



**Project  
Space**



Xpace Cultural Centre  
2-303 Lansdowne Ave  
Toronto ON M6K 2W5  
416 849 2864  
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6  
[www.xpace.info](http://www.xpace.info)

***Sanctuary Inter/rupted* curated by Jessica Kirk and Mitra Fakhrashrafi**

Kaiatanoron Dumoulin Bush with Ryan Rice, Amani Bin Shikhan with Hamda Warsame, Sharine Taylor, Samira Warsame and Noor Khan,  
February 23 – March 24, 2018

In 2013, the Toronto City Council passed a motion making Toronto the first “sanctuary city” in Canada. “Sanctuary cities” seek to ensure that all residents access essential social services without regard to “legal” status.<sup>1</sup> Yet in 2015, a press release by No One Is Illegal revealed that through carding, Toronto Police are continuously colluding with the Canadian Border Services Agency<sup>2</sup> and policing the city. Way Past Kennedy Road’s exhibition *Sanctuary Inter/rupted*, interrogates the possibilities and contradictions of a “sanctuary city” in the context of what we know to be true: that the state always already treats non-white bodies as “illegal”, “whether they possess documents or not.”<sup>3</sup> Through photography, sound, mixed media and video installations, the artists consider the complex dynamics that are tied to ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ identities, extending a conversation on understandings of belonging/(un)belonging in Toronto. Each artists’ work is accompanied by a song or soundbite uniquely chosen by them, presenting

---

<sup>1</sup> “What is a sanctuary city anyway?” TVO. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> “Often Asking, Always Telling: Toronto Police Services and Sanctuary City Policy.” *No One Is Illegal*. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

audiovisual inquiry into questions related to diaspora, migration, colonialism and the histories/futures of racial justice.

Ayesha Siddiqi speaks to the ways that, “every border implies the violence of its maintenance.”<sup>4</sup> We are interested in extending this understanding in the context of borderlands, highlighting the ways in which every border also implies the violence of its formation. Through poetry and prose, Gloria Anzaldua’s *La Frontera/Borderlands* describes the border as a dividing line where the “prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.”<sup>5</sup> This deeply spatialized understanding of borders is the starting point from which we trace the patterned and produced nature of illegalizations as “state violence inscribed in landscape”<sup>6</sup> and mapped onto the body. It is this mapping/(un)mapping that we are interested in addressing, as we highlight the interplay of belonging/(un)belonging and status/statusless-ness in Toronto, particularly in the context of white settler colonial imaginaries that continue to dominate the mainstream.

Kaiatanoron Dumoulin Bush and Ryan Rice’s *Tkaronto v.s Akwe:kon* t-shirt is the Mohawk translation of “Toronto v.s Everyone” a slogan popularized by t-shirts designed and sold by clothing brand Peace Collective. Through the reappropriation and Indigenization of the phrase and design, the artists bring Indigenous language and histories to the forefront, encouraging the viewer to learn the literal meaning of “Tkaronto

---

<sup>4</sup> @AyeshaASiddiqi “every border implies the violence of its maintenance” *Twitter*, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing Border Imperialism*. AK Press, 2013.

v.s Akwe:kon” and in turn challenging nationalized myths of relationships with this land and what it means to be ‘Torontonian.’<sup>7</sup>

Through a triptych of images, sharine taylor invites us to think about land, diaspora and “navigating institutional forces while on this land.”<sup>8</sup>. Created through the lens of an Afro-Jamaican woman, taylor uses her platform to leverage what sanctuaries and borders mean to her grandmother, Miss Hillory Hylton. In tracing her grandmother and many other Caribbean womens’ migrations to Turtle Island as domestic labourers, taylor chronicles imaginings of Canada as “both the promised land and the land of promises”<sup>9</sup>

Noor Khan’s original film and accompanying digitally manipulated photographs also document her relationship with land, race, gender and health as related to building love and community. The interactive piece invites Muslim-identified audiences to take pictures against the backdrop of 9/11, known and felt deeply as the continuation of violence against generations of Muslims “with and in North America.”<sup>10</sup> Khan is thinking through what it means to be #stillhere, building and caring for each other’s physical and mental well-being, despite and/or because of imperial and colonial violences.

