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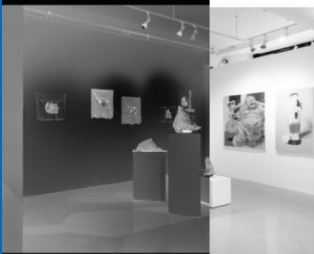
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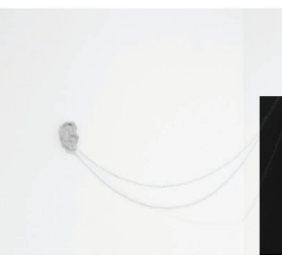
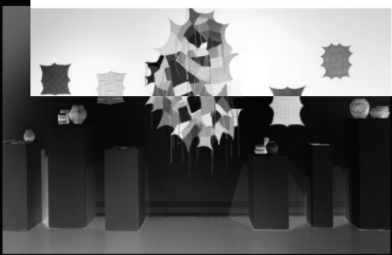
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James K. Mott

DIRECTOR	Avalon Mott
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Xpace Cultural Centre would like to acknowledge the Indigenous land on which our space operates on. Written collectively, we wish for this land acknowledgment to function as an understanding of the land and our relationship to it, as individual arts practitioners / cultural workers living and working [within Tkaronto as well as the collective entity that constitutes Xpace](#).

[This sacred land has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years, serving as the home of Indigenous people and nations long before the colonial project](#). These are the original territories of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations, and the Métis Nation.

This territory exists in connection to the One Dish, One Spoon Wampum belt, a peace treaty dating back to before the 18th century which is a mutual agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to share and care for the land and the precious resources around the Great Lakes; The dish representing the land itself and the spoon representing responsibility in sharing its resources, never taking more than you need and sharing with others. We must continue to uphold this treaty -both as Indigenous folx and non-Indigenous / settler folx - as it addresses our relations and relationships.

For Xpace, this treaty informs our intention to support artists who exist on the margins through public programming and the sharing of additional resources for arts practitioners. A sharing of knowledge, hospitality and opportunity; our fellow peers across the vibrant arts community that has developed here.

We stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities against the violent forces and effects of colonialism and white supremacy, we wish for this land acknowledgement to be a call to action. Support can look like many things, including working within institutions to dismantle systemic racism and inequities, ending violence against Indigenous women, 2spirit individuals, and advocating for Indigenous rights, sovereignty and stewardship of land.

■ Land Acknowledgement

Xpace Cultural Centre is a not-for-profit artist-run centre dedicated to providing emerging and student artists, designers, curators and writers with opportunities to showcase their work in a professional setting.

We approach our programming as a form of world-building: providing exhibitions, events, panels and workshops that respond to the direct needs and interests of our communities and membership. Expanding notions of theory and aesthetics, we seek to hold space for thought-provoking and experimental collaborations.

Xpace Cultural Centre is committed to maintaining an anti-oppressive, queer positive environment, prioritizing marginalized, racialized, Black and Indigenous folks.

Xpace is supported by the OCAD Student Union, and our programming is open to students, as well as emerging practitioners of any educational background. Xpace is not affiliated with OCAD University or the OCAD University gallery system.

■ About Xpace



■ About Volume

VOLUME is Xpace Cultural Centre’s annual anthology of exhibitions, essays and interviews. These essays demonstrate the breadth of exhibitions, artists and designers that contribute to Xpace’s place as a vibrant part of Toronto and OCAD University’s arts community. This publication includes programming across all four of our exhibition spaces September 2022 to July 2023.

DIRECTOR

[Avalon Mott](#) (she/her) is a curator, lens-based artist, and arts administrator originally from Vancouver BC, now calling Toronto/Tkaronto home. She graduated with her BFA from Emily Carr University of Art +Design, and is a recent MFA graduate in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD U as the recipient of the Presidential Scholarship and Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

Avalon was a founding member and the co-director of FIELD Contemporary, and has curated for numerous BC institutions. She has also curated public art installations for the City of Richmond, the City of Vancouver, and Capture Photography Festival among others.

Avalon’s curatorial practice is rooted in supporting emerging and under-represented artists. Her research explores the curatorial methodology of exhibitionary affect and how it can aid in creating moments to feel by encouraging relational experiences between the viewer and the works on display. Her exhibitions intend to alter and challenge the sensorial experience of the exhibition space.

PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR

[Natalie King](#) (she/her) artist, facilitator and member of Timiskaming First Nation. King's arts practice ranges from video, painting, sculpture and installation as well as community engagement, curation and arts administration.

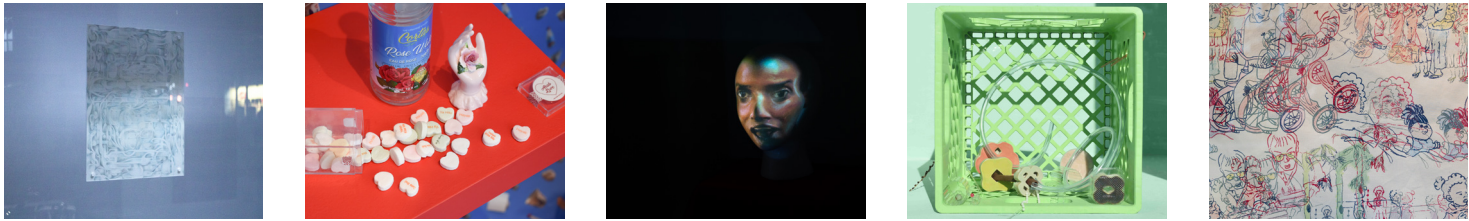
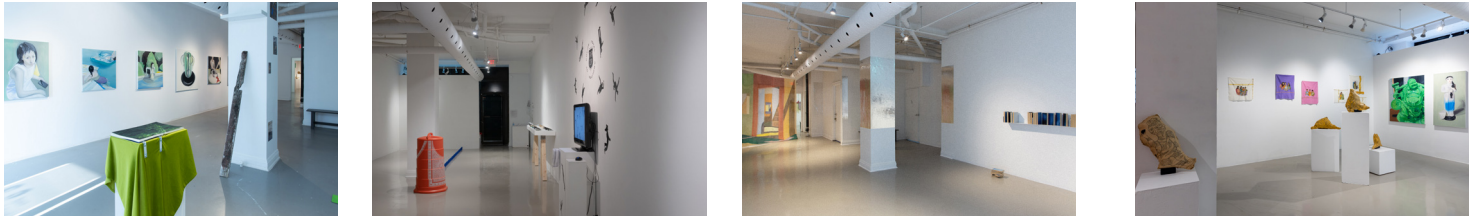
Often involving portrayals of queer femmes, King’s works are about embracing the ambiguity and multiplicities of identity within the Anishinaabe queer femme experience(s). King’s practice operates from a firmly critical, anti-colonial, non-oppressive, and future-bound perspective, reclaiming the realities of lived lives through frameworks of desire and survivance.

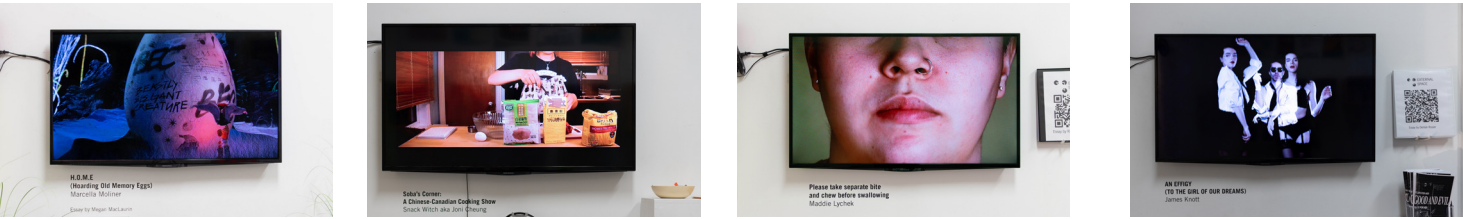

King’s recent exhibitions include Come and Get Your Love at Arsenal Contemporary, Toronto (2022), Proud Joy at Nuit Blanche Toronto (2022), Bursting with Love at Harbourfront Centre (2021) PAGEANT curated by Ryan Rice at Centre[3] in Hamilton (2021), and (Re)membering and (Re)imagining: the Joyous Star Peoples of Turtle Island at Hearth Garage (2021). King has extensive mural making practice that includes a permanent mural currently on at the Art Gallery of Burlington. King holds a BFA in Drawing and Painting from OCAD University (2018). King is currently GalleryTPW’s 2023 Curatorial Research Fellow.

PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR

[Philip Leonard Ocampo](#) (he/him) is an artist and arts facilitator based in Tkaronto, Canada. Ocampo’s multidisciplinary practice involves painting, sculpture, writing and curatorial projects. Exploring worldbuilding, radical hope and speculative futures, Ocampo’s work embodies a curious cross between magic wonder and the nostalgic imaginary. Following the tangents, histories and canons of popular culture, Ocampo is interested in how unearthing cultural zeitgeists of past / current times may therefore serve as catalysts for broader conversations about lived experiences; personal, collective, diasporic, etc.

He holds a BFA in Integrated Media (DPXA) from OCAD University (2018) and is currently a Programming Coordinator at Xpace Cultural Centre and one of the four founding co-directors of Hearth, an artist-run collective based in the city.

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Hiromi Nakatsugawa

Distrails

Essay by Leon Hsu
September 2, 2022 - October 15, 2022

With each stroke of his arm the swimmer exchanges this din for the silence beneath, his sliding green kingdom of hungers, monotonies and empty penetrations. To open this treasury is not for one’s father or brother or wife to decide. Oneself.

-Anne Carson, [Plainwater](#)¹

Engulfed in the wasteland,
whose shallowness kisses upon the surface of your hardened muscles. Exposed
in the sonorous chamber, at the fore of the screen, I travelled
in the midst of mist to find what is hard and harden to be an edge.

Like the swimmer, I dive
into the sliding surface of fog, radiating sounds of collision/collusion. Thickness
grows to build a fortress—with sweat—
for water cannot be held. Bodies (made) of water: a dissuasive edge.

*

Window Space

Hiromi Nakatsugawa	
Christina Hajjar	
Kim Ninkuru	
Wenting Li	
Moraa Stump	



¹ Anne Carson, Plainwater: Essays and Poetry (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 253.

An edge makes tangible the efficacy of a surface, which is itself an ever-shifting ground where meanings slip in and out by way of appearance and disappearance. Or perhaps, an edge can be thought of in relation to the logic of secrets, oscillating between concealment and revelation. In such a way, we might consider a surface and the effect of a surface to be the ultimate treasure—the most profound—to the extent that Paul Valéry, the French poet and philosopher, proclaims what is deepest is the skin². The moment of which sweat surfaces, it dispels the myth of the body as a contained whole, rendering the image of the body into nothing other than a hole. And such a hole is an awareness of an edge—a material matter not unlike a drawing: pencil on paper.

Like the swimmer who dips in and out of a sliding surface, Hiromi Nakatsugawa’s distinctive gestures of care repeatedly mark the surface with washes of pencil crayons that orchestrate a process-driven dynamism. Through her repeated tracing, every edge anticipates nothing other than touch, for it remains open to the possibility of being traced furthermore: an incessant becoming of something incomprehensible.

Overlaying patches of yellow and grey onto the sky-blue labyrinth, the resulting form, **Distrails**, Nakatsugawa’s window space installation, is a radiant mass whose movements—as soft spots of glow traversing on the pictorial surface—appear to be a dream-like scene. From the edge of the paper—swelling, creeping, spilling into the centre of which is not a centre—washes of colours form a network of biomorphic shapes. In a state of becoming, like a rhizome, each point of convergence forms an interaction, that is, a gestural and spatial retreat necessary to morph the form itself. In effect, the surface becomes a study of structures caught in the process of disappearance into the window and onto the sky. An edge that is aware of its removal.

² « Ce qu’il y a de plus profond dans l’homme, c’est La peau ? C’est vrai. » « Je n’en doute pas. Et c’est pourquoi je complète ma formule : Ce qu’il y a de plus profond dans l’homme, c’est la peau, — en tant qu’il se connaît. » Paul Valéry, L’idée fixe ou Deux hommes à la mer (Paris : Les Laboratoires Martinet, 1932), 50-53.



Nakatsugawa describes her process of wash-layering coloured pencil to be akin to an application of gauze, that is, a tender softness loosely wrapped in order to create a surface that shields the wound. Yet, it is precisely through the translucency of the fabric and that of her drawing marks that disappearance is made visible as a surfacing act. This is perhaps why dissipation trails inform the title of this exhibition, for the opacity of the wound is here surfaced as a cut: a cutting away of the veil of clouds in the wake of an aeroplane already gone. Such an intrusion—an empty penetration—creates a split (*partage*) of what remains possible, for the tracing of the path is simultaneously an act of sharing (*partager*) and dividing (*partager*).

The drawing, in this sense, spills into the question of what remains on the surface. Drawing at the degree of distance and separation, **Distrails** depicts an architecture of a placeless place right at the surface through a structural interrogation. As such, we might be reminded of the cause of desire through the scrutiny of the body. “For desire,” as Carson writes, “is like the secret of the suffering of a work of art, dispersed over the surface of the beloved’s body, residing everywhere and nowhere at once.”³ This is precisely the task of the paper’s edge and its surface. It is an attempt to untangle why skin is the most profound depth by way of repeated tracing: it troubles us. The efficacy of the surface troubles us in this work, insofar as our scrutiny cannot reveal the mechanism that punctures us. To think with Nakatsugawa in **Distrails**: What if the sky was a hard surface? To this end, we might be reminded of Gilles Deleuze’s surface-depth opposition, as he writes:

In opposition to the deep earth, air and sky describe a pure surface, and the surveying of the field of this surface. The solipsist sky has no depth: “It is a strange prejudice which sets a higher value on depth than on breadth, and which accepts ‘superficial’ as meaning not ‘of wide extent’ but ‘of little depth,’ whereas ‘deep,’ on the other hand, signifies ‘of great depth’ and not ‘of small surface,’” **Yet it seems to me that a feeling such as love is better measured, if it can be measured at all, by the extent of its surface than by its degree of depth.** It is at the surface that doubles and ethereal images first rise up; then the pure and free Elements arise in the celestial surveying of the field.⁴ ➤

⁴ Emphasis added. Here, Deleuze’s close reading of Michel Tournier’s novel Vendredi suggests that Robinson’s re-positioning of planetary elements as the “elemental beyond” or the “otherwiseOther” (de l’Autre qu’autrui) in the world without others is a re-discovery of the surface of sense. Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 315, 319.

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump

³ Carson, 199.

What remains on the surface here is perhaps
nothing other than illegible spots of interest

Look again! Grey trails congregate amidst blue saturations, like smoke undoing boundaries—smudging edges by way of a kiss—that is, a fleeting assurance with a great reach of surface. What remains on the surface here is perhaps nothing other than illegible spots of interest, whose opacity leads the viewer to trace along the edge of Nakatsugawa’s hardened sky.

★

Dive to the edge
Only to surface—oneself.

■ Leon Hsu



Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump



Christina Hajjar

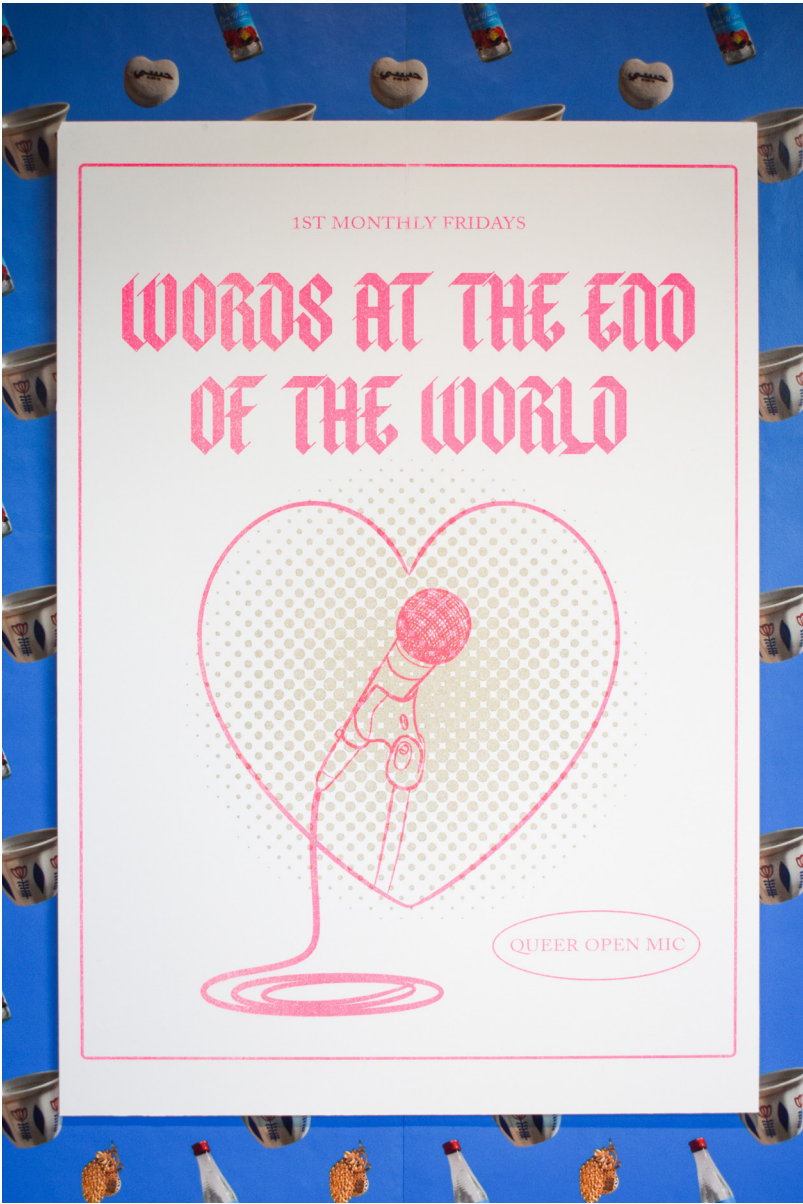
Lebanon's Rose

وردة لبنان

Essay by Jessica Kirk
November 4, 2022 - January 2, 2023

Shisha Bans have impacted the livelihood of migrant-business owners since 2016, threatening sites of sanctuary for their customers in urban centres across so-called Canada. Here in the city, scholars like Mitra Fakhrashrafi have archived histories and futures of Muslim placemaking in the GTA, insisting that shisha lounges model alternate ways of inhabiting space. Meanwhile in Edmonton, community advocates continue to challenge municipally-elected officials, following their ruling on a sunset clause phasing out shisha lounges (effective July 2021). In Winnipeg, Christina Hajjar’s organizing and 3 art practice respond to questions of placemaking through embodied acts of diasporic connectivity. By queering space and time through an imaginative hookah lounge storefront complete with dreamlike aesthetics, **Lebanon’s Rose** **وردة لبنان** creates a deeply personal yet fictive place of belonging for queer and trans Black, Brown, SWANA (South West Asian and North African), and/or Muslim people.

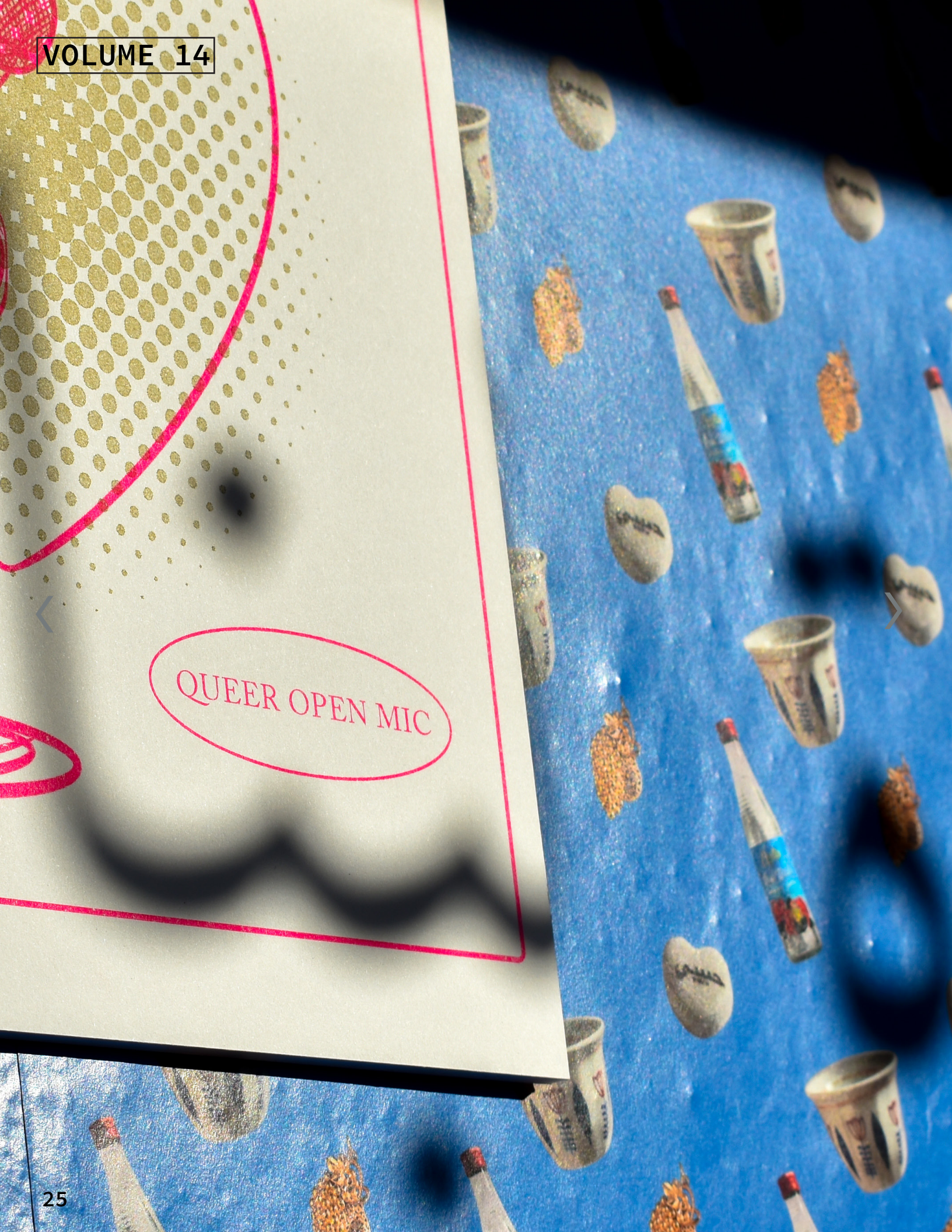
Using symbols and a delicate balance of overt and covert references, this work is an ode to public spaces of both gathering and cultural nourishment. Complete with displays of honour toward quotidian experiences, Hajjar manifests an interpretation of her dream shisha lounge, while also monumentalizing a set of deeply personal and familial items that she treasures. Influenced by the events of the Lebanese Civil War, **Lebanon’s Rose** **وردة لبنان** is an imagined queer space for remembrance, connection, leisure, and pleasure. ➤



Lebanon’s Rose **وردة لبنان** is an imagined queer space for remembrance, connection, leisure, and pleasure.

