a generative discourse.

## **Methodology**

My approach to this research was interdisciplinary and guided by methods based on ideas of intersectionality, as well as feminist and post-colonial theory. Both primary and secondary sources were considered including artist and curator interviews, conference discussions, archival research, and a broad social studies literature analysis. The research was undertaken with the intention of including

diverse knowledge systems grounded in the history of Canada and Turtle Island. I also aimed to be respectful and mindful to Indigenous methodologies developed in the works of Mitchell (2009), Weber-Pillwax (1999) and Smith (2012). This intention includes a focus on fostering ongoing relationships that are based on openness and continuous consent, and that aim to be mutually beneficial.

In some ways, the curator-artist relationship parallels the host-guest relationship, where the curator welcomes the artist as a “guest” into a pre-established space; and in the case of group exhibitions, a wider set of potential relationships must be negotiated. As part of my methodology, I was mindful of the power dynamics this could reproduce and aimed to maintain a more collaborative, non-oppressive relationship that was based on constant communication. It was also important to acknowledge that an entirely non-hierarchical relationship is perhaps impossible to achieve in this circumstance.

Artists who are currently based, or have recently been active in Toronto were considered and selected based on the conceptual complexity and maturity of their work within the given theme. I also considered the artists as a group, where multiple aspects of hospitality are portrayed through a variety of voices, adding to the probability of resonance with a diverse audience. Several locations for the exhibit were considered on the OCAD University campus and offsite, with the following criteria: accessibility, cohesion with the theme of the exhibit and artwork presented, as well as logistical factors such as rental costs, time constraints, and physical display considerations. Some possible venues considered

were: The Graduate Gallery, Student Gallery, Open Space, Onsite Gallery as well as various other local venues such as Artscape Youngplace, artist-run galleries, and experimental spaces. I chose Open Space Gallery as it is fully accessible, is centrally located with direct street access, it is close to public transit, and it offered a challenging but unique venue for the display of such diverse artworks due to its architecture.

My methodology is also influenced by several interdisciplinary thinkers and their writing. A literature review of the philosophical concept of “praxis” was undertaken, with the two most influential theorists being Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt builds on ancient Greek and Marxist ideas of praxis, the union of theory and action, and how it could lead to socio-political change. John Roberts also outlines the revolutionary nature of the everyday in his book *Philosophizing the Everyday: Revolutionary Praxis and the Fate of Cultural Theory* (2006). Broadly, philosophers tied to the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, have influenced my academic and curatorial practice by drawing attention to the political and social importance of the everyday. The concept of praxis, not privileging theory or practice but understanding the intersection of both, was important in the choice of artists and the development of the exhibit as a whole.

### **Installation Concept and Design**

The project aims to offer two complimentary entry points, through the exhibit and curatorial essay. While many are not familiar with Derrida’s theories

on hospitality, the multi-sensory and tactile nature of the exhibit aims to resonate with a broader public, who may otherwise not be readily interested in, or familiar with the issues raised in contemporary art practices such as installation or performance. Through making the project accessible through several avenues – intellectually and physically through the senses – *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* aims to reach a greater number of individuals and communities.

The exhibit is organized in a way that is “rhizomatic,”<sup>37</sup> allowing for multiple potential paths and interpretations. This is aided by the unique layout of Open Space Gallery, the architectural elements of which create connected but discrete spaces, and its arched shape, allowing viewers to enter from opposite ends of the building. If the visitor enters from the North entrance, the first work they encounter will be Basil AlZeri’s transformed kitchenette, a work that is perhaps most closely related to traditional notions of hospitality. As the viewer continues through the space, this concept becomes further complicated.

Alternatively, if the visitor arrives from the opposite entrance they are confronted with more difficult aspects of the exhibition in the video works of Prieto, and the theme of hospitality may be more challenging to discern. It is important to note

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<sup>37</sup> A philosophy outlined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and defined by six principles: connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, “asignifying rupture,” cartography and decalcomania (7-12).

that while the exhibition does not confront the viewer in any coercive way, it also deliberately does not attempt to offer a sense of resolution.