Samira Warsame’s photography series, *A Search for Hooyo*, also looks at what it means to take care of each other in ways no one else would or could. Warsame states

---

<sup>7</sup> Dumoulin Bush, Kaiatanoron, and Rice, Ryan. *Tkaronto v.s Akwe:kon*. 2017

<sup>8</sup> taylor, sharine. *Miss Hillory Hylton, The First of Her Name*. 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Khan, Noor. *before/after, still/here*. 2017.

that, “as children of Somali refugees, our blackness, Muslim-ness, Somali-ness, and Western identities are blended together, misunderstood, ignored and left out of communities and conversations that we are meant to be a part of.”<sup>11</sup> Warsame’s multiscalar work is accompanied by the “smell of *uunsi* and the sound of *qaraami* music,”<sup>12</sup> extending beyond photographs and taking on physical space. By interweaving experiences of displacement and (un)belongings, she recites a love letter to her Somali sisters of Toronto’s diaspora, appreciating the homes they have found in each other.

Amani Bin Shikhan thinks through the foreignness of an ability to fully conceptualize loss, death and spaces through which refuge is found. In Track 6 of Bin Shikhan’s playlist, Naomi Diaz of Ibeyi says, “My blood, my eyes/My guide, my spine.”<sup>13</sup> Guided by cultures, structures, people of the African diaspora and their/our livelihood, Bin Shikhan thinks through the intricate landscapes of lateral violence toward Black people and “something about cherishing the moments, people and places that build a life; something about better finales to stalled starts.”<sup>14</sup> Accompanied by cassettes illustrated by Mississauga’s Very Own Hamda Warsame (aka @hamwarz), Bin Shikhan’s playlist reflects “the portable refuge”<sup>15</sup> she has built for herself.

---

<sup>11</sup> Warsame, Samira. *A Search for Hooyo*. 2017

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibeyi. “Waves.” 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Bin Shikhan, Amani. *Sanctuary Inter/rupted Playlist*. 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Way Past Kennedy Road is a collective of multidisciplinary emerging artists based in Scarborough and other rejected but resilient corners of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). We build spaces for ourselves both online and offline and use art as a means of resisting the borders, boundaries and (un)belongings that define each of our lives and our works in distinct ways. *Sanctuary Inter/rupted* is a continuation of this work. In the timeless classic “Energy”, rapper Aubrey “Drake” Graham reminds us that he has, “real ones livin’ past Kennedy Road.”<sup>16</sup> While Drake may be referring to taking the 401 east past Kennedy Road “and exiting at Markham Road in the east end”<sup>17</sup>, we are interested in disorienting the idea of any centre<sup>18</sup> and reaffirming the brilliance of discredited communities across the city.

This reaffirmation is also captured in our graphic material, a postcard of a Scarborough plaza in all its full-set-of-stiletto-acrylics nail salon and halal butcher glory. Postcards capture places that are monumental. In playing on a vintage style postcard, Sahar Ullah’s imagery reimagines the monumental, paying tribute to the places (past Kennedy Road) that are monumentally meaningful to our communities<sup>19</sup>. By obscuring sanctuary city legislation as related to everyday illegalizations across the city, *Sanctuary Inter/rupted* pays tribute to the ways people and places redefine sanctuary. By grounding our conversations in illegalizations and the ways that Black and Indigenous people face distinct forms of violence including, “disproportionate incarceration, susceptibility to

---

<sup>16</sup> Drake. “Energy.” 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Drake. “Wu Tang Forever.” 2013.

<sup>18</sup> In conversation with Rachel Ngabire, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> In conversation with Sefanit Habtemariam and Sahar Ullah, 2018.

police violence, poverty, and targeted child welfare removal”<sup>20</sup>, we are better equipped to expand the ways racial justice is practiced.

-Mitra Fakhrashrafi and Jessica Kirk of **Way Past Kennedy Road**

---

<sup>20</sup> Maynard, Robyn. *Policing Black Lives*. Fernwood Publishing, 2017.