Window Space
Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump

QUEER OPEN MIC





Christina gracefully embeds an array of social, cultural and political references throughout her work, including sobering nods to the impact that colonial violence, imperial exploitation and war has had on Lebanese communities. Signage along the storefront, for instance, relates to a destroyed florist shop depicted in [Beirut, Never Again](#)⁴. Directed by Jocelyne Saab (1948-2019) with poetic narration written by Etel Adnan (1925-2021), the documentary follows experiences of everyday life after the Beirut massacre of 1975⁵, detailing early stages of civil war in Lebanon through a child’s eyes. While reflecting on the value added in centering the perspectives of young people during war, Saab shared the following during an interview with Olivier Hadouchi: “je ne pouvais que rendre hommage à leur lucidité [I had no choice but to pay homage to their lucidity].”⁶ By grounding her installation with ethics of solidarity and care, Hajjar uses placemaking to curate a site of warmth for other young people carrying lucid memories of grievous circumstances. Notwithstanding the intergenerational trauma we as children of immigrants carry as a result of colonialism, war, and other historic ruptures, [Lebanon’s Rose](#) وردة لبنان is a reflection of what shisha lounges mean to so many Black, Brown, SWANA, and/or Muslim people in urban cities from coast to coast. Described as an anchor for community gathering, Fakhrashrafi reveals that “in the face of increased surveillance, unaffordability, erasure, and other structural determinants that continue to shape life for Muslim people, the shisha lounge [albeit imagined or real, act] as a site to negotiate and transform these circumstances.”⁷

Roses are thematically expansive, in that rose water is also a vital aspect of Arab customs including tea rituals, desserts and skin care.

⁴ Beyrouth, Jamais Plus, directed by Jocelyne Saab (1976; Lebanon).

⁵ Rafei, Rania. “Lebanon: Sibling of Syria,” YouTube, Al Jazeera, March 13, 2013, <https://youtu.be/Ft0OkYSSwCA>.

⁶ Jocelyne Saab, interview by Olivier Hadouchi. Critical Secret, April 2, 2013, <https://www.criticalsecret.net/OlivierHadouchi-Conversations-avec>.

⁷ibid. 17

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump



Those of us who are invested in more livable futures are keenly aware of continued gentrification, the disappearance of affordable Black and brown venues across urban centres, and the criminalization of spaces in which we convene.⁸ In particular, we are attuned to the ways in which these disappearances disproportionately impact BIPOC and queer and trans people.⁹ Understanding that we are always already at the brink of dystopic conditions, Christina hones in on her expertise in event organizing by creating conceptual event posters as discreet invitations of levity in an era of morbid unease. Avoiding more obvious signage - like a rainbow sticker, for instance - troubles what queering urban futures might mean for those who have always been here. Producing an embodied balance of culturally relevant and queer and trans friendly event posters within an imaginary hookah lounge, **Lebanon’s Rose** وردة لبنان highlights the urgency in creating liberatory spaces of imagination and celebration such as these.

In 2019, a group of artists involved with the collective Way Past Kennedy Road generated an exploration of radical placemaking traditions through an exhibition called Habibiz. In the process, one of the questions we interrogated was this: “How do Black, Indigenous and racialized people reckon with the familiarity of being re/moved?”¹⁰ What Habibiz and **Lebanon’s Rose** وردة لبنان both offer, are reminders that shisha lounges across Toronto, Winnipeg, Beirut or Gaza are in many ways sites for transcultural connectivity - sanctuaries in which diasporic people are drawn to one another. While discussing her exhibit, Christina revealed that “part of its charm is embedded in cultural narratives, and the associations visitors bring with them.”¹¹ Enchanted by the charm of memory, of pleasure and of connectivity, time moves slowly at **Lebanon’s Rose** وردة لبنان, inviting each of us to stay a while.

■ Jessica Kirk

⁸ Bin Shikhan, Amani. “As clubs become condos, Rebeka Dawn’s parties remind Black Torontonians that celebration is ours too,” CBC, last modified June 4, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/as-clubs-becomecondos-rebeka-dawn-s-parties-remind-black-torontonians-that-celebration-is-ours-too-1.4690210>.

⁹ Mikdashi, Maya. “What A Queer Urban Future Looks Like: Beirut,” Jadaliyya, last modified May 23, 2016, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33297>.

¹⁰ Habibiz, co-curated by Mitra Fakhrashrafi and Jessica Kirk (Margin of Eas Gallery, 2019), <https://www.mitrafakhrashrafi.com/habibiz>.

¹¹ Christina Hajjar in discussion with author, December 2021.

x
“part of its charm is embedded in cultural narratives, and the associations visitors bring with them.”



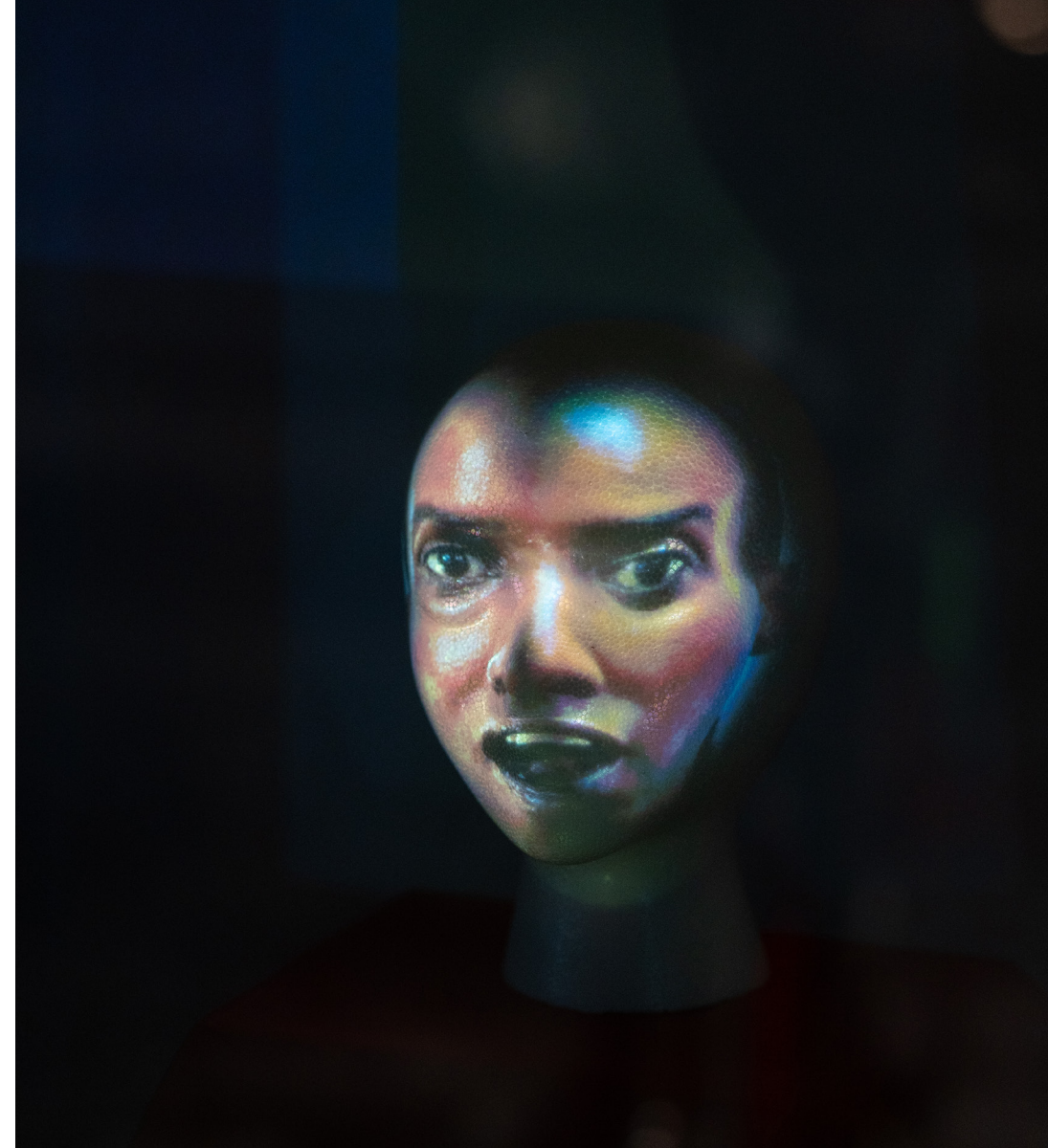
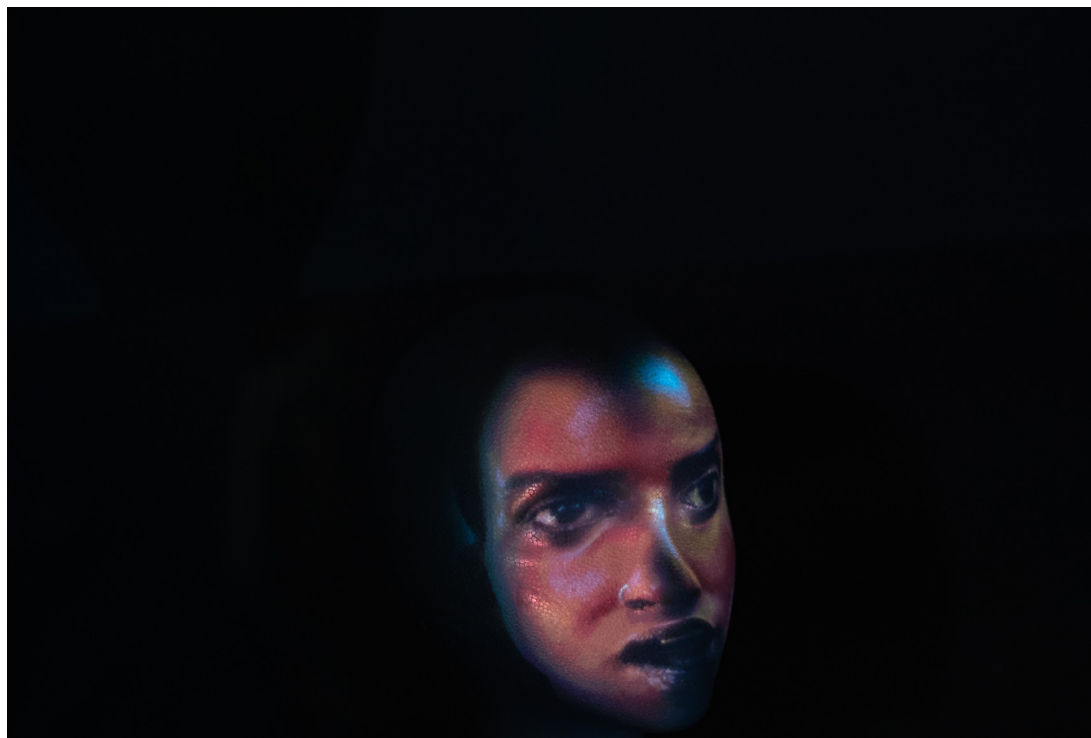
Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump

Kim Ninkuru

in partnership with Charles Street Video

These are my Reparations,
episode 1: march 18th, 2465

Essay by Ayo Tsalithaba
January 13, 2023 - February 25, 2023



Window Space

Distrails, Hiromi Nakatsugawa

Christina Hajjar

Kim Ninkuru

Wenting Li

Moraa Stump

I don't quite know when to start, and I meant to write "where" but I think that my little mishap is telling. Kim Ninkuru's work is always timely, it feels somewhat urgent and yet it has a lasting quality. So, mixing up "when" and "where" feels like a happy accident, or perhaps like something intuitively intentional. Before I watched episode one, which I am writing about, I spoke to Kim to gain insight into the four-episode series as a whole.

This is not the project's first iteration, in fact, it is a re-exploration of a previous installation by the same name in 2019. The earlier version of [These Are My Reparations](#), in which Kim suggested I watch, the film has a runtime of three minutes and twenty nine seconds. She sent me a recording of it to provide context, so I watched that version first. The setup of the opening shot is for me, as a viewer and filmmaker, a dream. We see a white bust with a reflective head covering sitting atop a pedestal. In front of it, a bright computer screen shining just as brightly as the face of the bust in an otherwise dark room. Behind the bust is a video of a character named Honey, played by Ninkuru, projected onto a white wall. We suddenly hear a voice say:

["Welcome, I'm RadioHead. The first virtually intelligent radio that will play all your favourite songs." >](#)



We soon discover that this intelligent robotic creature exists in a post-apocalyptic world and was created by societal elites for the purpose of entertainment. Then, the camera angles switch, revealing Honey, sitting at the computer in front of RadioHead as well as a closeup of the bust as it begins playing songs. The projections behind RadioHead are of Honey sitting strapped in a room, screaming inaudibly.

This version of [These Are My Reparations](#) leaves the viewer with questions: Who exactly created RadioHead? Who is Honey, the woman in the room, and how is she related to RadioHead or the songs that it is playing? On the phone, Kim told me that she struggles to describe this project in a short, concise way. I told her that I would try to help her find the words for it, and with my limited knowledge of the piece, I proposed: “a speculative worlding project,” hoping I was somewhat right. She told me that it is a horror sci fi short, and when asked her intention for her audience, she added “I just want them to have fun!”

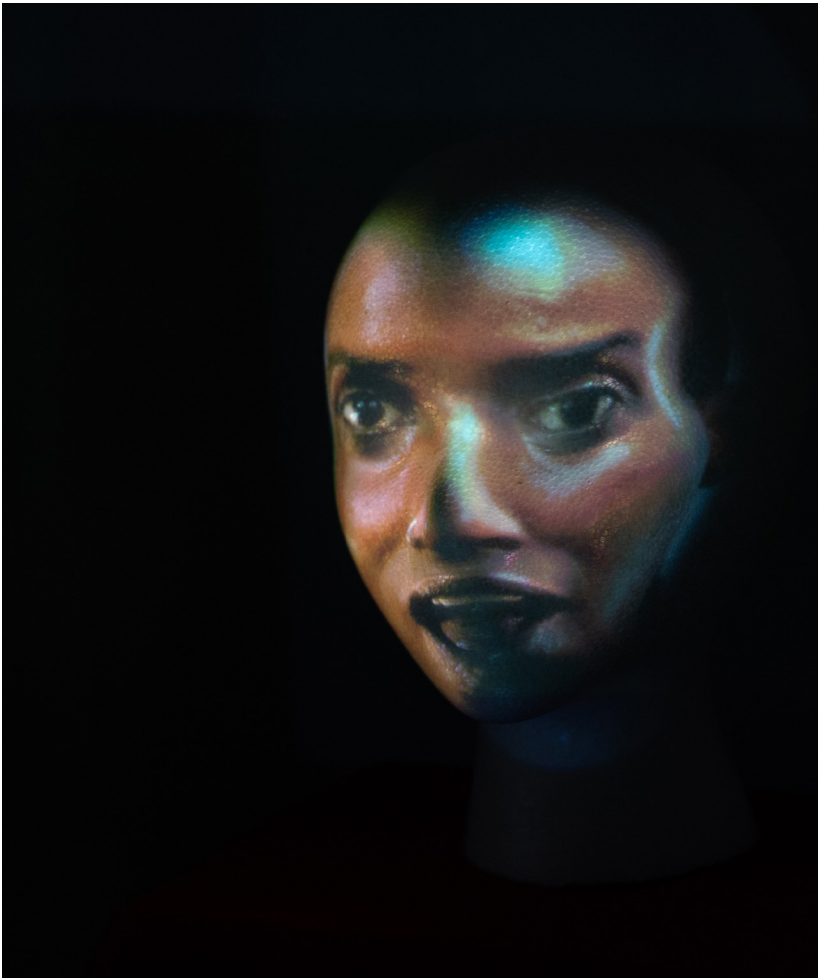
Let me now take you to [Episode 1](#). Housed inside the 95” by 52” Window Space at Xpace Cultural Centre, this short film’s themes take some time to uncover.

The film begins with Honey, our protagonist from the 2019 version of the project, turning the handle to a door. We are led into a small white room with nothing but a filing cabinet, desk and chair. Honey shuffles around in her seat, looking around nervously, until a stack of papers and a pen are slid across the desk by an unseen entity. Honey paces around the room, sits back down and flips through what appears to be a contract before signing several pages. She looks up at the camera, and we are thrust through the fourth wall into the position of voyeur.

Next, an unknown person places a silver bracelet on Honey’s wrist and in the next shot, her gaze lands on us once again, this time in a closeup. We are then transported into a different room, where our protagonist is in a strait jacket. Honey’s screams are inaudible, but the strain and sense of disarray is evident.

I am struck by the soundtrack to this piece. Like the presentation of the film’s themes, it is disorientingly dissonant, and intentionally unsettling from the beginning. The audio tricks you. We hear footsteps in sand, but Honey is walking on carpet at a different pace. Then a faint ringing creeps in along with various other aural disruptions.

Ninkuru draws a clear thread between her 2019 exploration of this concept in [These Are My Reparations](#) and its most current iteration. The display of Episode 1 at Xpace mimics the layout of its original 2019 version, extending the visual parallels across time but providing less context for the viewer. We are never fully comforted by a voice, telling us what is going on. Instead, there is only laughter and humming, juxtaposed with the image of Honey yelling in an empty room. Furthermore, Ninkuru subtly channels the themes of technologically fuelled disorder and disruption; while putting discomfort, uncertainty, power and agency (or lack thereof) on full display in this horror sci-fi thriller. ➤



Window Space	
Distrails,	Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar	
Kim Ninkuru	
Wenting Li	
Moraa Stump	



I am led to believe that this first episode is a mere part of a story, not its ultimate beginning. Besides the fact that the project itself had an earlier iteration; my belief comes from Honey's behaviour as she “settles” into the room. Her hesitant willingness to sign the papers presented to her presupposes a context that we are not privy to as viewers, but that we are curious about.

During our phone call, Kim told me that “the fourth episode is not the end,” a sentence that not only gave me further insight into her project, but that I promised her would end up in this essay. She is aiming to reveal more of the story in the future, and through her artistic practice, Ninkuru is building a world that I am excited to see more of.

■ Ayo Tsalithaba



Window Space

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa

Christina Hajjar

Kim Ninkuru

Wenting Li

Moraa Stump

Wenting Li

future re/collection

Interview facilitated by Kendra Yee
March 10, 2023 - April 22, 2023

An abridge conversation with Wenting Li February 22nd, 2023

Wenting Li’s installation **future re/collection** gathers an assortment of otherworldly objects to ask; what are the possibilities of collecting for the unknown? Radiant green milk crates serve as homes to reinventions. Polypropylene entities, Polyvinyl Chloride specimens, and Polyethylene ‘things’ exist in tandem with organic matter to capture time¹. These objects are products of the Anthropocene², tools to structure alternative futures. In our shared studio, Wenting and I exchanged stories over a table filled with snacks as the start of a winter storm could be heard rattling against the brick walls that enclose us.

Kendra: Your installation brings together both identifiable and uncanny objects. You’re decorating a space with seeds, plastics, porcelain and found materials. Physically recognizable objects are contrasted by temporal items that have less definitive usages. How does this collection interact with time?

Wenting: I’m interested in bringing feelings of difference to the familiarity. There are so many possibilities with collecting for the future, it’s full of potential if we can shift objects or resources that are in our current possession. How can this process lead to different manifestations of the future, rather than continuing in the direction our society is heading towards? A lot of everyday objects, such as plastic containers, have the capacity to exist in interesting configurations, yet we categorize them as mundane. Maybe when left alone, they are just mundane, but can we reimagine the objects and transform them into portals?

¹ Polypropylene (PP), Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC), and Polyethylene (PE), are the names of the most commonly used types of plastics.

² “Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems” cited from “Anthropocene.” National Geographic Society. 20th, May, 2022, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/anthropocene/>.



Window Space

Distrails, Hiromi Nakatsugawa

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Kendra: Yes, we take the mundane for granted. If an object appears familiar, we automatically assign the value or purpose, it becomes a tool rather than something of curiosity or play.

Wenting: It’s interesting to play with these pre-existing objects found in my life or by those around me. Milk crates, fish bones, clamshells packages, clay, and hard to recycle objects. We are consuming these things while also consuming many different ideas of how the future can play out. There is a future that we are expecting, and there are futures that we are hoping to have. Reading manifestos and then fiddling with objects has an interesting effect on how my mind thinks, it helps me imagine new concepts. Everything in the installation draws from the materiality of pre-existing objects, taking what’s available and seeing the possibilities of makeshift assembly.