While the works are quite different, they connect and overlap in several ways to create meaning. For example, both Ighara's and Prieto's installation works utilize sounds of running water, although in quite different contexts. Similarly, Dana Prieto's *Self Portrait* and *Commonplace* utilize family cloths, which are echoed in AlZeri's *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, offering a continuity but also complicating each work's possible interpretations. Additionally, many of the works convey a sense of "porosity": conceptually, as in the continuous "straining" in Lisa Myers's *Straining and Absorbing*, as well as through the use of materials and technique – crackled and unglazed ceramics, stained wood, and perforated or torn cloth.

The exhibit also aims to provide a multisensory experience: through the use of sound, tactile artworks, even odors – the trace scents of dried herbs in AlZeri's work interacting with the smell of laundry and earthy dampness of Prieto's well-used cloths, for example. Additionally, works such as Tsēma Igharas's and Julie Nagam's *Khohk'ātskets'mā (Reverbs: Sound Seeds remix)* and Tsēma Igharas's *Deposit*, were brought together to interact with one another, conceptually and physically: a speaker hidden within the plinth was installed in such a way, that when *Khohk'ātskets'mā* was played, the water inside the rock vessels in *Deposit* would reverberate. When the viewers came closer to the work,

they could feel the rhythmic of drums, rattles, other vocalizations and background sounds echoing through the ground and in their bodies.

In lieu of a scheduled curatorial talk and artist panel, and in line with the concept of the exhibition, the space was activated organically during the week through conversation, and the sharing of food. Several informal curatorial tours took place for individuals and groups. Visitors were able to ask question and join in the discussions, at times with the artists present, over coffee and tea, which took place around the kitchen table set up by AlZeri within his installation *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*. This pedagogical strategy encouraged a non-hierarchical exchange of ideas that further fostered a sense of hospitality within the space.

## **Conclusion**

While small in the context of the broader art world and current social movements, this research and exhibition aims to contribute to the broadening of representation in gallery spaces, both of artist and viewers, and to create space for art that has the potential for social advocacy, critical discourse as well as the ability to disrupt hegemonic narratives of identity and subjecthood. The project aims to demonstrate the potential of art practices to act as loci of critical reflexivity and socio-political praxis. Through challenging and problematizing cross-cultural concepts of hospitality and the domestic sphere, such as our visceral connection to food and the home, the works of artists such as Basil AlZeri, Tsēma

Igharas, Lisa Myers, and Dana Prieto, can lead to the reinterpretation of the everyday. This, in turn, has the potential of enriching our understanding of the social and political relationships within Canada, and what it means to live within, and perhaps be a citizen of, a nation with a troubled past and entangled present. Perhaps, such an understanding would illuminate a path towards a more just and hopeful future.

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## APPENDIX A – EXHIBIT DOCUMENTATION



Figure 2. Installation View, OCAD U Open Space Gallery, 2017.



Figure 3. Basil AlZeri, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, 2017. Jars, utensils, edibles and various domestic materials.



Figure 4. Basil AlZeri, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, 2017. Installation view.



Figure 5. Basil AlZeri, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, 2017. Installation view.





Figure 6. Basil AlZeri, *Kitchens Are No Longer Solely for Cooking*, 2017. Installation detail.



Figure 7. Installation View, OCAD U Open Space Gallery, 2017.



Figure 8. Dana Prieto, *Self Portrait with Family Rags*, 2016-2017. Video projection and cloth installation.