Kendra: Objects have intentions and are created to serve a purposeful task. Milk crates hold milk, fruit baskets hold fruit and many products are made out of ceramics. Would you consider your objects functional? If so, how is the form or structure impacted by the object's role?

Wenting: Oooh, the question of ‘what is functional’ is so open. Practically, they are not functional, but I have different expectations of their functions. They act as prompts for a passerby to ask, “what kind of function do these objects serve, what purpose could they have?” When you see objects you don’t understand, that leaves room to provoke a sense of play, curiosity and interest. With the bottoms cut out, the milk crates will never serve the same purpose. Other items once considered “trash” are offered for different merits in this collection.



Kendra: This ties back to your idea about material exploration against the apocalypse; perhaps with this assortment of assemblages, you’re trying to form a shield used in battle. For me, there is a soft quality to a lot of these objects, holding sensitivities that can easily be overlooked. Many of the things go unnoticed, the value is gifted by spending time with the objects. The items displayed share many dualities; you’re not really sure what’s machine or handmade. I’m curious to know the connection between the imagined and the industrial quality to the objects?

Wenting: I don't think 'objects against the apocalypse' necessarily means creating monuments that withstand the end of time. We are facing so many imminent global disasters, and the answer is not about building a capsule filled for preservation. How can we live if we are so focused on the idea of timelessness or viewing the bleakness of the future? I think the way we live against apocalypse is being softer, open to fragility, and approaching alternative ways to viewing time.

Kendra: Is this collection a preservation? Can preservation be trusted? I think preservation is an interesting word, it's both an action and static state. It's holding on to an idea of the past, but also you have to go through great lengths of maintenance and care in order to protect.

Wenting: Some of the objects will decompose because they are made of biodegradable materials, whereas others are made out of trash and will live on. You and I have both been reading this book, The Material Kinship Reader, and one of the essays discusses the idea of ‘petro-time,’ as in plastics will live forever.³ Maybe a 'forever' lifespan shows the potential for other stories. This collection isn't the preservation of the current timespan, it’s a starting point for different futures.

This collection isn’t the preservation of the current timespan, it’s a starting point for different futures.



Window Space
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³ “Heather Davis in Conversation with Kris Dittel and Clementine Edwards.” The Material Kinship Reader, edited by Clementine Edwards and Kris Dittel, First ed., Onomatopoe, Eindhoven, Netherlands, 2022, pp. 260–262.

Distrails,Hiromi
Nakatsugawa

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Kim Ninkuru

Wenting Li

Moraa Stump





Kendra: Perhaps we can discuss the importance of the milk crates, they seem like a foundation to the installation

Wenting: The milk crates explore how an established space can be altered, they act as units. I've edited their original function by cutting plastics, weaving threads and adding modular features. Each dairy producer will have different designs for the boxes. Their forms have been changed over time for both function and 'theft' prevention because they are such timeless storage containers.

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
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Moraa Stump

Kendra: Milk crates have huge practical purposes, and are aesthetically present in popular culture, both in city and rural settings.

Wenting: It's an object of life, and represents the continuity of plastics. Milk crates are made of a very valuable and seemingly endless material. They last so long due to their quality and durability, compared to other disposable plastics that exist in our lives.

Kendra: Is the actual plastic itself more valuable?

Wenting: The plastic that milk crates are made out of has a higher resale value, it can be ground down into finer particles and made into new objects. That's why milk crates have the "do not steal" slogan written on the side. They are valuable objects that circulate with repurposed usages; if they 'disappear' from your collection, there's acceptance that this object never was a personal belonging.

Kendra: We associate objects as 'unremarkable' because we already understand the function, as we look closer at the crates, you understand that there is a different purpose. The milk crates are solid but there are windows to peer through. I think this creates an inviting, yet sheltered space.

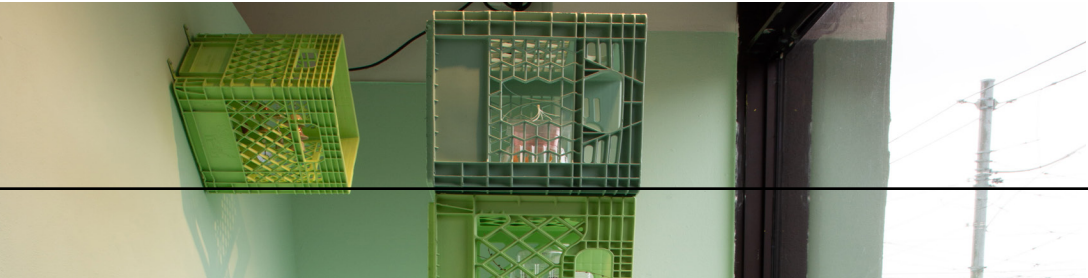
Wenting: Yeah, the crates offer a space in which 'things' can occupy or pass through, but ultimately they belong to the dairy and to the continuum of time. The objects within are presented equally, there's no hierarchy within storage.

Kendra: A container, the milk crates are looking for something to hold.

Wenting: Collectable objects!

Kendra: When we throw something away it is declared as useless waste; objects are saved by desirability, or considering it a "keepsake." How did you choose to value the materials (some found, some pre-existing), and what impact did this have on creating new "pieces?"

Wenting: I guess everything is like a new piece in this installation. The ceramics are what people would more readily call a new artwork, because they're made of a material that we hold to a higher worth. They're all made through reuse, either with stuff I've already owned, or stuff that was given to me.





are re/collection
nting Li

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Nakatsugawa

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Kim Ninkuru

Wenting Li

Moraa Stump





Kendra: It really took a community to gather this installation.

Wenting: I think so. This is built in collaboration with other people; whether it was asking questions on how to deal with new materials or receiving help transporting stuff from the side of the road. It's made of contributions from waste production, it's important that all the materials have been found or collected.

Kendra: The present feels fixed, however it is contrasted by the past and future which feel ephemeral. How does the installation speak to uncertainty?

Wenting: The present feels fixed because we live our lives day after day. How can we understand that things are changing? You only witness it over long periods of time, some situations feel more real, or immediate, the reality is shaped by perception.

The present feels fixed because we live our lives day after day. x

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
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Moraa Stump

Kendra: When you're experiencing something of the moment it is true, when you try and reflect upon the memory, that's when uncertainty filters in.

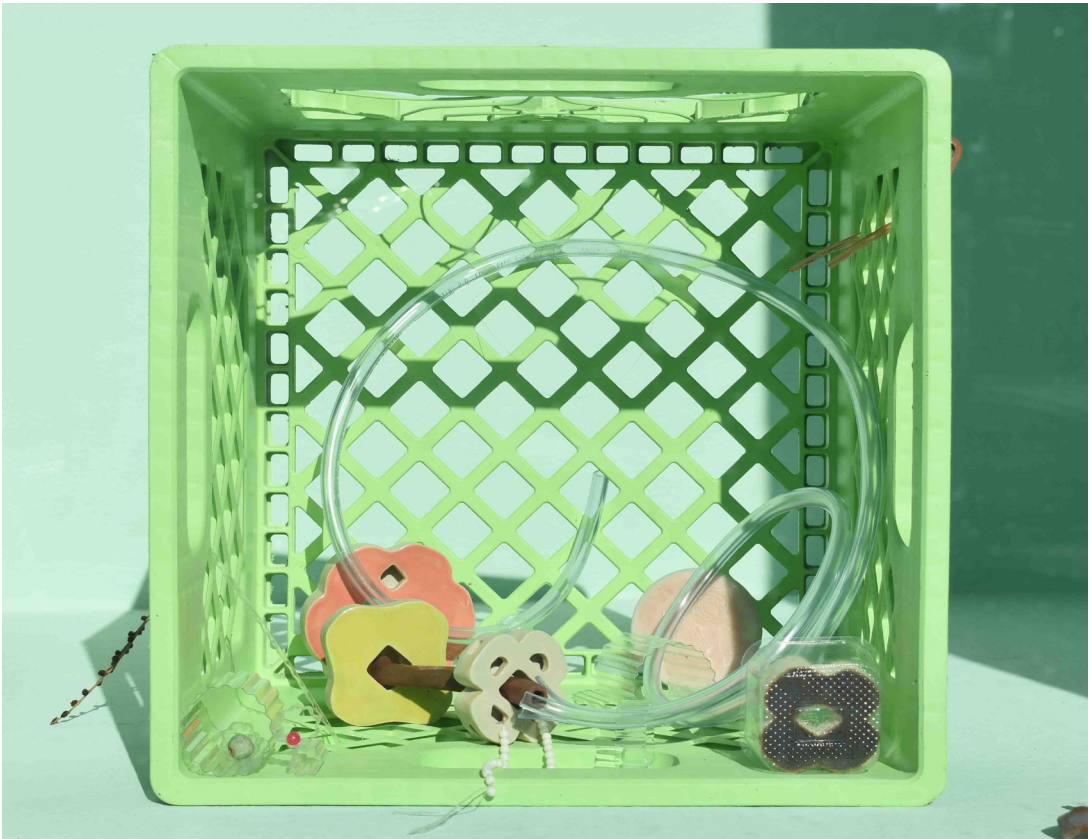
Wenting: You can't live by only asking questions, but neither should you live by accepting reality as finalized. I think when you look at objects that share the feelings of the familiar and unfamiliar, they represent a shift. I find this is interesting with material artwork, I can almost identify what something is made out of, but what it's made into is completely unknown to me. Things are not fixed, they're just unraveling.

Kendra: Do you have a favourite object from the collection? Or one that perhaps holds more meanings, histories or secrets?

Wenting: Hmmm... ok I can actually answer this question very easily. There is a certain rock—it's small, speckled blue and white from the Leslie Street Spit. It's a pebble that's been tossed into a larger rock made out of construction waste. This rock is a marriage between living processes, the tides throwing it against the land, with trash that's synthetically made. It's something human that's been introduced to the forces of change, making it a beautiful object. Now, the rock sits in this collection.

Kendra: The object has stumbled upon its future.

Wenting: An infinite amount of atoms that happened to come together for this human made rock. It's my favourite object.





Moraa Stump

Untitled.

Essay by Fabiyino Germain-Bajowa
May26–July8,2023

Distrails,Hiromi Nakatsugawa
Christina Hajjar
Kim Ninkuru
Wenting Li
Moraa Stump

In the Window Sits a Child (and a Doll)
As a child, I played with dolls. My favourite, a small girl with big hair and blue stockings, told me things and taught me things, and I listened and learned with bright eyes and an open mind...

Reminiscent of a childhood home, Moraa Stump has transformed the front window of Xspace. The floor is checkered in soft shades, and the wallpaper along the walls is coloured haphazardly as if a child took their crayons to the blank surface in front of them. In the centre of the space sits a doll. Larger than life, this soft sculpture is made from reclaimed materials of linen, denim, and upholstery fabric. While it is not a traditional quilt, it references the language of quilting and transforms from object to entity, one that embodies a living history. Confined and squeezed in the glass showcase, [The Doll](#) forces an engagement of self and other at once. It draws on a rich history of textiles, doll making, and black artistic expression to offer us a view into the past, showing us the moment in which we learned what to be, and what not to be in turn.

The Doll forces an engagement of self and other at once.

While the history of doll making is long and extensive, black cloth dolls have a much more recent story. As early as the 18th century, black dolls have been one of many essential tools of play through which social constructions of race, gender, and class are explored and enacted, particularly among children (Seow 337). And for as long as black dolls have existed, they have been viewed in contrast to the ideal white doll. As such, the black doll remains a representation of the values of dominant social groups and shows colonization’s lasting influence on the collective imagination. This rich history exposes the complex nature of simple things. A doll is not simply a doll, but a tool which teaches children what they should be from a young age. By remaking [The Doll](#) in monochrome black pieced fabric, Stump juxtaposes the domesticity and comfort associated with textiles and quilting with the pervasive pressures and systems taught to black children through childhood play. [The Doll](#) reveals just how deeply ingrained these social systems are by presenting us with an undisguised doll, one which confronts us with its size, colour, jagged teeth, and hollow eyes.

As we watch [The Doll](#) be compressed and suffocated in a space far too small for its size, a mirror image is reflected back at us. Across temporal fields, [The Doll](#) shows us those things we are taught to know as truth when we are children, those beliefs we didn’t even realize were not fact. Our gaze reveals that we are constantly being watched. For Black viewers in particular, [The Doll](#) speaks to the ways Black bodies are forced to engage with and perform for the gaze of others, with and without our knowledge. ➤



For Stump and many other Black artists, creating work has never been simple. It has always come with pressures. Not just those brought forth by the white gaze which makes up much of the art world, but also those affected by fraught internal relationships to self-expression and self-determination. Black artists must not only contend with the outward influence of colonial legacies but also those internal remnants of a system which has told them what they are since birth. Stump engages with and makes visible these internal and external forces, taking their power and redirecting it toward personal and communal growth and healing. By drawing on the language of quilting and textile work, Stump recalls themes of comfort, play, and domesticity from her childhood. The convergence of the past and present of her own life is embodied by [The Doll](#), and yet extends beyond it. This material familiarity brought forth by [The Doll](#) offers a point of entry for viewers to recall their childhood and, in doing so, reconsider their present.

Moraa Stump's installation asks us to perceive ourselves as both child and toy. The subject, and the subjugated. Drawing on the rich history of Black cloth dolls in the United States and Canada, The Doll exemplifies Stump's transformative use of the language of quilting and doll-making to address the complexities of Black life. By engaging with enriching narratives of healing, self-reflection, and joy, Stump repurposes play to reject and rewrite the social structures inscribed in these "toys" we call dolls

■ Fabiyino Germain-Bajowa



Window Space

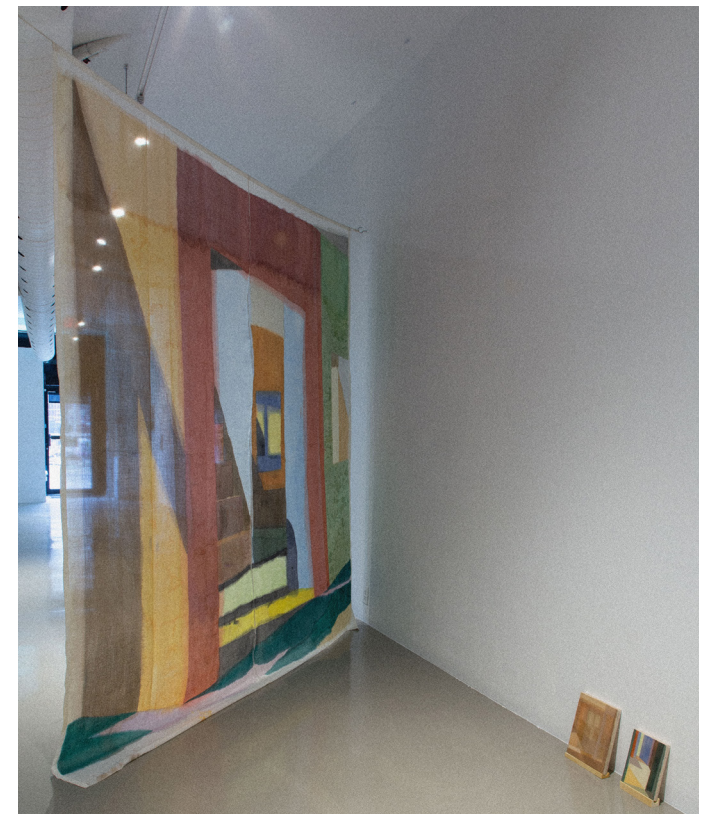
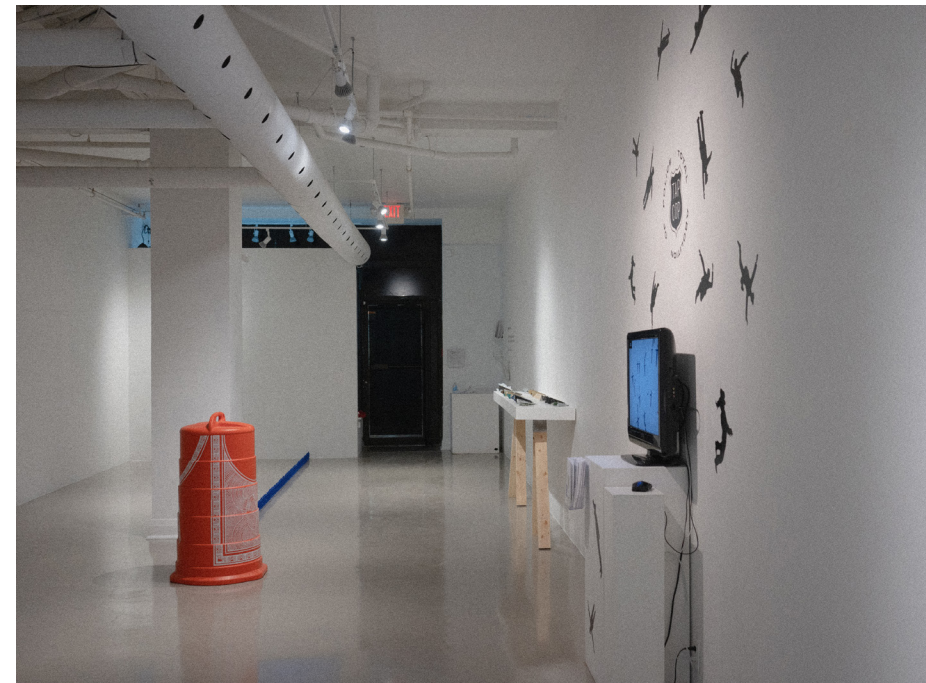
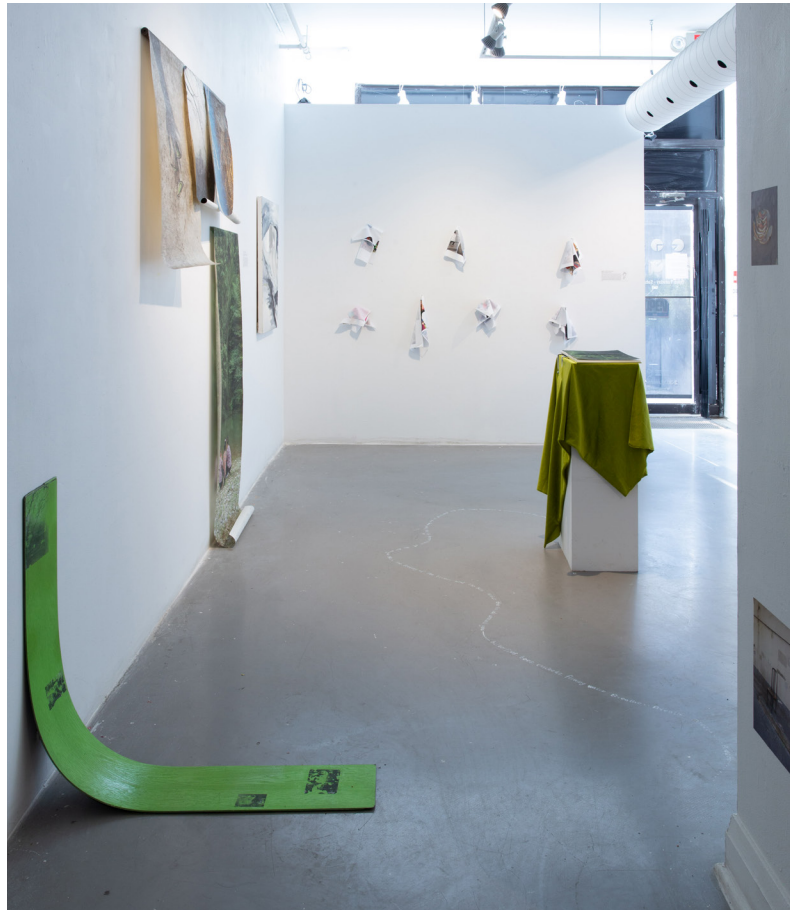
Distrails, Hiromi Nakatsugawa

Christina Hajjar

Kim Ninkuru

Wenting Li

Moraa Stump





Flowing Still

Flowing Still curated by Anqi Li
Tizzi Tan and Zim Yu

September 2, 2022 – October 15, 2022

Main Space

Flowing Still

Batteries Not
Included

a series of actions
or steps taken in
order to achieve
a particular end

Ascension of
Abundance

Time has parted company with meaning since the beginning of 2020. Running while standing still, too still to be flowing at all. The shift in time appears perceptible everywhere. **Flowing Still** (深水流静) is a duo exhibition in which artists Tizzi Tan and Zim Yu respond to this change through artmaking.

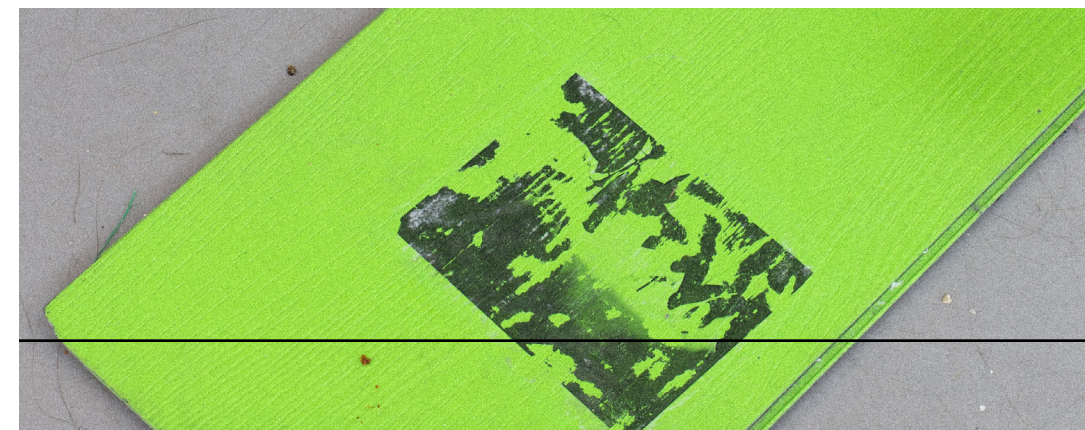
Although both are international students with families living on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, Tan and Yu made different choices when the pandemic hit: Tan returned to Southwestern China while Yu remained in Toronto. More than 10,000 km apart, however, both internalized this mesmeric state of time and used paintings and photography to share what they saw and felt.

The most apparent similarities between Tan and Yu are their use of colour and representative imagery. During the pandemic, time has often felt muffled. Voices cannot get out, and light cannot get in. Even though the concept of time itself can be abstract, the suspension of time is specific in the exhibited works as both artists take a realistic approach. Employing darker and less saturated colours, they convey this muffled state in their work.

Tan has said: “Photography is my most instinctive reaction ever [. . .] The connection between photography and reality is direct, and I like playing with reality.”

Painting and photography can work in opposite directions: painters include relevant elements to build on a canvas while photographers eliminate irrelevant information to frame a photo. In **Flowing Still**, both artists play with reality and create visual representations of it. Yu dips reality in his imagination by highlighting geometric shapes or exaggerating colour contrasts to guide the wandering eyes across the canvas. Tan, a photographer, zooms in on details that resemble illusions between reality and fantasy.

The flowing stillness of time is more than private nostalgia. Looking at the market place, Denglu village, and the empty sidewalk chairs, Tan observes the outdoor space. To the piquant question, “there are already countless images in the world; why do you want to take more photos?”

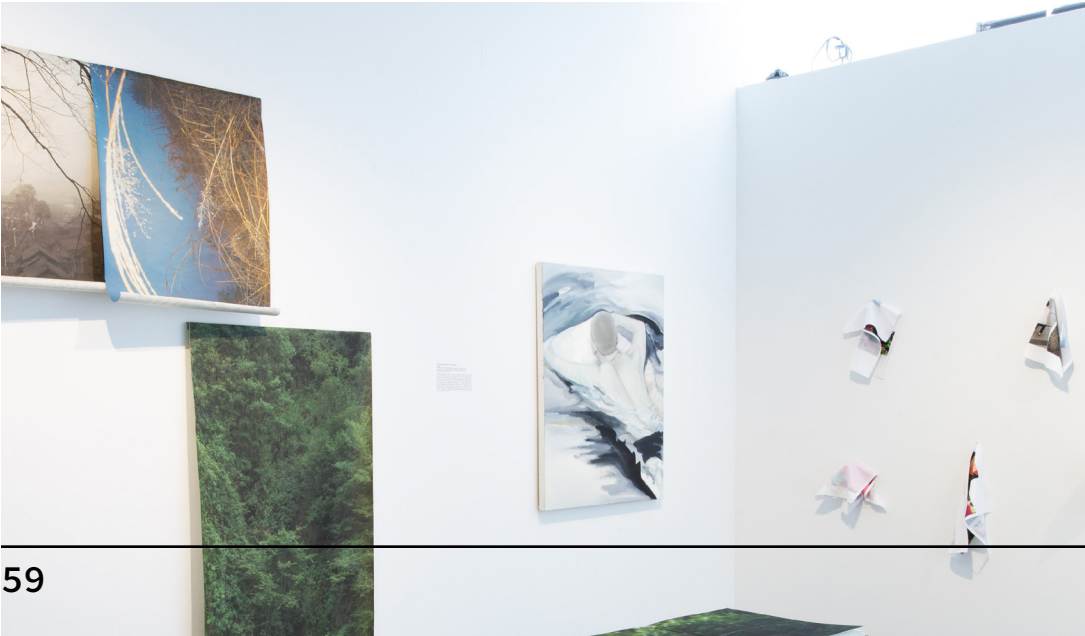




GOING TO MARKET PLACE WITH POPO (2018)

Going to Market Place with Popo was one of such projects that Tan documented with herphone. Like many international students, Tan usually spends the summer with her family, especially her grandparents. Tan often accompanied her Popo (grandma) to the market place and took photos of people she met during these short trips. Unlike younger generations, seniors in China still prefer grocery shopping at the market place where they can check the freshness of the vegetables at each stand, look for the perfect portion for the family, haggle with the vendors, and even chat with strangers to find a good deal or a fresher option. Popo enjoys these personal interactions that make the frequent trips worthwhile.

The flowy fabric used in Popo leads to a tangible and intimate association. Flipping through the soft pages, it is easy to spot the gap between the boisterous scenes in Popo and the empty chairs in Tan’s The Remains of the Day (on view nearby). Even though the primary colours remain bright in the photos, market places like this are disappearing in China as young people would rather shop online or at chain supermarkets. In Popo, the image-bearing textiles are turned over, and the vivid colours of fruits, vegetables, and seniors’ clothes become muted. The lively market is covered underneath with the fabric’s blank side blending into the white wall. Experiences become memories. Where will Popo shop in the future?



Flowing Still
Batteries Not Included
a series of actions or steps taken in order to achive a particular end
Ascension of Abundance

Experiences become memories.
Where will Popo shop in the future?



Flowing Still
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Ascension of Abundance



Going to Market Place with Popo
2019
Various sizes, inkjet print on fabric





The Remains of the Day, Tizzi Tan.

The Remains of the Day (2022)

Chairs are scattered all over Chengdu’s sidewalks, often brought by local residents from their homes. Placed in the gray zone between private and public spheres, they are an extension of private homes into the public space. As anyone can use any of the chairs, the ownership is vague. Moving the chairs around, people from nearby neighbourhoods gather, chat, play majiang¹ or chess, or simply relax. With a fan and a cup of tea in hand, they while the summer away.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, city streets suddenly became empty. At the time, public gatherings, even outdoor gatherings, were no longer permitted. The empty street seemed even emptier with the chairs, as the chairs, placed close to each other, alluded to the animated old days. If a street had no chairs, it was just a quiet street. The empty chairs are the reminiscence of and contrast with the once lively community that bore the expectations of in-person meetups. Nevertheless, the original chair owners didn’t take the chairs home. They knew that no one would be sitting in them any time soon, but they had a vague hope that they would meet in these chairs again.

¹ According to Cambridge Dictionary, majiang (or mah-jonga) is a Chinese game in which players pick up and put down small painted pieces of wood or other material until they have the combination they need in order to win.

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Ascension of Abundance





The Remains of the Day, Tizzi Tan.

a river waiting for falling pears (2022)

We all desired to escape the city and hide in nature at some point during the pandemic. Tan's [a river waiting for falling pears](#) not only seeks consolation from nature but also illustrates ways of being with nature. [a river](#) is an image-based project about Denglu, a village in Southwestern China with approximately 100 residents. Tan lived in Denglu for a month, but she does not pretend to know everything about it or conform to orientalist fantasies about remote Eastern villages. Instead, she records what she sees: the way nature and human experience intertwine. In other words, [a river](#) presents an alternative, a possibility to live "in an environment of self-sufficient subsistence." The colour green is present throughout this work. The green velvet tablecloth mirrors the colour and texture of moss on a winding staircase in the photo book. The moss grows to the edge of the human-travelled path, hinting at the close relationship between the villagers and nature.



a river waiting for falling pears, Tizzi Tan.

Flowing Still
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Ascension of Abundance



the spin, Zim Yu.

Meanwhile, Yu’s personal style differs from Tan’s focus on open space. He paints people around him, sharing his feelings via subdued colours, varied brushstrokes, and lights and shadows. The connection between the viewer and the artist can never be guaranteed, and Yu’s ambiguous representations may be interpreted in different ways. Still, his candidness opens his world to curious eyes.

the spin (2022)

the spin stands out from the primarily figurative collection. Capturing movement with two-dimensional painting can be challenging, yet Yu has chosen to describe a moment where time is whirling and unstoppable. Dividing the indoor paintings from the outdoor paintings, the spin functions as a visual portal between the world within and without. On its right, three paintings in dark colours divulge his private emotions. On its left, the swimming pool and Emma series represent Yu’s observation of his surroundings.

Emma

emma (2020) was Yu’s first painting after the pandemic began. Viewers are tempted to follow her gaze and find out what she is looking at with such concentration. The answer is on the table: the void accentuated by the matte sculpture. The viewers are in Emma’s presence but disconnected from her by her distant gaze. It’s an intimate moment where one can sense her physical presence in the room but her absence as company.

In emma II (2021), Emma finally raises her eyes to look at the viewer [...] Emma’s attention to the viewer is only temporary. But the phone screen is turned off and reflecting her thumb. Could it be that she is ready for an invested conversation?

In emma II (2021), Emma finally raises her eyes to look at the viewer. Yet her expression remains aloof and apathetic. The phone in her hand conveys conflicting messages. Holding onto her phone, Emma’s attention to the viewer is only temporary. But the phone screen is turned off and reflecting her thumb. Could it be that she is ready for an invested conversation?



emma II, Zim Yu.

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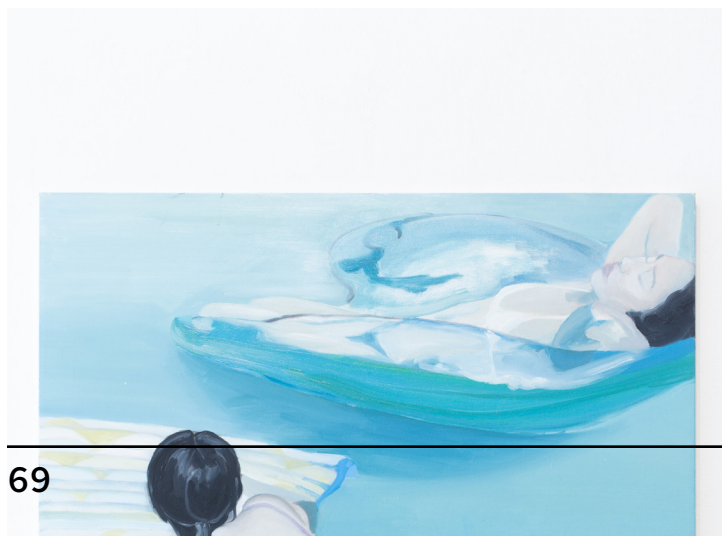


The swimming pool series

The swimming pool series introduces the other side of [Flowing Still](#), which shifts from negativity to a more relaxed state. In to [the swimming pool](#) (2021), Yu illustrates a good time with friends. One girl lies back in a transparent float while the other has her back to the viewer as her body melts into the quiet water. The moment is transient, and the good times depicted here are unstable and will unlikely last. Time, like water filling the swimming pool, is accumulating in silence.

The moment is transient, and the good times depicted here are unstable and will unlikely last. Time, like water filling the swimming pool, is accumulating in silence.

x



the swimming pool, Zim Yu.



Main Space

Flowing Still

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Ascension of
Abundance

Exhibition view, Flowing Still.

Indoor

Chaos, as indicated in the title [children of chaos \(2022\)](#), permeates the self-portrait. This painting pictures the time when one wakes up from an afternoon nap and is taking a moment to locate oneself. Composite light creeps in from the window without telling the time of the day. Even the look into the mirror shows an obscured face laden with disorientation and displacement—a profound loss of time and self.

[a pause \(2022\)](#) is another self-portrait of Yu as he reads a book on the sofa. On the left, the paper towel symbolizes the mundane daily routines. His figure is elongated to demonstrate the stretching force of time’s slow passage. In contrast, his dog Abao, unaware and unbothered by the shift in time, is depicted in standard proportions.

This difference raises a key question embedded in this exhibition: where does this sensation of “flowing still” come from?

Time in Denglu village was slow to begin with. The life presented in [a river](#) is so slow and essential that it is hard to tell whether the photos were taken before, during or after the pandemic. In urban settings, the contrast between life before and after the pandemic is more evident. The extensive addition to basic needs in a city, such as concerts, festivals, diner parties, shopping sprees and so on, generally promises people something to look forward to. When the pandemic took these add-ons away and left a void, endless time trapped at home replaced the supposedly endless possibilities. And another day is flowing still.

Time is an abstract concept, but Tan and Yu find ways to present it visually. And the works featured in [Flowing Still](#) are more descriptive than prescriptive, revealing how time is simultaneously condensed and extended. Their work is like a gentle nudge, reminding us of this paradox between the flow and the stillness of time.

■ Anqi Li

Flowing Still
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Ascension of Abundance



a pause, Zim Yu.

Batteries Not Included

Batteries Not Included curated by **Tristan Sauer**
Cat Blumke and Jonathan Carol SpekWork Studio (Cat Blumke and Jonathan Carol), Lana Yuan, Connor MacKinnon, Micelle Cieloszczyk and Cassie Paine

January 13, 2023 – February 25, 2023

Main Space

Flowing Still
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Ascension of Abundance

On November 4, 1922, a team of archeologists excavated a tomb in the Valley of the Kings belonging to Tutankhamun, the youngest Pharaoh in Egyptian history, who assumed power at the age of only nine.¹ Undoubtedly to the team the finding of golden shrines, jewelry, statues, and the world's first perfectly preserved mummy were the greatest reaps but, preserved alongside these artifacts was also a simple wooden top, dating back approximately 6000 years at the time.² This top is widely considered to be one of the oldest toys in archaeological records, one the young Pharaoh probably played with when not consumed by his royal duties. The excavation of the tomb and the finding of this top is a perfect analogy for not just the long and seemingly instinctual nature of humans to create devices for play, but also that of the colonial and capitalist ties to play that were enacted to retrieve the top in the first place. At this very moment you can buy a replica of King Tut's spinning top on Amazon for only \$12.99 (plus tax).³

At this very moment you can buy a replica of King Tut's spinning top on Amazon for only \$12.99 (plus tax)

In her keynote speech at the 2019 Early Childhood Conference hosted by the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, Dr. Susan Linn, a ventriloquist and children's entertainer known for her work using puppets in child psychotherapy, proclaimed that "Play is the foundation of [children's] learning, creativity, and constructive problem solving. It's [...] how they wrestle with life to make it meaningful."⁴ Play, an essential part of social development, often taken form as theatrical fantasies where we wear the world as costumes: we play house, we play jobs, we play war. The toy aisle still contains gendered fractures etched in blue and pink, reminding us of who toys are designed for. Young boys get trucks, soldiers, and guns, while young girls get houses, dolls, and fantasy kitchens. These forms, often symbols of capitalism, social norms and violence have long intersected with play, the normalization of friendly government agents as toys reinforces dynamics of privilege and power through these objects that, as Linn proclaimed, children use to "wrestle with life". LEGO, one of the biggest toy brands in the world, still sells police sets. Their official website labels their most recent set as "a relaxing day at the station" with only "the prisoner disturbing the sheer calm". A cartoonish caricature of a prisoner fitted with bandit mask and striped clothes is seen fleeing the scene with police cars and helicopters in pursuit. Despite the real world implications of this scene, all the cops are smiling.⁵ ▶

¹ History. 'Mummy Mystery', 8 August 2016 <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/king-tut>.

² Reuben H. Fleet Science Center - San Diego, CA. 'The World's Oldest Toy', 26 March 2021.<https://www.fleetscience.org/science-blog/world-s-oldest-toy>.

³ 'Amazon.Com: Ancient Toys - Wooden Spinning Top - King TUT's Top - Perfect Way to Introduce History with Toys Used by Children Thousands of Years Ago. Packaged in Attractive Gift Box with Spinning String! : Toys & Games'. Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://www.amazon.com/Ancient-Toys-Introduce-Thousands-Attractive/dp/B09MNZZSF2>.

⁴ 'Early Childhood Conference 2019 - Susan Linn'. Accessed 11 January 2023.https://www.acel.org.au/ACEL/ACELWEB/Events/2019/Early_Childhood_Conference/Susan_Linn.aspx.

⁵ 'Build an Awesome Fire Engine with LEGO® City Fire!' Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://www.lego.com/en-us/themes/city/fire-police>.

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Batteries Not Included
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“Play is the foundation of [children’s] learning, creativity, and constructive problem solving. It’s [...] how they wrestle with life to make it meaningful.”



Gallery Gestures, Connor MacKinnon



No Parking, Cassie Paine and Ground Troops, Michelle Cieloszczyk.

Yet, play is a powerful means to understanding and interacting with the world. Video games, often question players morality through the results of their in-game decisions. The third-person shooter game [Spec Ops: The Line](#) coats the players hands in virtual blood as they reconcile with the outcome of a white phosphorus bomb, launched by their own button press.⁶ Spec Ops and games like it place players in the role of active participant, creating tactile emotional narratives that are not possible in mediums where players are only observers. Though these examples require players actions to initiate their engagement, sometimes play itself can be the active participant. In 2012, protests in Russia fighting corruption and electoral malpractice were declared by authorities as “an unsanctioned public event”.⁷ Following the ban, a protest of “100 Kinder Surprise toys, 100 Lego people, 20 model soldiers, 15 soft toys and 10 toy cars” was shut down as the toys were not considered “citizens of Russia”. The multi-coloured activists confused authorities to the point where legal counsel was consulted about the validity of the gathering.⁸ Toys become extensions of the player, traversing our own world in exaggerated means. The same Lego happily chasing down an escaped convict were also plastered over Russian YouTube protesting corruption.⁹ In the end it is never the toy that decides its own meaning, but the players who births purpose and action into it.

⁶ Spec Ops: The Line is a 2012 third-person shooter video game

⁷ O’Flynn, Kevin. ‘Toys Cannot Hold Protest Because They Are Not Citizens of Russia, Officials Rule’. The Guardian, 15 February 2012, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/15/toys-protest-not-citizens-russia>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

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x
In the end it is never the toy that decides its own meaning, but the players who births purpose and action into it.



Ground Troops, Michelle Cieloszczyk.

TAPCop

Originally created as a mobile phone app, Artists Cat Blumke and Jonathan Carol (SpekWork Studio) allow the player to take police reform into their own hands. **TAPCop** plays exactly as the name, the player finds themselves in an expansive white void populated only by floating cops and is invited to TAP these cops. After being tapped they let off a small explosion of money and rag doll around the void. The player can also spend their collected funding on social services that would be valuable replacements for police services. Cities like Toronto spend nearly \$1.1 billion annually or approximately 7% of our municipal budget. Other Canadian cities see even greater percentages with approximately 11% of Montreal’s, 21% of Vancouver’s, 17.5% of Calgary’s, 9.3% of Ottawa’s and 18% of Hamilton’s annual operating budgets going towards police expenses. 90% of this money is used to pay salaries.¹⁰

Originally published to the App Store, the artists created the game as an attempt to “redirect some of the emotion[s] channeling through phones, as images and videos from international protests against police brutality [are][...] circulated through Twitter and Instagram.”¹¹ The cellphone has become more synonymous as a device for navigating and communicating during protests and is often the first infrastructure to be disrupted or used as a means of surveillance by government bodies. However, soon after its publishing, **TAPCop** was swiftly removed for violating Apple’s guideline surrounding “the use of apps and games to explore critical ideas.” Despite the fact that, **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**¹², a game where you can commit far greater acts of violence against police, sits in the top 10 paid games list on the app store.



TAPCop, Spekwork Studios.

¹⁰ News ; Ryan Patrick Jones · CBC. ‘The Police Budget Is One of Toronto’s Largest Expenses. Here’s What You Need to Know about It | CBC News’. CBC. Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-police-spending-1.6623747>.
¹¹ SpekWork ‘TAPCop Zine’ Accessed 11 January 2023

¹² An action-adventure video game developed published by Rockstar Games. It is the fifth main entry in the Grand Theft Auto series.



TAPCop, Spekwork Studios.

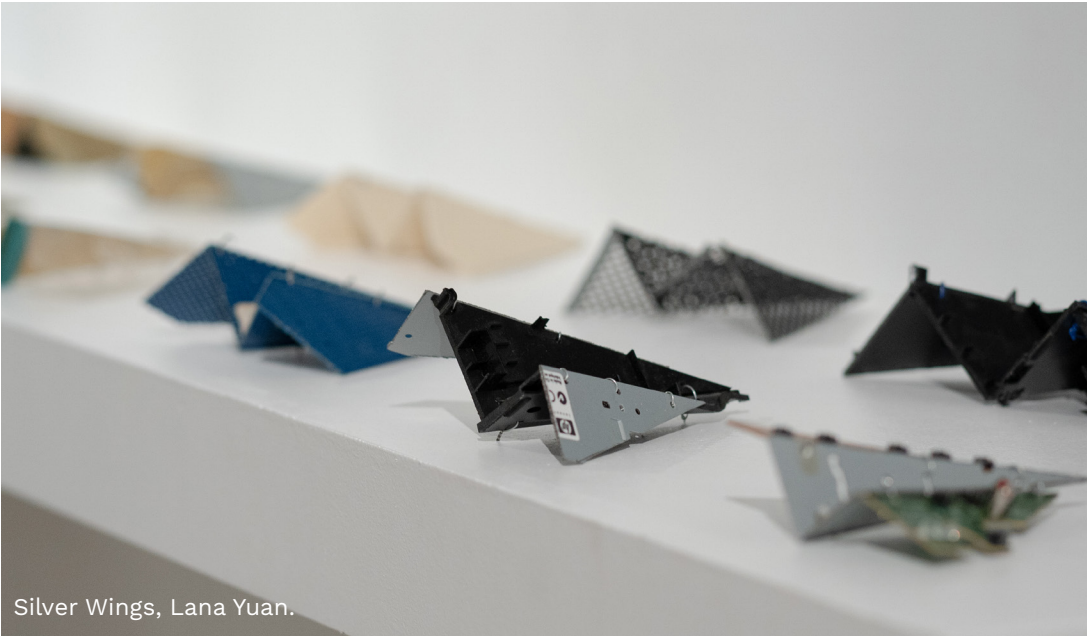
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Silver Wings

Unmistakably reminiscent to paper airplanes, the mixed media sculptures of Lana Yuan are much more than crudely constructed toys by idle handed students. Forged from tech waste the artist literally plucked from the dumpsters of their university campus, [Silver Wings](#) reminds us of what we leave behind for the next generation. Tech waste, purely for functional purposes, is designed to “resist decomposition, forever.”¹¹ The fossils of the future will probably be littered with mother boards for archeologists to ponder the use of. Perhaps they will be the hieroglyphics of the 21st century, containing centuries of unobtainable date. [Silver Wings](#) defines that understanding that “what we are getting rid of also defines us”¹² by shortening the gap between our present and the childhoods of children yet to be born. What kind of future do we leave the next generation when they are forced to reconcile with our messes?