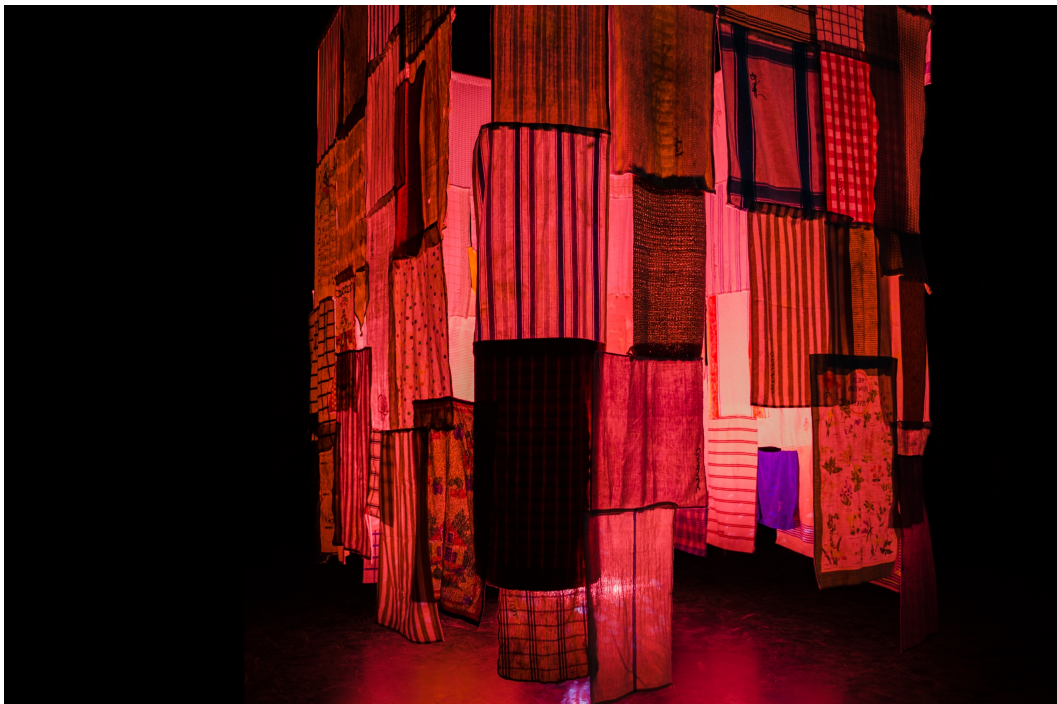


Figure 9. Dana Prieto, *Commonplace*, 2016-2017. Donated cloths, copper pipes, cast iron pit, LED lights.





Figure 10. Dana Prieto, *Commonplace*, 2016-2017. Installation detail.



Figure 11. Lisa Myers, *Straining and Absorbing*, 2015. Video installation.



Figure 12. Installation View, OCAD U Open Space Gallery, 2017.

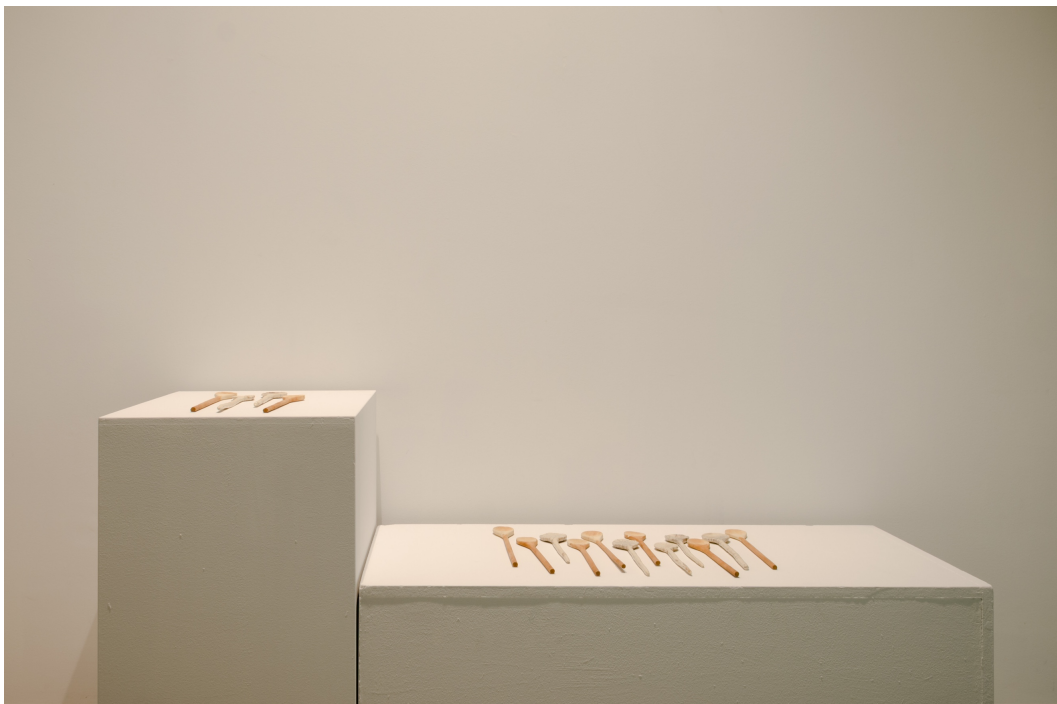


Figure 13. Lisa Myers, *Old Spoons*, 2012. Nine wooden spoons, seven ceramic spoons fired in raku style.





Figure 14. Lisa Myers, *Old Spoons*, 2012. Installation detail.



Figure 15. Installation View, OCAD U Open Space Gallery, 2017.



Figure 16. Ṭēma Igharas in collaboration with Julie Nagam, *Khohk'āṭkets'mā (Reverbs: Sound Seeds Remix)*, 2014-2016. Sound installation.



Figure 17. Ṭēma Igharas, *Deposit*, 2017. Ceramic rock vessels, blue tarp, water.



**APPENDIX B – LIST OF ARTWORKS AND EXHIBIT DESIGN (BROCHURE SIDE A)**

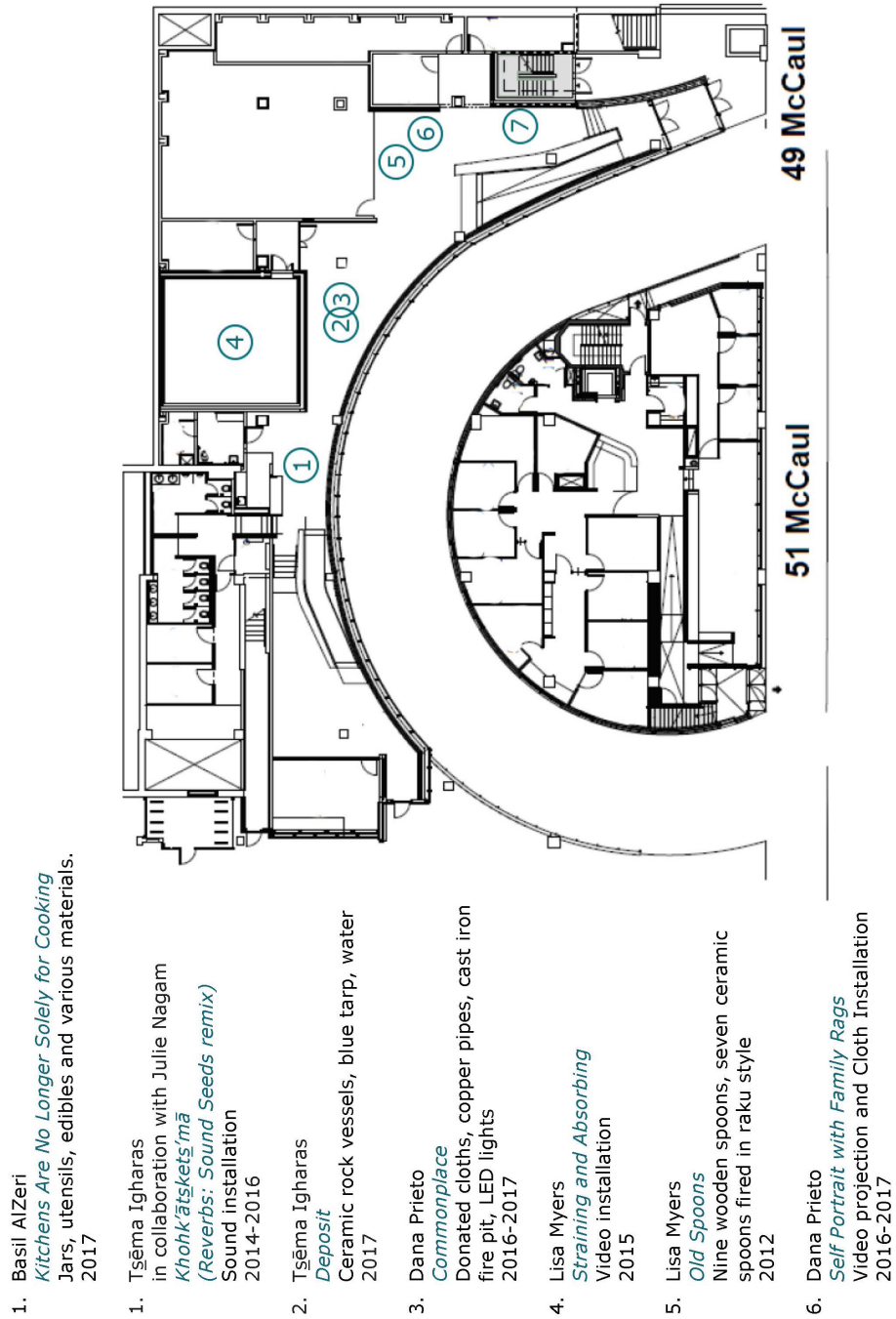


Figure 18. List of artworks and map of OCAD U's Open Space Gallery (Exhibition brochure side A) 2017.