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), a “deep geological repository [...] licensed to store transuranic radioactive waste,” was designed to hold waste for 10000 years, inevitably outliving its creators and those who had filled it. A dissertation to warn and admit guilt of the mess had left behind stands outside. The second stanza reads “This Place is Not a Place of Honor. No highly Esteemed Deed is Commemorated Here...Nothing Valued is Here.”¹³ [Silver Wings](#) attempts to yield similar warnings, that what we discard now will still be a problem in the future, just not one we’ll have to handle, but one we will forever hold the shame of creating. The use of the paper airplane grounds our current reality in the future of tomorrow, urging us to do better than those who came before us and walk amongst us.

The use of the paper airplane grounds our current reality in the future of tomorrow, urging us to do better than those who came before us and walk amongst us.



Silver Wings, Lana Yuan.



Gallery Gestures, Connor MacKinnon.

Gallery Gestures

Standing in un-marching lines, weapons drawn, seemingly always in perpetual combat, the toy soldier is an easily recognizable symbol. Going so far as to seemingly have ownership over the very gestures the models are frozen into. To most children, the side profile of a man with his legs spread and the scope of the rifle to his eye is more ubiquitous with play than it is warfare. These gestural elements are what artist Connor MacKinnon was interested in when he turned the gallery into a warzone. Playing off the idea of the soldiers iconic and repetitious positions, MacKinnon captures a similar phenomenon in the gestures of gallery attendees. Art is often a completely unique experience for everyone, yet our bodies stall, wait, and bend in the same ways as we gaze upon work.

MacKinnon’s introduction of the soldier, and specifically the iconic green toy soldier, into the gallery space goes beyond simple gestural forms. The toy soldier represents a great uniformity that is not just present but demanded from those who serve. The stripping of soldier identities is identical to the toy’s uniformity in stance and appearance. Toy soldiers are incapable of making their own decisions and require the player’s intervention to carry out tasks. Further, MacKinnon is attempting to play with the uncanny presence of military figures in the gallery space. Positioned on top of a white plinth that is modeled after the layout of the gallery, MacKinnon has designed an unnatural environment where the soldier’s standout like sore thumbs. This same juxtaposition questions why military figures are seen as normal occupants of the toy aisle, why do they not also stand out there. Why do we play war to begin with and how does this normalize government agents in areas never designed for combat?

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Ground Troops

Artist Michelle Cieloszczyk, like MacKinnon, employs the use of a miniatures. Cieloszczyk explores the intentions of the toy's designed and why it is militarized. The artist emphasizes this narrative by casting the figure in a vibrant blue, referencing police and their layout referencing the 'thin blue line' that became synonyms with support of law enforcement.¹³ The thin blue line represents "police [as] the force that stands between law [,] order and chaos".¹⁴ Cieloszczyk has thusly positioned her miniatures in their own thin blue line, physically obstructing the gallery, evoking imagery of lines of police officers encroaching on the viewers.

The ties between play and imperialism have long existed. America's Army is was a series of first-person shooter video games designed by the US military as a "PC-based recruitment tool designed to inspire interest among disaffected gamers."¹⁵ First released in 2001, online support for the game was only stopped in 2022.¹⁶ Media theorist David B. Nieborg proclaimed the game as "a careful blend of propaganda, advertising, and education."¹⁷ The end of the America's Army signifies what Cieloszczyk's is portraying in her work: That there exists a malicious warping of morality when play is used as a tool of imperialism.

¹³ USA, Thin Blue Line. 'About Us'. Thin Blue Line USA. Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://www.thinbluelineusa.com/pages/about-us>.

¹⁴ Twitter and Email. 'The Thin Blue Line: The History behind the Controversial Police Emblem'. San Diego Union-Tribune, 6 July 2020. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/story/202007-06/the-thin-blue-line-the-complex-history-and-thoughts-behind-the-police-emblem>.

¹⁵ GamesIndustry.biz. 'America's Army Launches Mobile Offensive', 30 January 2007. <https://www.gamesindustry.biz/americas-army-launches-mobile-offensive>.

¹⁶ 'America's Army News | AA:PG Shutdown', 27 April 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220427142712/https://news.americasarmy.com/aapg-shutdown/>.

¹⁷ David.B, Neiborg. 'Digital Material. Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology'. Amsterdam University Press, 4 April 2012. <http://dare.uva.nl/document/163532>





Arbitrary and Fictitious Currency to be Traded for Real Value, Cassie Paine.



Magie, Cassie Paine.

Magie / No Parking / Arbitrary and Fictitious Currency to be Traded for Real Value

The three works of Cassie Paine at first glance seem to be simple, recognizable objects, ubiquitous with traffic and public space. Yet, their very presence dictates the space they occupy. The symbols of traffic cones, and no parking signs are synonymous with corporate, and municipal land control. The patterns adorning these pieces are direct references to the bills of the board game Monopoly, which the idea for was stolen from the anti-capitalist The Landlord's Game.¹⁸ Paine's work questions how public space can be commodified and controlled by using the concept of land ownership, which has created increasing economic disparities.¹⁹ The specific use of currency from Monopoly further implies the futile power objects that control space impose through their lack of tactile enforcement. The final work Arbitrary and Fictitious Currency to be Traded for Real Value lays scattered on the ground. In the form of large metal coins the work both references the fictitious currencies from Monopoly and the arbitrary value money and objects like the sign, pilon and coins hold in their attempt to reinforce capitalist values.

Paine's work, similar to Cieloszczyk's, is displayed so that it obstructs physical space in the gallery, at first glance appearing to be for the original intended use of the repurposed objects, the work instead upholds capitalist ownership over space never meant to be owned.

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¹⁸ Staff, N. P. R. 'Ever Cheat At Monopoly? So Did Its Creator: He Stole The Idea From A Woman'. NPR, 3 March 2015, sec. Author Interviews. <https://www.npr.org/2015/03/03/382662772/ever-cheat-atmonopoly-so-did-its-creator-he-stole-the-idea-from-a-woman>.

¹⁹ News , Don Pittis · CBC. 'ANALYSIS | Cracks Appear in "free Enterprise" Argument against Rent Control: Don Pittis | CBC News'. CBC. Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/home-prices-economic-theory-1.4054764>.

Play is a fundamental part of all stages of our lives, something that is understood by us all, including corporations and government entities. Their interest in play is often rooted in the idea of it being fundamental, allowing them to normalize and reinforce norms that have long been upheld by institutions and organizations who benefit from them. G&L Trophies and Gifts, a toy shop founded by retired police officers in the Chicago region,²⁰ describes the importance of police toys for toddlers as “kids will grow and become adults who will be recruited into the police force to continue the good work of serving the community.” The toys can be the best way to develop a good attitude towards the career of police officers. The very nature of these police toys are designed with the express purpose of forming positive images of the police to young children, going as far as sowing the seeds to create future cops. The borderline propaganda of these toys frames them so they can only be viewed as tools of the force. Yet, toy cops are not necessarily cops if the world the player places them in has no need for law enforcement.

Just as toy soldiers are only soldiers if they are sent into combat, whose battles they fight and for what cause are at the behest of the player. Objects of play may be crafted in forms designed to normalize and familiarize the player with the world we live in, but play knows no boundaries. Its very existence challenges reality and thus can always become tool to do so. From the moment we’re born, we never stop playing, it’s something to protect and cherish. The future of play will continue to both reinforce and challenge the systems we are cast into. It will always be there to aid in our understanding of the world. The works in this show imagine in many ways how we can create more equitable approaches to play, so that one day, there may be no more smiling cops and cartoon criminals in bedrooms.

■ Tristan Sauer



Objects of play may be crafted in forms designed to normalize and familiarize the player with the world we live in, but play knows no boundaries.



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²⁰ Chicago Fire and Cop Shop. ‘G&L Trophies and Gifts’. Accessed 11 January 2023. <https://chicagofireandcopshop.com/>

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curated by Avalon Mott
Featuring works by Ella Gonzalez, Meichen Waxer, and Meg Ross

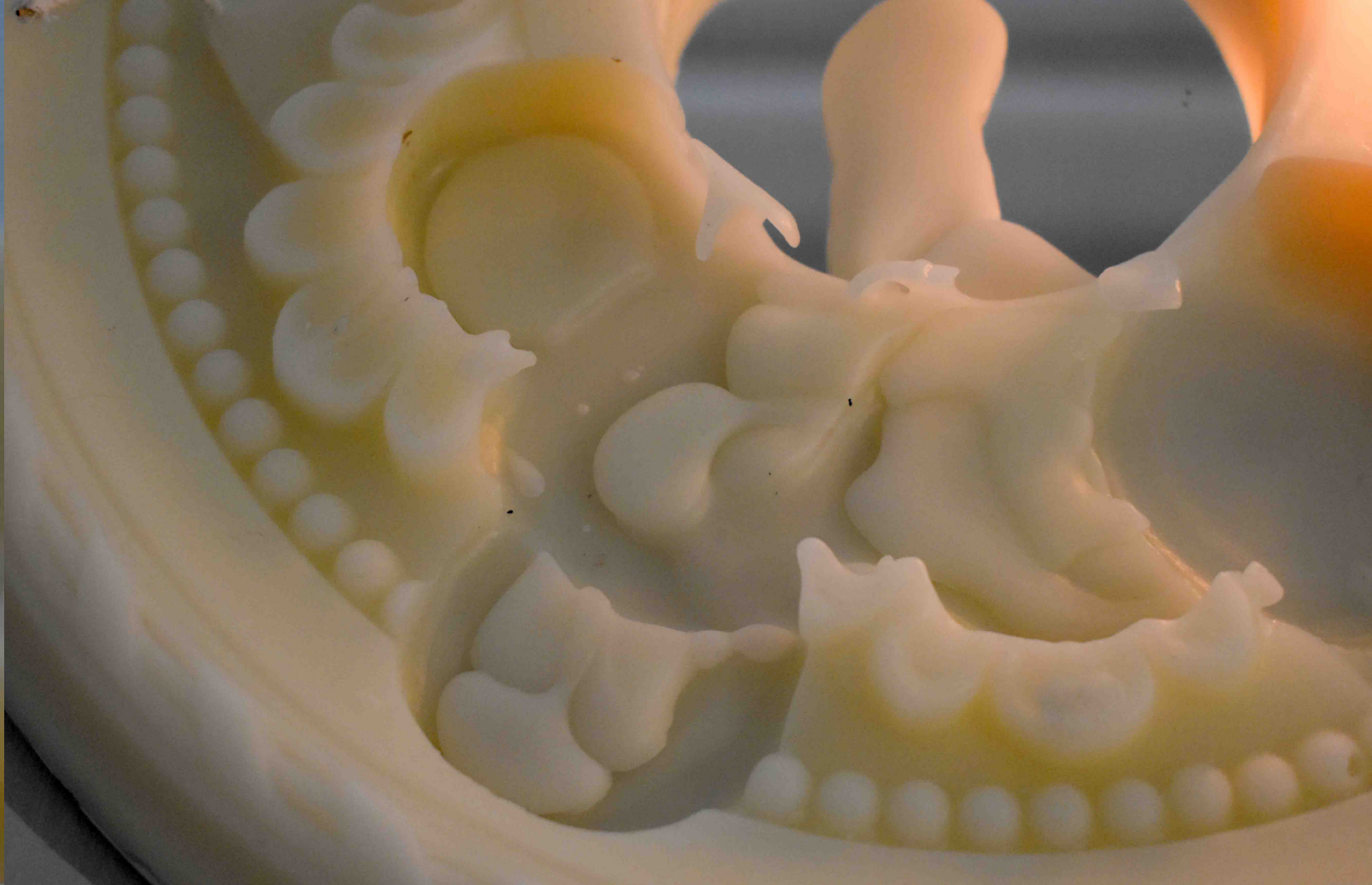
March 10, 2023 – April 22, 2023

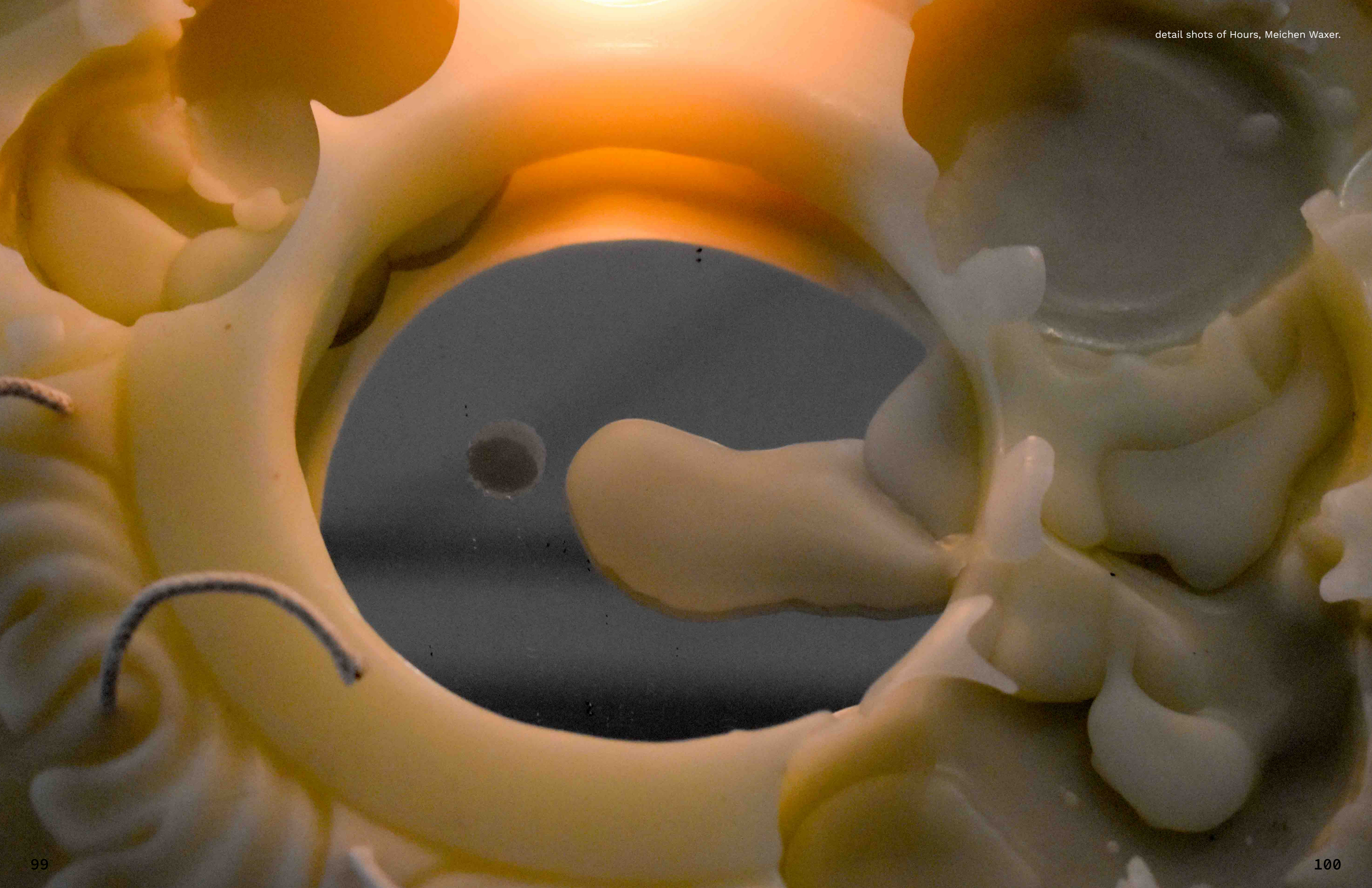
To tell you about the works in this exhibition, I must first talk about a work that isn't in it—piece-x. I won't give you the expected specifics about piece-x; no title, didactic or dimensions. I won't provide a medium or colour palette to envision. I can't describe piece-x to you, because for each reader of this essay, piece-x is different. Piece-x is an enigma, a work that you've already encountered that spoke an untranscribable language which felt as if it was only spoken between the two of you. You might've encountered it visually, it might've had sensory components as well, but you knew you were in front of piece-x when the hair on your arms stood on end, when the pace of your breath might've altered, when your eyes might've misted. Piece-x is an artwork that has channeled exhibitionary affect to move you at your core.

you knew you were in front of piece-x
when the hair on your arms stood on end

There is no formula for piece-x, although artists and curators alike are in perpetual search of its outcome. Throughout this exhibition, [a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end](#), I'm examining how curating for exhibitionary affect can create the conditions to allow for piece-x to reveal itself to the viewer. Exhibitionary affect is a curatorial methodology focused on generating emotive responses towards art through strategic arrangements and relationships between works in the gallery space, and an acknowledgement of the atmosphere of the exhibition. When scholar and curator Jennifer Fisher writes about exhibitionary affect, I can only imagine that piece-x is her prototype. As she states, 'curatorial initiatives that engage the communicative function of affect embrace not only relational, but also somatic and cognitive ontologies of exhibition experience'¹, which in turn extend the artworks' ability to communicate beyond its representational self (Fisher 28). >

¹ Jennifer Fisher, "Exhibitionary Affect," in n. Paradoxa, vol. 18, 2006, pp. 27-33.





I have defined affect as the charged space of potential between the artwork and the viewer; a space that when entered, can lead to curiosity and learning. This challenges the traditional hierarchy of a viewer's experience in a gallery, in which they are made to feel as though they must understand the work through a particular lens.

Exhibitionary affect is integral to art’s accessibility; it acknowledges that works communicate to a varied public through many languages. It recognizes different ways of knowing and seeing and leaves room for the viewer to form meaningful and resonant relationships with works. [a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end](#) is an exhibition of three distinct, site-specific works by three artists—Ella Gonzales, Meg Ross, and Meichen Waxer—which channel affect in various ways. The Irish critic Brian O’Doherty writes about the convention of ‘hanging’ in his text [Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space](#) warning that, ‘the way pictures are hung makes assumptions about what is offered. Hanging editorializes on matters of interpretation and value’², which would have immediate effects on the transmission of exhibitionary affect (O’Doherty 23). The exhibition seeks to disrupt traditional ways of display to spark and uphold affect. By turning towards site-specificity, the works ask for relational readings that privilege viewers’ individual curiosity, rather than one of detachment reinforced by an absence of conversation between the works on view and the stark gallery space.

‘the way pictures are hung makes assumptions about what is offered. Hanging editorializes on matters of interpretation and value’



² Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).



Meichen Waxer’s installation [...and the sky \(2023\)](#) evokes an air of enticement. In the middle of the Main Space, the artist has partially covered a load-bearing column in a skin of thin, mirrored adhesive. By hanging the adhesive only between where crown molding and chair rail would be, Waxer invites a specific reading of Western domesticity and class. This calls us to think of colonialism’s tradition of ornamentation motifs, and how they rely on illusion, as they are not able to provide anything deeper than the surface they present. On the four opposing walls, Waxer has applied strips of mirrored adhesive at the same dimensions as the column, and installed a temporary baseboard below them. The column which Waxer has covered is the prominent architectural feature of the otherwise rectangular space. Dividing the room into quadrants, this intervention disrupts the pristine character of the gallery’s white walls. In the corner of the gallery, the circular beeswax candle ([Hours, 2022](#)) gently glows (when its wick is lit) from atop a mirrored plinth. As [Hours](#) melts away throughout the duration of the exhibition, the mirrored surface below it emulates the reflective surface elsewhere in the space. As viewers move through the exhibition, they’re made aware of themselves and the other works in the gallery as their fragmentary reflections create a moving ‘wallpaper’ which destabilizes the wall space. Fracturing the viewer’s expectations further, the mirrored skin articulates the texture of the various surfaces that it’s been applied to; rough, inconsistent and irregular, and distorts any objects which are reflected. The irregular reflection denies the viewer the pleasure of feeling the gaze directly reciprocated, and ignites an obsessive desire to see what won’t be fully mirrored: the self. Affect lies in the unrequited desire to be seen by [...and the sky](#), the audience's presence acknowledged by a reflected soft-self which will never crystallize into a recognizable form. In the space created by exhibitionary affect, Waxer asks what preconceptions we subconsciously bring into the space that surrounds us and our way of seeing. ➤

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Blue Read, Meg Ross.