## APPENDIX C – CURATORIAL AND ARTIST STATEMENTS (BROCHURE SIDE B)

### *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*

#### CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The sharing of bread and salt is a traditional welcoming ceremony in many European cultures, and ubiquitous to hospitality in Slavic cultures. Similarly, in some Middle Eastern cultures, the Arabic saying "Fi Khobez wa meleh bainna", or "There is bread and salt between us", refers to an alliance based on mutual respect and moral obligation between individuals. While bread has largely been associated with life and sustenance, salt has both positive and negative connotations; it is able to represent both prosperity and hardship as well as denote a difficult relationship or history. This rich metaphor can be used to frame the conversation about what it means, for many, to call nations such as Canada home, and contemporary ideas of subject-hood.

#### FEATURED ARTISTS

Basil AIZeri  
Tšema Igharas  
Lisa Myers  
Dana Prieto

Curated By:  
Valentyna Onisko

OPEN SPACE GALLERY

49 McCaul Street  
Toronto, Ontario

March 18-25, 2017

Gallery Hours: 10-5PM

Reception: March 18, 7-10PM

**Basil AIZeri**  
My work examines the socio-political dynamics of the family and its intersection with cultural practices; drawing on the necessities of everyday life and the visibility of labour as sites of exploration. The kitchen is one of the most essential and universal spaces that we set up so we can prepare meals and sustain ourselves and our families. The kitchen (cooking areas) are established in the smallest corner of a refugee's temporary living space, apartments, houses etc. Most of the time women set up these spaces and run them. The kitchen is a place to think about your family and friends and their health and sustenance. A place to gather and share, a place that is full of colour, aroma, love and care. The kitchen is the HEART of every home. My work aims to facilitate a space for empathy through gestures of inclusivity and generosity.

**Tšema Igharas**  
My artistic work grapples with the body, my body as it has witnessed material and metaphysical landscapes changing and continually impacted, shaken and consumed by corporate resource extraction. What is important to me in making and preparing my work is to engage and critique how the value of Western measures-of-wealth (social, economic, environmental, power, ownership) and how these types of evaluations impact traditional and contemporary cultural production in the Canadian wilderness, which is still considered an untapped frontier for natural resources. My praxis is sparked by strategies of indigenous resistance to neo-colonization, the embodied knowledge and everyday acts of decolonization as ways to understand the imaginary Canadian true-north and industrial reverberations felt by those who live downstream.

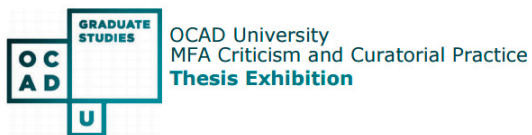
**Lisa Myers**  
I consider walking and cooking as research methods for art making. Using video, super eight film, photographs, sound, and writing as documentation sources, I delve into stories and experiment with ways to retail or re-construct narratives in sculptural and installation form. I use a range of media and materials in my artwork including print making, sewn structures and surfaces often involving video projections, audio and the assemblage of materials such as food, seeds, canvas and beads. The tactile nature of working with these materials is similar to the creative process of cooking. Each ingredient has a story and its right to cultivation contributes to the meal, as do the materials that bring it all together. My work asks how we can use these place resonances through much of my work and refiles the stories and meaning embedded and imbued on these elements.

**Dana Prieto**  
A popular proverb commonly used in Spanish speaking countries states that "dirty cloths are washed at home", or that "you can wash your dirty linen with..." a particular person or group of people. A similar but rather individualistic and restrictive motto is rendered in English as "you don't air your dirty laundry." Allegories about washing or airing our dirty cloths suggest the longing to share messy, unsuccessful, intimate and at times traumatic domestic stories. Inspired by diverging interpretations of this popular saying, my work focuses on an exhaustive exploration of rags, kitchen cloths, dish towels and tea towels donated by women of my family, friends, acquaintances and strangers.

This project re-frames and reenacts these ordinary cloths into affective materials, actions, and spaces that embody female narratives of alliances and disconnections with cleaning and sustenance.

Figure 19. Curatorial and artist statements (Exhibition brochure side B). 2017.