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Mounted along the front wall of the gallery is Meg Ross’s [Blue Read](#) (2023). At first glance, the work resembles a grouping of thirty-nine books on a metal shelf. As the viewer chooses and pulls one of the ‘books’ from the shelf to read, they may recognize the intimate feeling of selecting a volume at a library or bookstore. The covers of the books are made from cyanotypes—either digitally manipulated, or in some instances, entirely constructed with Photoshop. Ross has adhered the cyanotypes to MDF blocks which wear gently as the compressed pages of a book would. The artist’s use of cyanotypes represents her ongoing investigation into photography’s relationship with light. The blue-toned colour fields are non-representational; they provide deep, indefinite contours to hold the viewer’s gaze, highlighting colour, space and form. By using a photographic image as the jacket of the book, Ross presents the viewer with a rare opportunity to form a kinetic relationship with a typically two-dimensional medium. Viewers are able to touch the image and leave a trace of their presence through their fingerprints, stirring a visceral relationship to the art objects which couldn’t be obtained by simply viewing the images. The work asks the viewer to read rather than view— a familiar act which leaves room for private contemplation and favors individual comprehension. By allowing the viewer to encounter a cyanotype in such an intimate way, Ross creates a space in her work for reflection at an interpersonal emotional level. ➤



Hung on a diagonal from the ceiling in the main space corridor is Ella Gonzales’s large-scale painting, [Reflection of a doorway](#) (2022). The work is an 9-by-8.5 foot painting made on semi-transparent jusi-silk³ fabric sent to the artist from the Philippines by her family. At first glance, the painting depicts the architecture of Gonzales's former family homes, which lends to a reading of memory and nostalgia. Behind and through the painting, additional works by Gonzales become visible: a folded painting on a shelf and two small-scale paintings situated on the floor, all on piña-silk⁴ fabric. In this deferred revealing, [Reflection of a doorway](#) provides a secondary viewing experience in which the creases and traces from human touch and the gallery space become subtly apparent. In her understanding of this phenomenon, Gonzales references Lisa Robinson’s theory of soft architecture⁵. The organic creation of this soft architecture privileges form, shape and light—all qualities of which the transparent texture of the jusi-piña fabric is in concert. In this, the painting becomes a vessel which carries history in both its surface and imagery, while simultaneously addressing its present context. The jusi fabric is thin and semitransparent, with a refined weave that allows for light to travel through the sheer coat of paint, while the imagery remains semi-opaque. In its opacity, the painting situates the viewer in Gonzales’s domestic familial past. Yet in its transparency, [Reflection of a doorway](#) invites the viewer in on an intimate conversation about the shifting nature of diasporic movement and the longing for something that will never be as it once was.



(detail), Reflection of a doorway, Ella Gonzales.

³ Jusi-silk fabric is from the Spanish "jusi" and the Tagalog "husi". It refers to a delicate fibrous dress fabric, woven in the Philippine Islands. It is made with hemp warp and pineapple fibre filling or pineapple fibre warp and silk, cotton or fine abaca after filling. (<https://skosmos.silknow.org/thesaurus/en/page/298>)

⁴ Pina-silk fabric (Piña-Seda or Pineapple-Silk) is a type of fabric that combines pineapple fibers and silk fibers. It was first historically used in the Philippines at the beginning of the 17th century. It is found in the province of Pampanga, which is known for its pineapple plantations. The Piña-Silk weaving was introduced to Pampanga by Spanish missionaries, where they were taught how to weave this type of material. The Piña-Silk fabric is not only beautiful to look at, but also very strong and durable. (<https://barongsrus.com/barong-tagalog-fabric/>)

⁵ Lisa Robinson uses the term soft architecture to describe the incorporeal aspects of architecture like memory, light, form, colour, furnishings, social space, etc, in her essay Seven Walks from the Office of Soft Architecture. In speaking with Gonzales, and as discussed in her thesis paper, the heightened attention to these abstract forms give texture to her experience of having called 12 places home.



Reflection of a doorway, Ella Gonzales.

The stage for affect has been set through the curated arrangement and relationships between the works. This creates a stirring atmosphere composed of textural elements, and opportunities for engagement. Affect also is roused through resistance—by leaning into the tensions between the viewer’s expectation of the pieces to perform and their actual functions. Affect binds the three works together across their disparate subject matter and mediums. In their display, the three works subvert the dominance of the twodimensional picture plane and turn instead to three-dimensional site-specificity to facilitate feeling. What we’re with are the sticky⁶ remains of our experience with the works, the feelings we have after we leave the gallery, the images in our mind’s eye. The active contemplation that is required in all three pieces to stimulate the works on display is also a home for affect. [a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end](#) is open to relational viewing through the lens of exhibitionary affect, and provides the viewer a supported space to feel inside the gallery.

⁶ Sara Ahmed uses this term to describe the lasting feelings of affect in her essay Happy Objects.

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Reflection of a doorway, Ella Gonzales.

Ascension of Abundance

curated by Natalie King

Janine Ilya, Par Nair, Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong,
Cedar-Eve and Hau Pham
May 26, 2023 – July 8, 2023

“....I end up in discussions with other young women who are trying to be good aunties without having aunties of their own. We express sadness and shame at being made to beg for teachings like we’re mining for gold with our bare hands, only to be told we aren’t trying hard enough...

But resistance is in our blood. So we shred their illegal contracts with the movement of our hands, digging for the roots our great-grandmothers used to treat cramps, anxiety, and patriarchy. We recreate rites-of-passage ceremonies to teach ourselves survival skills for the apocalypse that has never ceased. Here, knowing how to salvage the quills from a roadkill porcupine is more useful than being exiled to sit alone with our sins, like the in abstinent, unconciliatory little witches we are—heathen, obstinate, and refusing to convert.”

- Erica Violet Lee, ‘In defense of the wastelands’¹

¹ Erica Violet Lee, ‘In defense of the wastelands: a survival guide’, GUTS Magazine, April 2016



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Mikinaak, Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong

Ascension of Abundance is an exhibition in which artists move through time and space to portray thoughts, feelings and ideas related to dreaming of worlds beyond our current reality. Janine Ilya, Par Nair, Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong, Cedar-Eve and Hau Pham all share speculative futures and themes of abundance, joy, sovereignty, magic-making, and world-building as each are embedded in the artist’s practices, creating space and energy to expand our current reality while sharing their stories, memories and thoughts regarding the past, present and future.

Dr. Darcie Little Badger, a Lipan Apache scientist and Indigenous futurist author, reflected in an interview that: “Both in and outside fiction, we are pushed to the past tense. The reality is, many Indigenous cultures in North America survived an apocalypse. The key word is survived. Any future with us in it, triumphant and flourishing, is a hopeful one.”²

Reflecting on these triumphant and flourishing futures. As artists and creatives, we are often working within hard timelines, on top of a full or part time job, well aware of scarcity and abundance. Colonial forces and praxis force us to believe that resources are limited, including our time, relationships and livelihoods. We are currently living in a capitalistic and colonial society, at the same time there are many artists working within ideas of future reclamation. Abundance is everywhere in our relationships, in our time and in our lived experiences. Past and present converge to create ideas/narratives and dreams about the future.

Within these ideas of future, past and present, the artists in **Ascension of Abundance** create worlds within worlds, telling their stories through textiles, painting, sculpture, installation and video.



Spirits See Red, Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong

² Decolonizing Science Fiction and Imagining Futures: An Indigenous Futurisms Roundtable, Dr. Darcie Little Badger, Strange Horizons Magazine, 2017



the shawanga river, our miskwi

Spirits See Red (2022), is an installation that creates a traditional and sacred space of time, while also facilitating a conversation surrounding symbolic notions of genocide against Indigenous people, this work also explores reclamation.

Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong is from Parry Sound, Ontario. She is Ojibwe and proudly represents her community, Shawanaga First Nation. Alexis’ work includes several pieces that span different mediums including woodcarving, single channel video and print. Within these works are the presence of the colour red. The lights illuminate the colour red onto the works, surrounding the area with a crimson glow.

“Red is a powerful colour. The psychology behind red, even if they say they don't like the color red, they’re attracted to it because of when you’re in the womb, and how the stomach basically looks from the inside. I think about that too as kind of like birth and love and being held.”³

The editeg⁴ presence in Alexis’ work symbolizes blood and editeg teachings, healing, medicine, and love, using language, food, and stories. Alexis’ work to me signifies a future where we as Indigenous peoples receive healing. ➤

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³ Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong in conversation with Natalie King
⁴ berries, Anishinaabemowin

“Reclaiming my Indigeneity like, a lot of that comes with, like, you know, you learn about your culture and you’re learning about your family language, ways of knowing and being, but you also have to learn about, like, the really shitty fucking things, the government issues around that. I think that’s one thing that we don’t really acknowledge is that reclaiming Indigeneity also gives you a sense of anger that comes with it, too. And you have to be prepared for that. Take care of yourself.”⁵

⁵ Ibid

Through these worlds Alexis creates work that explores what it means to be an Anishinaabe person and her connection to the land, more specifically the Shawanga River, a large river located in Alexis’ home territory in Shawanga First Nation. Overfishing and overhunting are currently an issue in Alexis’ home territory.

‘Our Miskwi’ is a single channel video work accompanied by a poem that explores themes of blood quantum, assimilation, resilience, survivance and sovereignty. The artist uses plexiglass, ode’imin, miin, odatagaagomin, miskomin⁶ to tell the story of Miskwi. Mirrored by her connection to the land, Alexis speaks to resistance.

⁶ strawberry, blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, Anishinaabemowin

Within the video text appears at the bottom of the screen, Alexis speaks to Miskwi:

our miskwi was and is not for your viewing or absorbtion
our miskwi is sacred, and its ours
our miskwi will not divide
our miskwi will not dissolve
our miskwi exists and survives
our
miskwi

-Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong, our miskwi was, is, and will..., 2023



Spirits See Red (drum), Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong

mawinzo and nibi anang, 2023, are two inkjet prints. These two prints collaborate to acknowledge dreams, stars and berries as medicine and healing. Alexis references nibi anang which translates to ‘water stars’ in Anishinaabemowin;

We are star people— dreaming of swimming in editeg⁷ water, soaking up their medicine and love.. ⁸

⁷ Berries, Anishinaabemowin

In the far end of the gallery sits Mikinaak, (2023). This basswood hand-carved sculpture made from Basswood, berry stain and wood chips is a process of love and labour. The piece stands firm in the gallery, with various shades and hues of red and purple, creating an almost holographic colour story. The basswood soaks up the blood and memories of the editeg which include ode’imin, miin, odatagaagomin and miskomin.⁹ Mikinaak is Anishinaabemowin for snapping turtle, the form of the sculpture can be interpreted in different ways depending on who is witnessing the work, but it is intended to acknowledge our four legged friends and our shared relations on Turtle Island.

⁸ Alexis Nanibush Pamajewong artist statement

⁹ strawberry, blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, Anishinaabemowin

Spirits See Red (Drum) “is about the Anishinaabe concept of kobade meaning the relations to our ancestors, our grandparents, and acknowledging that we are all a link in a chain or vital park of spiral. The drum mimics our heart beat, and can synchronize our beat together. The red beads communicate the bloodline— our family, to the land, the stars, to our songs, and the love we have for each other. ”¹⁰

¹⁰ Alexis Nanibush-Pamajewong describing work Spirits See Red (Drum)

Alexis gifts viewers with a love letter to her home territory, a love story between herself and the land.

Flowing Still

Batteries Not
Included

a series of actions
or steps taken in
order to achieve
a particular end

Ascension of
Abundance



Her Stories Were Blue, Par Nair.

her stories were blue.

Having moved from India to Canada in her early twenties, Par Nair’s work addresses diasporic journeys of South Asian communities, highlighting stories of peoples historically silenced in colonial spaces. Nair’s multidisciplinary practice considers cultural histories, family archives, photos and histories to unravel narratives surrounding Indian women.

“her stories were blue” is a series of hand embroidered works based on photographs Par’s grandmother collected. Par’s grandmother would carefully curate the images that she loved and would send them along to Par to embroider, creating an intergenerational collaborative art making process. The work aims to trace the vanishing familial archives and fading crafts specific to diaspora and migration. These works are created on [kasavu mundu](#), a textile with a golden border traditionally worn by Indian men, from Kerala, India. By carefully hand embroidering stories of mothers and daughters on this specific material, Nair considers and imagines worlds and creates space where the voices of Indian women had not previously existed, creating a new dialogue that centres Indian women.

Speaking to familial reactions to her work Par adds “I also see how much joy it is bringing them, which I didn’t expect, like, somehow, I was always thinking, ‘would they be okay with this?’ But they say, ‘oh my gosh, we can’t believe that you’re telling our story on such a large scale’.”¹¹

¹¹ Par Nair in conversation with Natalie King

Par’s grandmother would carefully curate the images [...] creating an intergenerational collaborative art making process.

x



Her Stories Were Blue, Par Nair.

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capital G Greatness

The idea of greatness is instilled in Turtle Island through the project of colonialism.

For thousands of years bodies on Turtle Island were here to celebrate and care for the land. As an artist and cultural worker, I am constantly reminded of the double-edged swords that things like capital ‘S’ Success or capital ‘G’ Greatness are, and the realities of the day-to-day existence that is trying to survive, thrive and continue to live. In her work, Hau Pham investigates what this Greatness means. Pham’s work draws heavy influence from her South-East Asian Heritage and Buddhist beliefs. Her practice relies on the intersection of one’s relationship with the object, and the perception of Asian women in the western world. Her works are a reflection of the Asian feminine experience.

“I was thinking a lot about the collection of objects and how they are like humans. We always collect things, and we use them as representations of ourselves, right? We also place a human relationship to those items, regardless of whatever role that they serve.”¹²

In the corner of the gallery hangs who paintings by Pham: **I was Crafted to be Great and Vietnamese Woman Figurine with her hat broken off**. The first painting, I was Crafted to be Great features a realistic rendering of a large Laughing Buddha figurine carved from Jade, his smiling face accentuated by this bright green exterior. n **Woman Figurine with her hat broken off** there is a figure within the centre of the piece with her broken hat at her feet. Pham and I discuss the optics of these figurines and more broadly what these paintings of objects represent to her:

“You know, and I think both of those paintings deal with ideas of perfection and greatness and always like pushing yourself to be to be better or to be the best to be the greatest that there was.”¹³

¹² Hau Pham in conversation with Natalie King

¹³ Ibid.



I Was Crafted to be Great and Woman Figurine with her hat broken off, Hau Pham.



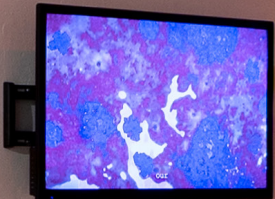
Installation view, Ascension of Abundance curated by Natalie King.

Flowing Still

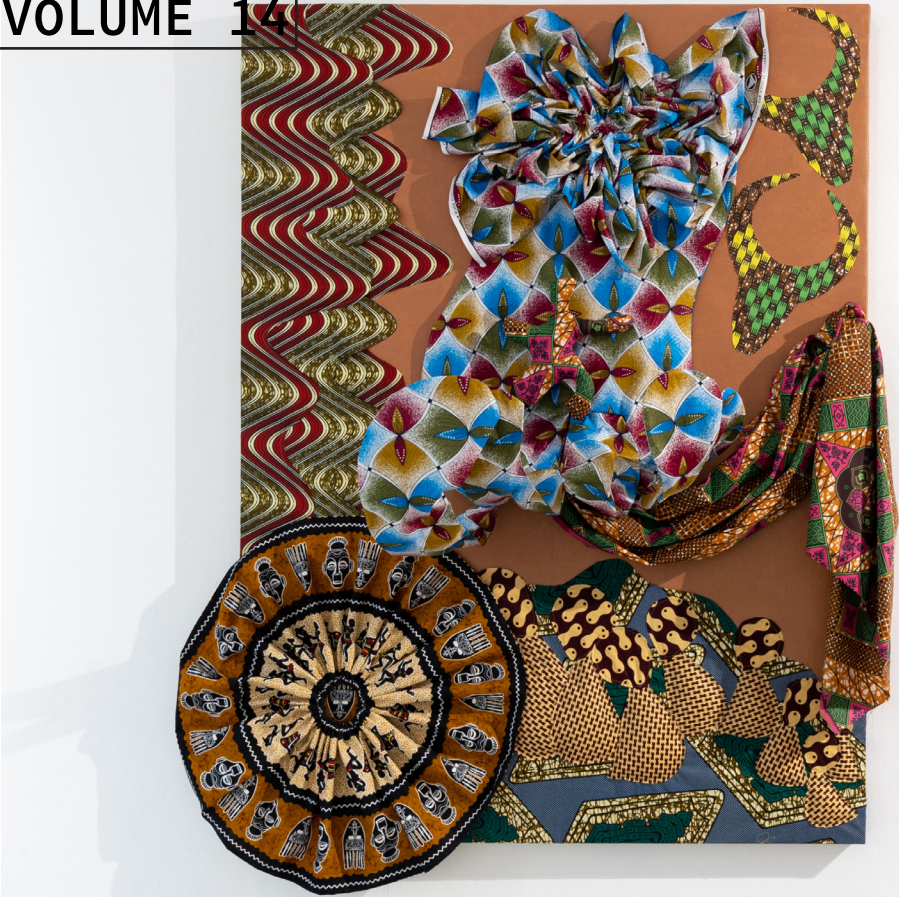
Batteries Not Included

a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end

Ascension of Abundance



Installation view, Ascension of Abundance curated by Natalie King.



within the palm of my land, Janine Ilya.

The land of a thousand hills

Rwanda is warmly known as the land of a thousand hills because of its hilly and mountainous physical natural beauty covering the land. These hills are echoed in the work ‘Within the palm of my land’ by Janine Ilya with the Kintenge cloth patterns moving up and down in various lines to mimic the presence of the hills of Rwanda.

within the palm of my Land (2023), is a large-scale mixed media piece on Kintenge cloth¹⁴, recycled fabrics, wire and acrylic paint on wood that portrays a history of diaspora and immigration. The textiles in the work act as a representation of the histories and stories that are embedded in Rwandan culture, this work piece depicts an open palm which simultaneously welcomes the immigrant home and releases them into the world.

Janine and I discuss the history and significance of these textiles and how the figurative aspect of the piece is important:

“Welcome home. The fingers in the piece being three dimensional. That was important to me because I wanted this sense of being held. The textiles that I use were brought from Rwanda to me. And so family members and friends have brought these textiles.. And so, even the fabrics themselves have had full lives and have had full experience with travel and displacement, or immigration.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Kintenge cloth is is an East African, West African and Central African piece of fabric similar to a sarong, often worn by women and wrapped around the chest or waist, over the head as a headscarf, or as a baby sling. Kitenges are made of colorful fabric that contains a variety of patterns and designs.

¹⁵ Janine Ilya in conversation with Natalie King

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Ascension of Abundance

Janine Ilya is a multi-disciplinary Canadian-Rwandan artist, based in Toronto her practice centers around capturing the subtleties of intimate moments and Black identity. She looks at how the concepts of intimacy and vulnerability – in relation to others and oneself – contribute to the process of identity formation, drawing from her memory, observations, and communities.

Ilya also draws inspiration from her mother, often working together or collaborating on the process of choosing textiles to include in the works:

“My relationship with textiles is very intimate because of my relationship with my mom. Growing up with her being a designer. Her being a seamstress. I’ve always been very interested in fabric and textiles. It’s interesting because I’m learning how to sew more recently in life. It also has to do with her own practice. She was trained to be a designer, so she had her own store in Rwanda as well. My relationship with textiles themselves is mostly embedded in what she has taught me about different types of fabric and how they lay on your body, how you have to care for them, how you have to wash and things like that. I also have this very strong part of my practice that allows the materials to guide me.”¹⁶ ➤

¹⁶ Ibid.



i cry in denim, Janine Ilya.



i cry in denim, Janine Ilya.

i cry in Denim (2023), reflects on the grief and the complexities of the artist’s journey of longing to be fully immersed in one’s culture, while also contemplating being reminded of how immigration and displacement coexist to produce a colourful and complex multi-layered identity. “When I do go back to Rwanda, like I know of course, there are different ways of interacting with people because of cultural elements and things like that, but it’s like almost I get to like tap into these parts of myself that I don’t get like that I don’t get here in Canada.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Janine Ilya in conversation with Natalie King

spirit stitches or windows to the future

Cedar-Eve is an Ojibway artist from Saugeen First Nation in Ontario. She was born and raised in Toronto and is currently based in Montreal as a full-time artist.

“All my work is done intuitively. So I didn’t really come in with the idea of turning it into a pillow, it was more like, I’m gonna sew a bunch of leather together and then draw onto it. I feel like the images that are drawn onto it were just like patterns that I had seen. They’re really detailed pen drawings. It’s a bunch of little tiny shapes that make up the main form of the body.”¹⁸

In Anishinaabe culture, our dreams play a significant role in decision making. We are taught that they are messages from our ancestors meant to guide us right where we are meant to be. Our dreams are our guides. In her series; **Spirit Stitch (2012)**, Cedar connects this dream world to their current reality.

Four pillows are centred in the gallery. Each pillow is made from deer hide, stitched together and stuffed with the artist’s hair. Spirits are drawn in various fine lines and the images flow over the hide, each pillow shaped like its respective spirit. Speaking to the physicality of the piece and having Cedars hair becoming integrated into the piece:

“ My DNA is embedded into this. After doing it, a bunch of these things came to light, but I wasn’t in the process of making. This is really from my spirit. Other than the piece being physically a pillow, obviously, you could sleep on them if you want to. Just that idea of messages from our ancestors, in the dream role, but then also, physically, through my hand and creating these things, because I’m not aware of it. Being able to make those pieces felt like it was connecting me so much more to my spirit realm and not just my physical self, learning more about my culture at the time, learning about how, how significant dream worlds are. They’re your guides. It’s a window into the future...”¹⁹

Spanning generations, time and physical geographical places, Ascension of Abundance is meant to hold space for these stories, bringing them to the forefront of the collective consciousness of viewers as an act of honour, of remembering. These stories are integral to telling the stories of who we are and where we come from, in abundance, forever.

■ Natalie King

¹⁸ Cedar Eve Peters in conversation with Natalie King
¹⁹ Ibid.

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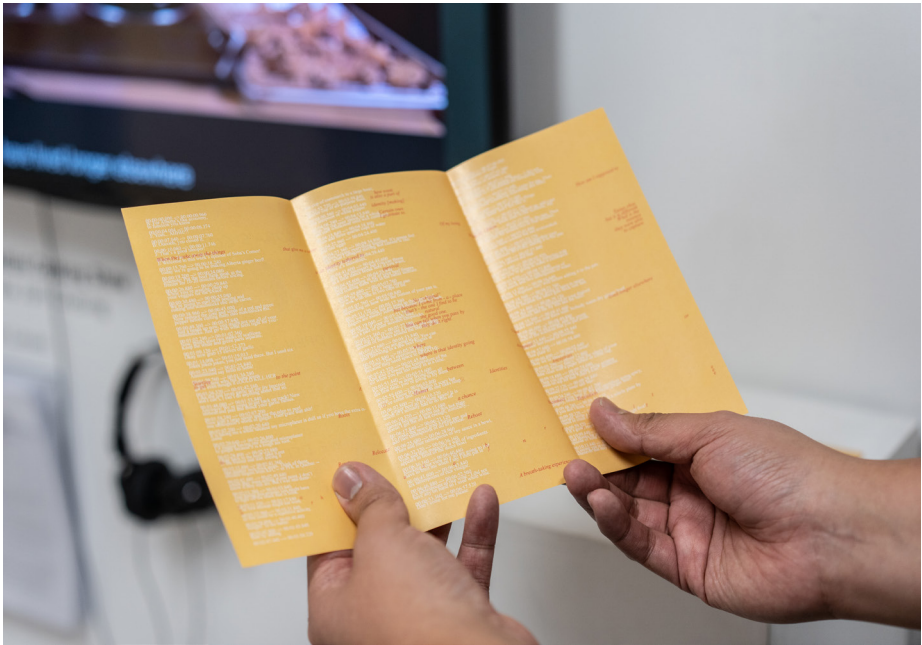
Flowing Still

Batteries Not Included

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Ascension of Abundance





Marcella Moliner

H.O.M.E

(Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)

Essay by Megan MacLaurin
September 2, 2022 - October 15, 2022

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott



I used to play with toys until an embarrassingly old age. The appeal of Polly Pockets and Build-a-Bear persisted into tweendom as peers adopted more worthwhile pursuits ([Sims](#), [Guitar Hero](#)). If I’m being honest, I still have a lot of toys stashed away, buried in my Dad’s basement somewhere. I haven’t had the heart to part with select stuffed animals and dolls despite successive moves and the resultant need to declutter. Why hold onto these things? They retain so much connection to an earlier time in my life that I have trouble accessing without these visual, tactile aids. These nostalgic objects are able to unlock and retether my childhood memories in a way even photographs can’t.

These nostalgic objects are able to unlock and retether my childhood memories in a way even photographs can’t.



Memories can also reside in places. Take for instance the feeling you might get when you drive past your old elementary school or childhood home. These architectural memory objects are so powerfully nostalgic that, despite being tangibly rooted in place, are able to transport us vast emotive and temporal distances.

Artist Marcella Moliner is similarly interested in keeping memory objects and has discovered that photogrammetry allows her to collect places as well. Photogrammetry is a 3D digital imaging technique that involves taking dozens, sometimes hundreds, of photos of a single object from all sides and using a software to stitch these images together, creating a 3D digital rendering. Since the rendering is created using photographs, this 3D model is often highly detailed with true-to-life colours and textures. Moliner became fascinated with this technique during her days as a teaching assistant for the Exploring 3D Digital Objects course at OCAD University. She fervently practiced this technique, scanning almost anything she could get her hands on. When examining her archive of 3D models she discovered a commonality shared by these disparate scans: they all reminded the artist of the people and places surrounding her when they were captured. Realizing the sentimental power of photogrammetry, the artist began scanning precious objects and places of personal significance: the cowboy boots she wore growing up, childhood drawings created by the artist and her sister, the fountain in her current neighbourhood, and the prison in her hometown. These memory objects are all contained within [H.O.M.E. \(Hoarding Old Memory Eggs\)](#), a work that is both a virtual cabinet of curiosities and a visual diary, created in Moliner’s effort to find comfort and connection during a period of loneliness and isolation.

In [H.O.M.E. \(Hoarding Old Memory Eggs\)](#), we follow the character of S.A.L. (which stands for Self-Afflicted Loathing), a creature composed of horse bones, shoes, knee pads, and other miscellania. Motivated by a desire to cure his loneliness through the accumulation of objects, S.A.L. is the embodiment of the artist’s own desire for love and companionship. “S.A.L. is the worst version of me,” Moliner states, he “feels entitled to belong, and to collect and own things... to keep people and consume relationships.” ➤

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott



In the work, S.A.L. seeks connection at any cost, leading him to an egg containing the work’s antagonist, B.E.C. (Beastly Elegant Creature), whose unusual appearance is modelled after Mike the Headless Chicken,¹ a subject of childhood fascination for the artist. After disturbing B.E.C., S.A.L. is confronted by this monster and is swallowed whole, a consequence of the character’s all-consuming desire for connection. Moliner doesn’t imagine this is the end for S.A.L. though. The title of the work—**H.O.M.E. (Hoarding Old Memory Eggs)**—suggests that this world encompasses many other eggs that might contain friendlier companions for S.A.L.

Eggs hold special significance for the artist, having grown up surrounded by chickens and ducks. Collecting eggs, incubating them, and watching them hatch connected the artist to the cycle of life, and the experience of finding unfertilized eggs left to rot taught her about vh eggs, the artist is harkening back to her childhood association of eggs with exploration, discovery, survival, and comfort. ➤

¹Mike the Headless Chicken (April 20, 1945 – March 17, 1947) was a chicken who survived being beheaded and famously lived without his head for 18 months.



Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott



the artist is harkening back to her childhood association of eggs with exploration, discovery, survival, and comfort. x

It took Moliner many months to produce this work. The countless hours she spent locating and scanning objects, and creating and editing the animation, allowed her to feel like the work itself was a companion. The artist poured herself into the work, creating its various components piece by piece over time. Some days she would test her animation chops by 3D animating technically challenging aspects, like the race car found zooming around the cowboy boots, whereas other days she would delve into the emotional content of the work, like when she scanned her grandmother’s obituary to form the paper boats. Moliner eventually viewed her process as “feeding” the work—it became something she was nurturing and growing with.

As the volume of objects in the work grew, so did its maximalist aesthetic. Moliner realized that any and all memory objects could be scanned and situated together virtually, uniting sentimental items and places that would never share physical proximity. The artist’s process allowed her to alter these objects as well, like the Hamtaro figurines she digitally enhanced, giving them vibrant hues and full lips. What results is a medley of both realistic and surreal elements, some things familiar and others aspirational. The sounds heard in the work are similarly multifaceted: a slow beat draws us in, and is overlaid with foley sounds that enhance our experience of the objects and activities in the animation, which are further described in Moliner’s haunting narration. The work is so maximalist that it even spills beyond the limits of the screen. In the artist’s thesis exhibition, the plants and furniture seen in the work were presented alongside the video, creating an environment that invites viewers into S.A.L.’s world.

What results is a medley of both realistic and surreal elements, some things familiar and others aspirational.

The artist has also made countless 3D prints of the yassified Hamtaros,² making these imaginary companions real. Moliner regularly offers these figurines as gifts to her loved ones, proliferating the sentimental items supposedly hoarded in the work. Just as my collection of toys connects me to my childhood memories, these critters become cherished memory objects and sources of joy for those in Moliner’s life. [H.O.M.E. \(Hoarding Old Memory Eggs\)](#), the animation and its material offshoots, allows the artist to find connection with others through nostalgic objects and affirms that maybe you’re never too old for toys.

■ Megan MacLaurin

² In an interview about the work, Moliner described the Hamtaros as being “yassified.” Yassification is an internet slang term referring to the process of making something better by making it queerer.



Marcella Moliner

Snack Witch

Maddie Lychek

James Knott

Snack Witch aka Joni Cheung

Soba's Corner:
A Chinese-Canadian Cooking Show

Essay by Ramolen Laruan
January 13, 2023 – February 25, 2023

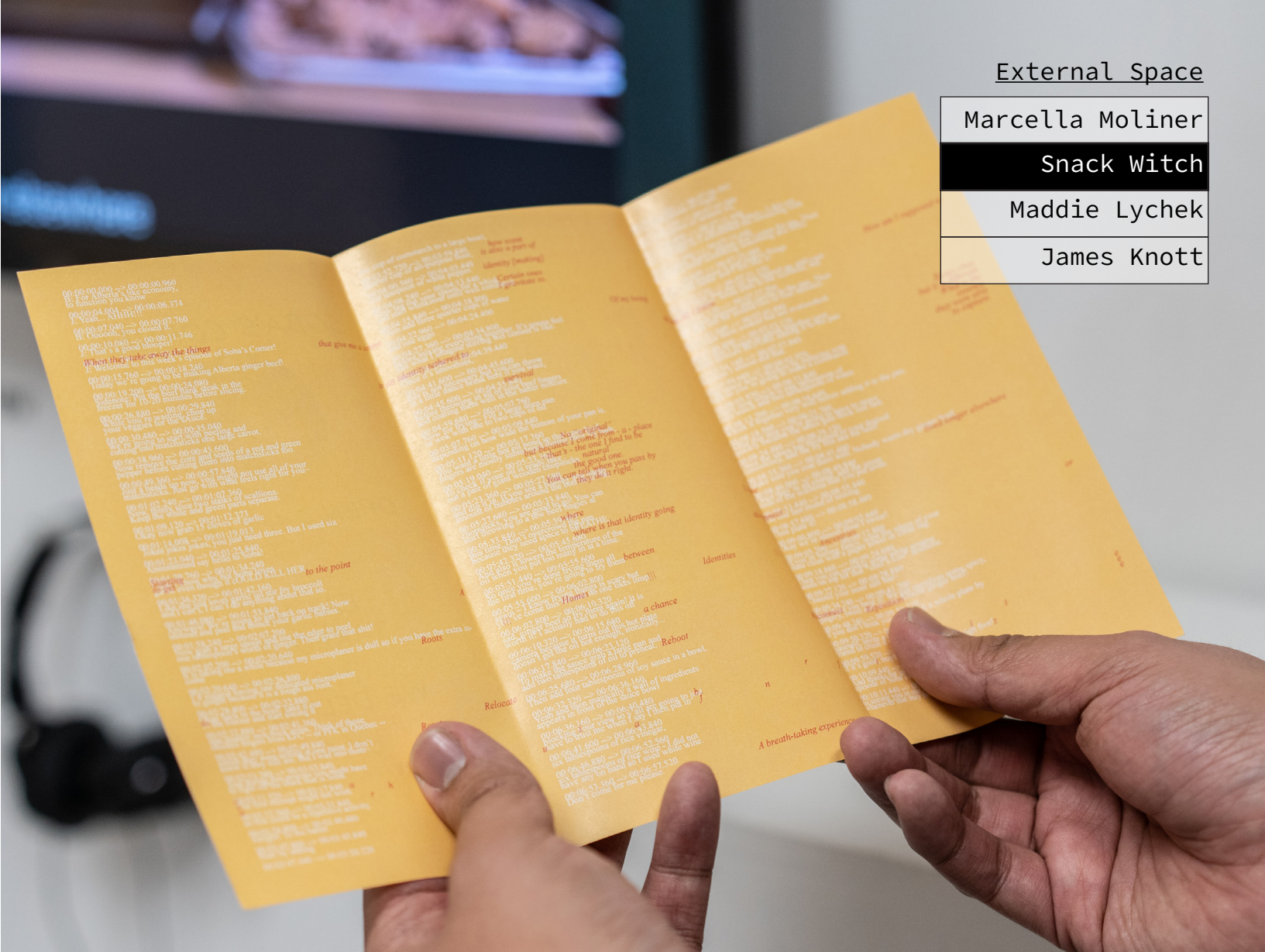
One of the most memorable class experiences I had while completing my Undergraduate degree was when in my third year Cultural Studies class, each student was tasked to bring or cook food that “speaks to their identity in some shape or form.”

Eager to share a comfort food, I decided to bring **arroz caldo** because it was a dish that made use of classic Filipino ingredients that were easily adaptable in the case that I do not find the Asian ingredients needed and must substitute them with the narrowed (or I should say “specific”) produce section of the nearest grocery store. **Arroz caldo** is a rice soup that is mixed with garlic, ginger, and chicken; it is finished with boiled egg, scallions, and a squeeze of calamansi on top. *I could talk about migration and adaptability*, I thought.

I could talk about migration and adaptability, I thought. x

When I was young, I accompanied my grandmother to church every Sunday because after the service finished, she would take me to the **palengke** for some **arroz caldo**, always with a boiled egg on top. To be frank, this sentimentality was enough reason for me to share this dish. Yet the more I thought about the dish, I realized that **arroz caldo** was personally sentimental and a dish that reflects the Philippine’s national identity. I knew that in the name, “arroz” means “rice” and “caldo” means “broth” in Spanish, so it must have been influenced by over four-hundred years of Spanish rule over the Philippines. At the time, I was making it in Kingston, Ontario for a predominantly white and English-speaking class. My geographic location’s limited access to Asian ingredients prompted me to use lemon instead of calamansi and skip on the scallions; and since it was most people’s introduction to Filipino food, I used a lot less ginger that I would have liked. Is my **arroz caldo** authentically Filipino?

This very act of adaptation felt, to me, one of the most intrinsic elements of identity and culture. It is in the act of overcoming obstacles, of continuous revisions, and, often, with delusional vigor that the fantasy of the golden sour Mediterranean lemon no longer mimics but is transformed into the sweet vibrant tart of a small and mighty calamansi fruit undeniably indigenous to the tropics of the Philippines. That is, perhaps carrying on our respective cultures is not in whether we possess the correct ingredients or act on traditional methods, but that it carries on slightly altered, slightly less spicy, but that it carries across land, water, and generations of i-don’t-know-what-my-grand-mother-put-inhere-but-let-me-try grandchildren. What will people in the diaspora create if we keep waiting for the right place, the right temperature, the right ingredients, the right tools, or the right circumstance to prove some sort of authenticity—and in extension—worth?



External Space
Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott

Unbeknownst to my minimal understanding of countless occupations by different nations in the Philippines, a classmate of Chinese descent tastes my arroz caldo soup and yelps, “Mmm just like *congee*!”

The first episode of **Soba’s Corner** starts with “It’s in all Chinese restaurants here so it must be legitimately Chinese” subtitled on a video of Joni Cheung, also known as Snackwitch. In the show, named after Cheung’s sous-chef, their cat Soba, Cheung is in their kitchen with the camera focused on the kitchen counter and Cheung’s hands. At the corner is Soba, noodling in and out of the frame. Cheung cites “Binging with Babish” as an inspiration for the format of the video. Like in the internet’s most popular food videos with a headless host, Cheung seldom shows their face; instead, they center what they are doing in front of the camera. They are cooking Montréal peanut butter dumplings while a voice over of their voice recites the preparation methods. Peanut butter dumplings are only found in Chinese restaurant menus in Montréal, while the Alberta ginger beef introduced in the second episode is the pride of Chinese-Albertan establishments. Both dishes include nontraditional Chinese tastes such as peanut butter and sweet sauce on beef. Neither dish is known to Chinese people in China and known only to some Chinese in Canada. ➤

[Soba's Corner](#) came out of a transformative time in Cheung's life, having just moved to Montréal from Vancouver to pursue their MFA at Concordia University. Shortly after, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the loss of their studio and a loss of connection to the outside world. They had access to a camera, wifi, and grocery delivery. Without a studio, there was no longer a need to purchase sculpture supplies; instead, the budget for art supplies was allocated on feeding themselves well. In [Soba's Corner](#), Cheung invites classmates and fellow artists to tell them about a Chinese-Canadian staple dish from their province and their memories of it while they cook the dish "in real-time"— Peanut Butter Dumplings from Montréal and Ginger Beef from Alberta. Through food, [Soba's corner](#) aims attention towards the communal aspect of food sharing that fosters care and generosity as it questions the strict notions of authenticity within communities. In pursuit of survival, their practice adapted to different ways of presenting their work, reimagining the extent in which we consider food as physical nourishment; and its origins and traditions, expanding ways to collaborate, share and find connections to the histories and futures of food.

[Soba's Corner](#) can be found on YouTube, an artistically unconventional and democratic space for the public to come across art throughout its endless library of content. Cheung welcomes surprise visitors, interrupted in their everyday doomscroll —or perhaps commuters and passersby of Xpace's exterior space. Through video and disseminated on the internet, [Soba's Corner](#) is a disguised recipe vlog that corrupts the ways in which we expose ourselves to new food, and therefore, new cultures. Joni invites further curiosity through seemingly random subtitles and 26-page recipes that inform accidental audiences that this particular cooking show offers much more beyond the how-to videos.



“Food brings me joy,” says Cheung about their project. In an Asian household, food is loving, food is generosity, food is memory. “We did not talk about things a lot, but we always had meals together and that was where conversations happened. A way of showing care and apologizing.” Apology morphs into a bowl of freshly cut fruits delivered to your room, your favourite dish for dinner, or even going to your favourite restaurant. The tenderness imbued in Asian dining tables is carried by Cheung across their new community in Montréal and extends to their artistic practice. [Soba's Corner](#) provokes emotional thirst and physical hunger to remember all of that which gives us joy and pain as peoples living within diasporic communities. To share a meal—irl or pre-scheduled online—especially during the on-going pandemic, is an extraordinary reciprocal relationship of trust, hope, and devout friendship that was once, without caution, unremarkable. ➤

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott



Canadian Cooking Show
aka Joni Cheung

en Laruan



Xspace Cultural Centre
2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M5S 2W5
416-849-2966
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xspace.info

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott



The recipe videos are filmed during conversations with the guests; Joni later transcribes and slates these conversations as the written recipe of the dish. Whilst the videos show how to create the recipes, the interviews provide personal, social, political, and economic context to the dishes over a conversation with their guest. Host and guests chew on present relations between Canadian provinces; hyphenated Chinese-Canadian-CanadianChinese dishes and identity; family immigration stories; family food and dining traditions; food court and oil sands; of authenticity and originality in having just the right ingredients, the correct brand, the correct crispiness. These conversations do not attempt to historicize the dishes, instead they reminisce on memories created around the food. These are the texts that appear as subtitles on the video:

all those feelings were coming back
feelings of familiarity, of comfort
all at once

it might not be
“authentic”
“traditional”
but it means something
to me,

The text floats across the screen, almost a distraction from the images and sound. They are not in sync. Although it might seem like it at first, this is not a YouTube glitch. Cheung intentionally withholds information by creating added layers in which the viewer might decide to move further and willingly seeks what the texts are and where they came from by clicking on the links in the description. [Soba’s Corner](#) demands a slow watch, a rewatch, seeding doubt to which aspect of the video and our senses can be trusted. Neither text, image, sound, nor recipe is more important than the other; they are treated equally, demanding a horizontal-looking contrary to how our attention is fought over online. With at least three different timelines in the video, overlapping stories exist simultaneously, diminishing capitalist notions of originality, a single truth, and sole authorship.



Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott

One may stumble on [Soba’s Corner](#) on Youtube, a gallery space, or a monitor in a public site, yet such accidental encounters, nevertheless, encourage that the audience must mutually share their time to begin peeling the layers of complexity in the work. Cheung allows the viewer to decide whether to dig deeper on their own accord. If this exchange is accepted, the viewer might start to recognize the variety of approaches utilized in peeling back layers of generational, colonial, imperial, and capitalist legacy through stories of and around food. Cheung does not ration. Sustenance is afforded beyond ingredient lists, preparation methods, and traditional dishes. The promise of [Soba’s Corner](#) is that you find nourishment in generosity.

[Soba’s Corner](#) explores notions of authenticity through a multi-layered experience with image, text, sound, and movement while staying committed to the intimacy of what it means to be in relation. The experience is akin to seeing your first Magritte painting but with sizzling beef, sticky dumplings, clanking chopsticks, and sifting flour instead of a pipe that is not a pipe. In Rene Magritte’s [Treachery of Images](#), viewers might latch on the image depicted or the text written. However, Magritte defies rational thought because it was never about the text. Not the image either. Through this glitch, Magritte explores how our mind easily accepts what is perceived through the sign, signified, and signifier, and encourages viewers to question reality itself. In [Soba’s Corner](#), Cheung layers identity, food, geography, and memories that their relationships flutter beyond our understanding of signs such as “Chinese”, “Canada”, “authentic”, “traditional”, “recipe”, and even “art”. Joni Cheung’s work challenges existing conditions that do not and cannot hold a complexity of flavours carrying thousands of years of history. Akin to Magritte’s pipe and my [arroz caldo](#), if the food made in [Soba’s Corner](#) cannot be described using these words, then what are they?

■ Ramolen Laruan

Maddie Lychek

please take separate bite
and chew before swallowing

Essay by Racquel Rowe
March 10, 2023 - April 22, 2023

Belly Full of Jelly

Chew, swallow, repeat. Chew, swallow, repeat. Chew, swallow, repeat.

As [please take separate bite and chew before swallowing](#) begins, we’re presented with a closely cropped image featuring the bottom half of Lychek’s face. She’s positioned against a yellow backdrop, making the setting nondescript. The ambiguity of person, and place, and context, is broken with the appearance of the lychee jellies. The jelly cups themselves offer fragmented bits of information about brand, flavour, and origin; only fully revealing themselves to those already familiar with this snack. Maddie lifts a single jelly cup to her mouth, sucking it in with one swoop, sometimes more, chewing, chewing, and swallowing. As this pattern continues and the video progresses, losing count of the number of jellies the artist has consumed we see her begin to slow down, a visible reduction in the speed of her chewing as she either begins to feel full, and or sick.

The exhibition title is derived from a warning on the plastic seal on the candy packaging themselves “please take a bite and chew before swallowing”. A phrase many of us were likely all too familiar with, a phrase imbued with care and caution as eager mouths sucked down jelly candies.

Maddie Lychek is an interdisciplinary artist of mixed Filipino and white ancestry. Her practice revolves around performance, video, and curatorial projects. Her video [please take separate bite and chew before swallowing](#), centering on jin jin lychee coconut candy jellies, is part of a video series that explores the continuity and nuances present in her multicultural upbringing and reflections on the Filipino diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).