## APPENDIX D – PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL



### *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*

#### FEATURED ARTISTS

Basil AlZeri  
Ṭṣēma Igharas  
Lisa Myers  
Dana Prieto

Curated By: Valentyna Onisko

#### OPEN SPACE GALLERY

49 McCaul Street  
Toronto, Ontario

March 18-25, 2017

Gallery Hours: 10-5PM

Reception: March 18, 7-10PM

"Commonplace" (Detail), Dana Prieto, 2017

Figure 20-21. *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* Exhibition Postcard (Front and Back) 2017.





OCAD University  
MFA Criticism and Curatorial Practice  
Thesis Exhibition

*There is Bread  
and Salt Between Us*

**FEATURED ARTISTS**

Basil AlZeri  
Tšēma Igharas  
Lisa Myers  
Dana Prieto

Curated By: Valentyna Onisko

**OPEN SPACE GALLERY**

49 McCaul Street  
Toronto, Ontario

March 18-25, 2017  
Gallery Hours: 10-5PM  
Reception: March 18, 7-10PM

"Commonplace" (Detail), Dana Prieto, 2017

Figure 22. *There is Bread and Salt Between Us* Exhibition Poster, 2017.

## APPENDIX E – SAMPLE CONTRACT

### EXHIBITION LOAN AGREEMENT

1/3

This agreement is made in duplicate on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2017 between:

A. Artist \_\_\_\_\_ (herein called "the Artist")  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

and

B. Valentyna Onisko (herein called "the Gallery")  
205 Richmond Street West. Toronto, Ontario

The parties agree as follows:

#### 1. Work Lent

- 1.1 The Artist agrees to lend to the Gallery for the purposes of exhibition and Gallery agrees to exhibit the works described in Schedule "A".
- 1.2 The term of the loan shall commence on March 17, 2017 and end on March 26, 2017.
- 1.3 A photograph of each work lent to the Gallery shall be annexed to Schedule "A".

#### 2. Exhibition

- 2.1 The Gallery agrees to exhibit the works from March 18, 2017 to March 25, 2017. The exhibition may be extended on the mutual consent of the parties.
- 2.2 The exhibition will be open to the public between the following hours of each day the Gallery is open to the public: Opening time: 10:00am. Closing Time 5:00pm.
- 2.3 The works will be exhibited in Open Space Gallery (the "Venue") located at 49 McCaul Street, Toronto, ON.
- 2.4 The works will be exhibited as part of a group exhibition titled: *There is Bread and Salt Between Us*.

#### 3. Fees

- 3.1 For the right to exhibit the works, the Gallery shall pay the Artist an honorarium of \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.2 The honorarium shall be paid on execution of this Agreement, at the time of artwork pickup.
- 3.3 The Gallery will reimburse the Artist for expenses which have been authorized by the Gallery. The Artist must provide the Gallery with receipts for all expenses within three (3) months. After three (3) months, the artist will no longer be able to claim expenses incurred.

#### 4. Delivery and Return of Works

- 4.1 The Gallery shall be responsible for all costs incurred to deliver or crate and ship the works to the Venue.
- 4.3 The work shall be picked up by the Artist from the Venue on Sunday, March 26, 2017 during business hours or at another time, agreed upon in advance between the Artist and the Gallery.
- 4.4 The Gallery shall provide the Artist with a condition report in the form attached as Schedule "B" to this Agreement within five (5) days of delivery of the works to the Venue.
- 4.5 Subject to article 5, the Gallery shall return the work in the same condition as received.

#### 5. Insurance and Risk of Loss

- 5.1 The Gallery shall be responsible for and indemnify the Artist for all risk of loss or damage to the work from the time the work leaves the Artist's possession until the time it is returned. The Gallery agrees to pay the Artist the agreed valuation of each work lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed as specified in Schedule "A".
- 5.2 The Gallery shall obtain insurance coverage to be in effect from the time the work leaves the Artist's possession until the time it is returned to the Artist. The insurance shall be in an amount not less than the total insurance value of all works specified in Schedule "A".



**6. Damaged Works**

- 6.1 The Gallery shall be responsible for repairing any works which are damaged. The Gallery agrees to immediately inform the Artist of any such damage and not to repair any damage without the Artist's consent.
- 6.2 The Gallery shall not be required to pay for repairs in an amount that exceeds the insured value of the work as listed in Schedule "A". If the repair cost is greater than the insured value of a work, the Gallery's liability shall be limited to the insured value.

**7. Installation and Removal**

- 7.1 The Gallery shall be responsible for the installation and removal of the work.
- 7.2 The Artist shall supply each work in a condition ready for display unless special installation, framing or mounting of the work is required.
- 7.3 If required by the Gallery, the Artist agrees to consult with the Gallery with respect to the installation or removal of the work.
- 7.4 The Artist shall have the right to inspect the works on reasonable notice while in the custody of the Gallery.

**8. Reproduction Rights**

- 8.1 Subject to article 8.2, photographs of the works for the purposes described in article 8.2 shall be taken by the Gallery or the Gallery's agent at the Gallery's expense.
- 8.2 The Artist grants the Gallery the right to use all photographs taken of the Works for reproduction in:
  - (A) an exhibition catalogue;
  - (B) promotional materials including posters, invitations, press releases;
  - (D) final exhibition report and its publication, curator's portfolio and website.
- 8.3 All photographs of the work taken by the Gallery or its agent and the negatives of such photographs shall be the property of the Artist. Copyright in such photographs is retained by the Artist.

**9. Non-permitted Uses**

- 9.1 The Gallery acknowledges that the works lent under this Agreement are lent solely for the purpose of exhibition at the Venue. The Gallery agrees that it shall make no other use of the works without first obtaining the prior written consent of the Artist.
- 9.2 The Gallery acknowledges that the photographs of the works are for the purposes outlined in article 8.2 only. The Gallery agrees that it shall make no other use of the photographs without first obtaining the prior written consent of the Artist.
- 9.3 Subject to article 12, except for purposes of delivery and return, the Gallery shall not move the works from the Venue.

**10. Copyright**

- 10.1 The Artist retains copyright in the Work and has not waived his or her moral rights in the work.
- 10.2 All rights not specifically granted to the Gallery are reserved to the Artist.

**11. Artist's Warranty**

- 11.1 The Artist warrants that
  - (A) they are the sole author of the work;
  - (B) the Work is original and does not infringe any existing copyright;
  - (C) the Artist is the exclusive owner of the rights conveyed to the Gallery and has full power and authority to grant the rights; and
  - (D) the Artist has not previously assigned, pledged or otherwise encumbered the rights granted under the Agreement.

**12. Amendments**

12.1 Amendments to this Agreement shall be in writing and signed by the parties.

**13. Dispute Resolution**

13.1 The parties agree to use their best efforts to settle any disagreements as to the meaning of this Agreement. If the parties are unable to settle a dispute within thirty (30) days, they agree, subject to this Agreement, to mediation using a single mediator acceptable to both parties.

13.2 If the mediation is unsuccessful, an aggrieved party shall be free to seek such redress as may be obtained in an action or application to a court of competent jurisdiction

**14. Entire Agreement**

14.1 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties and supersedes all prior negotiations and understandings. The parties further agree that there are no representations or warranties, collateral agreements or conditions which affect this Agreement other than as expressed herein.

**15. Force Majeure**

15.1 If any party is unable to comply with the provisions of this Agreement for reasons beyond that party's control, this Agreement shall not terminate, but shall remain suspended until such time as the cause ceases to operate. If this period exceeds six (6) months from the date the cause began, either party may terminate this Agreement by giving thirty (30) days' notice, in writing, to the other party.

**16. Interpretation and Validity**

16.1 The interpretation and validity of this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the Province/Territory of Ontario and the parties agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Ontario.

**17. No Assignment**

17.1 Neither party shall assign its rights under this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other party. However, the Artist retains the right to assign monies due to the Artist under this Agreement and to assign the copyright in the Artist's Work without the consent of the other party.

**18. Termination**

18.1 All rights granted to the Gallery shall terminate on the date specified in article 1.2 unless the term has been extended, in which case the rights granted shall terminate on the last day of the extended term. The Artist shall have the right to terminate the Agreement by written notice to the Gallery if the Gallery is in breach of its obligations under this Agreement. The Agreement shall automatically terminate if the Gallery becomes insolvent, makes an assignment in bankruptcy or goes into receivership. On termination, all Works and shall be immediately returned to the Artist at the Gallery's expense.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Artist/Lender (or Artist's Authorized Agent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gallery (or Gallery's Authorized Agent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date