When chatting with Maddie about the inspiration behind the work I was curious about her history with said candy and asked if she grew up eating them. She confirmed she’s eaten them ever since she was little and that her family would get them whenever they went to a Chinese or Asian grocery store in Richmond Hill or Markham. She recalled the way her mother would cut them up for her younger siblings and gave them each only a few to avoid a sugar rush. “These restrictions inspired me to eat as many as I could, it felt very foreign to buy multiple jars just for myself and for my consumption alone. I guess you always hear your moms voice at the back of your head even through adulthood.”¹ ➤

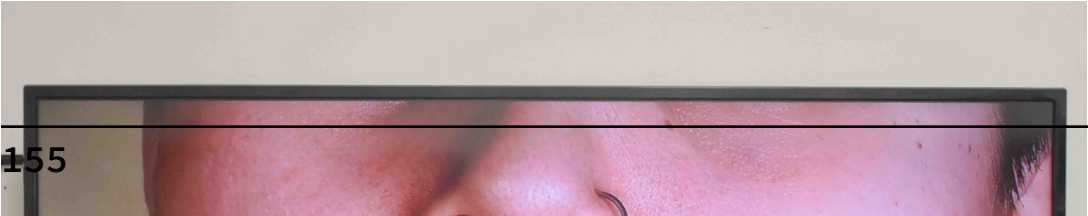
¹ Interview with Maddie Lychek, please take separate bite and chew before swallowing, 2023.

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott

Lychee coconut jelly candies here don’t just represent a defiant childhood act but a living and ongoing understanding of community and cross-cultural diasporas that take place in so called Canada, and more specifically southwestern Ontario. When you live in southern Ontario depending on where you are, these types of jelly candies can be found in many places, corner stores, Asian diasporic grocery stores and often in the ethnic or international aisle at big box stores like Walmart.

As Maddie talked more about her relationship to diasporic cuisines and practices during our conversation, I realized geography played a significant role. “Up until I was 10, I lived in a predominantly Chinese neighborhood and community. The places that we frequented when I was growing up were always Chinese, and I felt very at home within Chinese establishments because of this. When I was 10 or so we moved to a different part of Richmond Hill that was predominantly white. We would have to drive fifteen minutes south to where we used to live to access the cuisines we were used to.”²

Maddie evokes a sense of excitement and discomfort for the viewer. Much of her practice is often inspired by queer identities, the abject, and subverting dominant gazes. This work challenges the boundaries we use to categorize the world around us such as, inside/outside and the body/separate from the body as the jellies evoke both entities within and outside of ourselves.



² Interview with Maddie Lychek, please take separate bite and chew before swallowing, 2023.



In [Queer Phenomenology](#) Sara Ahmed reckons with orientation, and moments of disorientation, in relation to queer existence. Part of the experience of disorientation is the “giddiness and nausea” that fills our bodies. Ahmed suggests that if we stay with such moments, that we might achieve a different orientation toward them; that such moments may be the “source of vitality as well as giddiness.”³

I consider Maddie both a friend and a collaborator and it’s always a privilege to watch her perform. During production of this series, I watched as Maddie set up for the performance, lights, camera backdrop, ready to go. She began to pre-emptively open the lychee jellies so she could start eating them throughout the performance with no delays. Dressed casually she sat down, mic’d up and looking forward to perhaps fulfilling a childhood wish. The sweet smell of the jellies filled the air as she began to consume them. Behind the scenes you could see how ambitious she was with the amount she intended to eat. “I was excited to challenge my body and the process was definitely demanding.”⁴

When asked how the artist felt after the performance for the video, words of ill came to mention, and not being able to consume anymore of the jellies she had once loved for the foreseeable future. (She had some a day or two later)

External Space
Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott

³ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Duke University Press: London) 2006 pg.4

⁴ Interview with Maddie Lychek, please take separate bite and chew before swallowing, 2023.



James Knott

AN EFFIGY (TO THE GIRL OF OUR DREAMS)

Essay by Delilah Rosier
May 26, 2023 - July 8, 2023

Marcella Moliner
Snack Witch
Maddie Lychek
James Knott

Beat you to it

[An Effigy \(to the Girl of Our Dreams\) \(2021\)](#) opens with the rattle and hum of a 16millimeter projector. The title emerges shakily, in white handwritten type. Fuchsia pink parted lips appear inside a projected box to deliver an acapella cabaret recitation, sultry and slowed, of the opening lines to Irish punk group The Undertone’s wet dream anthem [Teenage Kicks](#):

[Are teenage dreams so hard to beat?!](#)

Across the following three movements, James Knott enacts a cast of characters. Without missing any beats, English post-punk band The Pop Group’s 1979 funky, bouncy, disco banger [She Is Beyond Good and Evil](#) plays as The Girl of Our Dreams throws her arms behind her head and gazes at the viewer in burlesque stance. Fitted in black lingerie: black bra, black garters, and hoes with lacey tops, she poses for us. “My little girl was born on a ray of sound!”¹ proclaims the Male Protagonist. In shades, white dress shirt buttoned nearly all the way down, and black tie loosened, his white-gloved hands grooving, clutching, reaching. He is occasionally doubled, for the better, to pipe in with his own backup vocals. He flirts, clutches, and reaches, pointing, aiming, for her, for us.

In tune with the punching guitar, The Girl of Our Dreams is tripled, double exposed. She’s stolen his fit and styled it like a schoolgirl ripped from the dusty cardboard cover of a VHS porno. With Knott’s insertion of themself into the role of The Girl of Our Dreams, they practice a sort of consensual, self-fetishization, beating them (us?) to it, and offer the viewer a queered reimagining, an anachronistic rendition, a correction, a revisitation, an amendment.

Through the thoughtful appropriation of punk anthems that uphold heteronormative, infantilizing, misogynist, and sometimes pedophilic narratives, what emerges is a queering of traditional punk values that pays homage to and plucks from the aesthetics and politics of the past. >



what emerges is a queering of traditional punk values [...] the aesthetics and politics of the past.

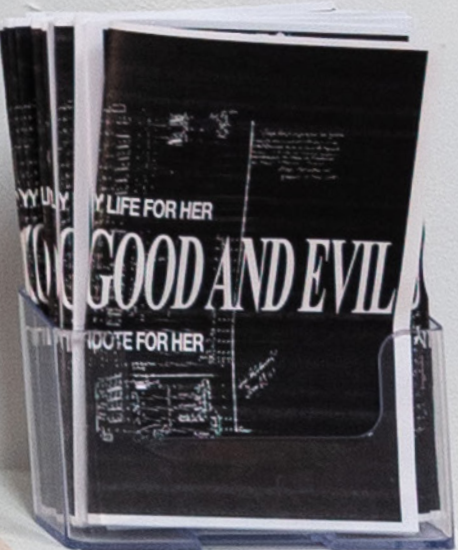


Marcella Moliner

Snack Witch

Maddie Lychek

James Knott



**AN EFFIGY
(TO THE GIRL OF OUR DREAMS)**
James Knott

The second act, [The Rite of Spring](#), with choreography borrowed from German dancer and choreographer Pina Bosh provides a temporary jolt in gesture. We hear a crackle before those white gloves reappear, isolated from The Protagonist, superimposed, and seemingly massaging the shoulders of the sacrificial dancing virgin, garbed in red; marked, chosen.

She who is lurching, clenching her gut in a fight, never peers behind her at the men who are dirty like Pina would have liked it, coveting, pining after her, with a longing like The Undertones. “How would you dance if you knew you were going to die?” Bausch asked her dancers while creating [The Rite of Spring](#) in 1975.² Serendipitously, I stumbled upon a review of the premiere of Bausch’s work [Água](#) in a [New Yorker](#) that I haphazardly plucked from a pile. Of Bausch’s process, the author writes:

“...she asked her dancers questions—“What do you do, in order to be loved?” was one—and they responded with stories and movements from their own lives and imaginations. With them, she would elaborate, cut, compile, and integrate the material into a dance.”³

This methodology of assemblage is mirrored in [An Effigy \(to the Girl of Our Dreams\)](#), where, by collaging and compiling references Knott generates a nuanced critique of subcultural history, ripe with disidentifications. Who (what) was (is) included and excluded? “If you know, you know,”⁴ James tells me, while we stare at the blank screen soon to be displaying the piece.

For the final act, Russian composer Igor Stravinsky’s [The Rite of Spring](#) accelerates, then stops. Our shaded Protagonist takes a seat, rolls up his sleeves, finds the beat, and nonchalantly starts the motor, miming like Chaplin. Much like the road ahead, his movements are mesmerizing, hypnotizing, enough to make you nod in and out. Our Girl is depicted from the back, decapitated and swaying to the French cover band Nouvelle Vague’s 2004 “Psyche”, a cover of Killing Joke’s 1980 song. She is everywhere/nowhere. Her white body, lingeried and wriggling. Here comes her head! Floating, painted for the Gods for a lipsticked lip-sync. She is evoking the Warholian screen test, though, swap the boring, unflinching gaze of Edie Sedgwick,⁵ stunned, silent, and blinking for a soft punk queen with hard edges, a master of the lip jitter and the eye roll. Winnipeg icons, [The Guess Who](#),⁶ play us out: “She didn’t know what she was headed for/and when I found what she was headed for/it was too late.”⁷

Knott asks us how we are complicit.⁸ Should we pull over that Wet Dream King on the lamb, sheets still soaked all thanks to The Girl in His Dreams to check his trunks? He keeps going, haunted. She’s undone, haunting. Who do we become once undone?

² Vanessa Manko, “Pina Bausch’s The Rite of Spring,” The Paris Review, October 11, 2017, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/10/11/pina-bauschs-rite-spring/>.

³ Jennifer Homans, “The Afterlife of Pina Bausch,” The New Yorker, March 20, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/27/the-afterlife-of-pina-bausch>.

⁴ James Knott in conversation with the author, May 2023.

⁵ Edith Minturn Sedgwick Post was an American It Girl, model, actress and muse of Andy Warhol.

⁶ See: http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/90/musicalhistory.shtml

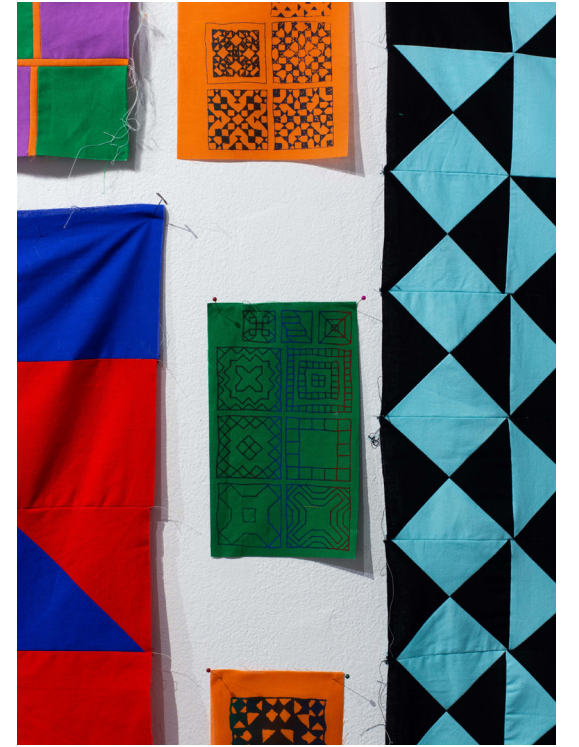
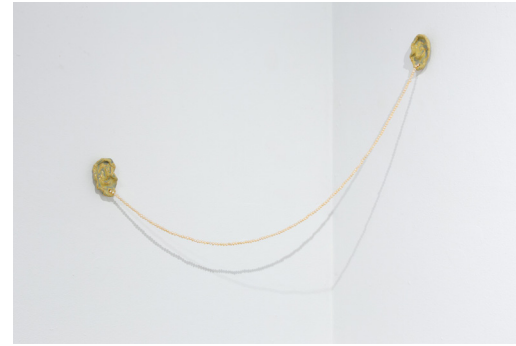
⁷ “She’s Come Undone,” Genius, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://genius.com/22615399>

⁸ “An Effigy (to the Girl of Our Dreams),” Xpace Cultural Centre, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://www.xpace.info/exhibition-event/an-effigy-to-the-girl-of-our-dreams/>.



Troubling commodification, identification, lust, and desire, Knott’s provocative piece oozes with sexiness and joy all the while interrogating the underbelly of the scenes and in-betweens.

Keeping with the tradition of counterculture, Knott presents patrons with a fanzine to savour for later. Peering at the full-colour prototype that gives facsimile Xerox (how’s that for a name of a punk band!) I imagine what she could become had her inks been subjected to the copier, to degrade and erode. Self-commodification, all packaged and printed for consumption. A piece of her to be remembered by; wanna hold her/wanna hold her tight.





The Pleasure of Patterns

Carson Van Vliet
Essay by Alexander Rondeau

September 2, 2022 - October 15, 2022

Carson Van Vliet
Sasha – Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez

Stitch, fold, slide, loop, thread, curl, stitch, close, loop, stitch, pull, pleat, furl. Stitch, fold, slide, loop, thread, curl, stitch, close, loop, stitch, pull, pleat, furl.

Tedious, repetitive, detail oriented work.

Stitch, fold, slide, loop, thread, curl, stitch, close, loop, stitch, pull, pleat, furl, goes Carson Van Vliet, artist in residence in the Project Space at Xspace Cultural Centre in preparation for his first solo show: [The Pleasure of Patterns](#). Van Vliet, a recent graduate of the Painting and Drawing program at OCAD University, concerns himself with the slow, durational practice of knitting and quilting. While perhaps not something immediately conjuring pleasure, Van Vliet’s quirky approach to textile mark-making and pattern making offers itself as a joy-filled, process-based meditation on craft, kitsch, and coziness. Here, the motif of the quilt is figured in drawings, screenprints, ceramics, and handmade quilts.

Initially pragmatic objects to keep warm, quilts themselves both hold and narrate polysemic histories as lyrical, archival storytelling tools of black history, and as memorializations of persons deceased across the AIDS Memorial Quilt.¹ Contemporaneously, ‘barn quilts’ are often used as adornments on barns and farmsteads as markers of ‘rural pride’ amassing together as the barn quilt trail: a network of agrarian homes proudly displaying their mounted barn quilts for road-trippers to admire. First practical, then developing into a craft and eventually involving into narrative folk art, quilts eventually gained their footing in the contemporary art ethos during the 1960’s and 70’s as championed by feminist artists such as Miriam Schapiro. To many, quilts may hold sentimental memories, perhaps reminding us of our mothers, our mothers’ mothers, and their mothers before them. Personally, I think of my great-grandmother on her farm in rural Northeastern Ontario making quilts out of flower and potato sacks to keep warm during the unforgiving Northern winters. ➤

¹ Originally conceived in 1985, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is a massive 54 ton quilt commemorating the many lives lost to the ongoing AIDS epidemic. Each of the estimated 50,000 panels measures 3’x7’ – approximately the size of a grave – and each panel is made in memory by the friends, families, and lovers of the deceased.



Van Vliet’s quirky approach to textile mark-making and pattern making offers itself as a joy-filled, process-based meditation on craft, kitsch, and coziness.

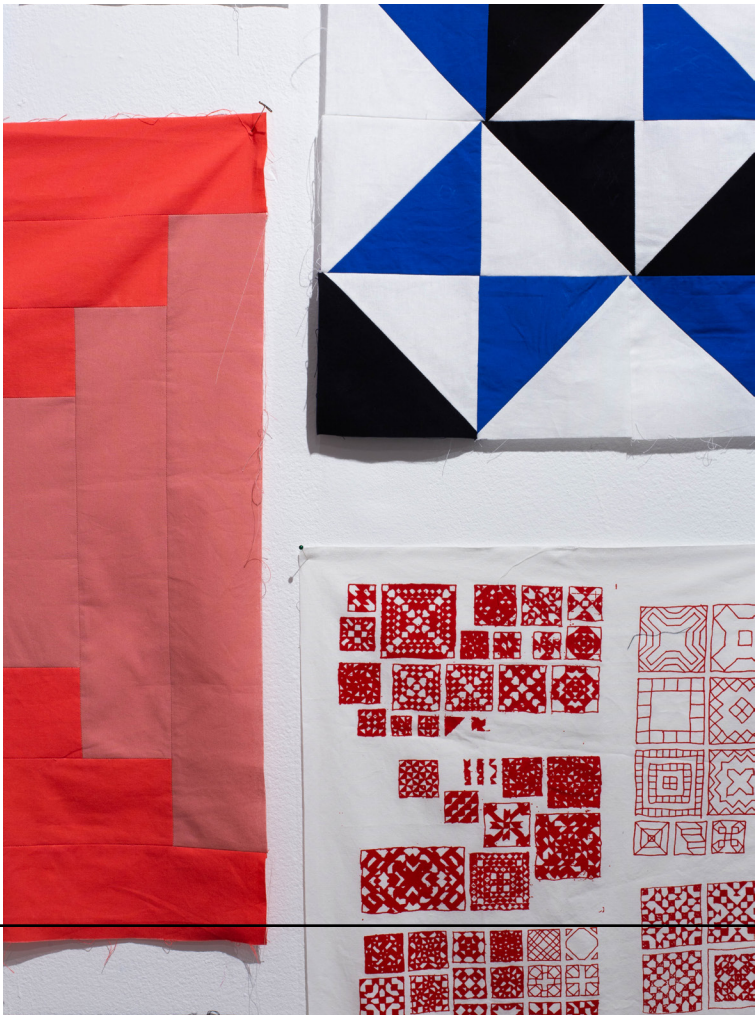
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Whereas Van Vliet’s inspiration, Miriam Schapiro, was known for blurring the disciplinary lines between craft and fine arts, Van Vliet has decisively expressed interest in working within the fold of folk arts. A lifelong knitter as taught by his grandmother, Van Vliet recalls being questioned for knitting in places like school or in public transit with remarks like “I’ve never seen a guy knit before” evidencing the very gendered cultural expectations of this craft. Undeterred,

The Pleasure of Patterns playfully presents the artist’s burgeoning expansion of his knitting practice into the world of quilting and ceramics. The presented pieces are objects of transference and records of time: like a score tenderly unfolding through a hazily lit living room, a grandmother’s wrinkled hands, or the yellowed, furling edges of a handwritten recipe sheet. There’s a unifying praxis of tenderness throughout Van Vliet’s pieces imbuing them with a sense of lived-in-ness. Similarly, Van Vliet’s sketchbooks piled atop a plinth in the gallery beckon to a level of thoughtfulness and meditation in the fabrication of these pieces underscoring a layer of preparation, just like following a detailed recipe or a stitching pattern — this is process work.



Where Van Vliet aberrates from the otherwise structured nature of craft is in the surprising fluidity of the patterns he has overlaid atop his ceramic pieces, and the playfulness in the vibrant colour choices in his quilts. Van Vliet refers to this methodological approach by the exhibition’s namesake: “the pleasure of patterns”. In coining ‘the pleasure of patterns’, Van Vliet references his inspirations such as Alexander Girard and Faith Ringgold for their evocative use of colour and design in pattern making that imbue their craftwork with joy and reverence through their creative configuration of the quilt as a site of play and storytelling. Girard famously mixed mid-century modernist design principles with the whimsy of folk art, and is celebrated for his then bold and pioneering colourful contributions to interior design. The lyrical, narrative driven mixedmedia quilt pieces Ringgold is best known for helped to politicize craft and quilting as a productive modality for black feminist discourse in the 1980’s. Ringgold’s celebratory quilts invigorated practices of quilt-making with passion and fervor. Using Girard and Ringgold as inspirations to fray from the traditionally formulaic grids of quilting, a pleasure driven pattern making approach particularly differentiates Van Vliet’s playful style as opposed to the rigid, modernist form of the grid as he prefers fluid asymmetrical compositions with clashing colours at odds with the expected disciplined attention to form in quilt making. This colourful, quirky, and lighthearted aesthetic and methodological approach to fabrication reveals Van Vliet’s fascination with all things kitsch. ➤



Project Space
Carson Van Vliet
Sasha – Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez



As anachronistic objects, the temporal slippages of quilt-making in 2022 inherently leans into a kitschy aesthetic whereby quilts delineate the otherwise contemporary artistic and design principles that would normally adorn the white walls of a gallery. The antimodernist underpinnings of anachronistic quilt-making in [The Pleasure of Patterns](#) prompts interesting questions for such a young artist showing works in Toronto: is his artistic trajectory aligned with the canonical feminist artists who worked to blur the distinctions of craft and contemporary art? Or, does this intergenerationally transferred skill position him in the peripheries of art history amongst folk artists, the fall fair showcases, and the invisible labour of our grandmothers? When asked, Van Vliet interestingly positions himself as indebted to both, but adherent to neither. Rather, it is in the gooey, undetermined middle ground that his work emerges. To Van Vliet, there is a simultaneous lack of preciousness to these artworks in that he anticipates using them for their material purposes (curling up on the couch wrapped in a quilt), and an immense affective charge where in these objects feels homey and deeply sentimental.



To Van Vliet, there is a simultaneous lack of preciousness to these artworks in that he anticipates using them for their material purposes

[The Pleasure of Patterns](#) doesn't conjure the typical mysticism of an artistic figure working in solitude in a messy studio powered by divination and transcended vision, instead, these pieces are made in the domestic environment of which they emerge and ultimately serve. Blurring the lines between the extraordinary — fantastic, visionary, artistic — and extra ordinary — quotidian, practical, familiar — the quilts are a modest and thoughtful offering of a warm embrace. When brought together, Van Vliet's ceramics, drawings, screenprints, and quilts reveal a playful foray into the artist's personal obsession with quilts and their bizarre, multi-faceted cultural and historical usages and significance.

■ Alexander Rondeau

Project Space
Carson Van Vliet
Sasha – Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez



Carson Van Vliet

Sasha - Evgenia

Jill Smith

Anahi Gonzalez

What
Has
Hardened
Will
Never
Win

:/ ' /

Sasha Shevchenko and Evgenia Mikhaylova
Exhibition Essay by Danica Pinteric

January 13, 2023 – February 25, 2023

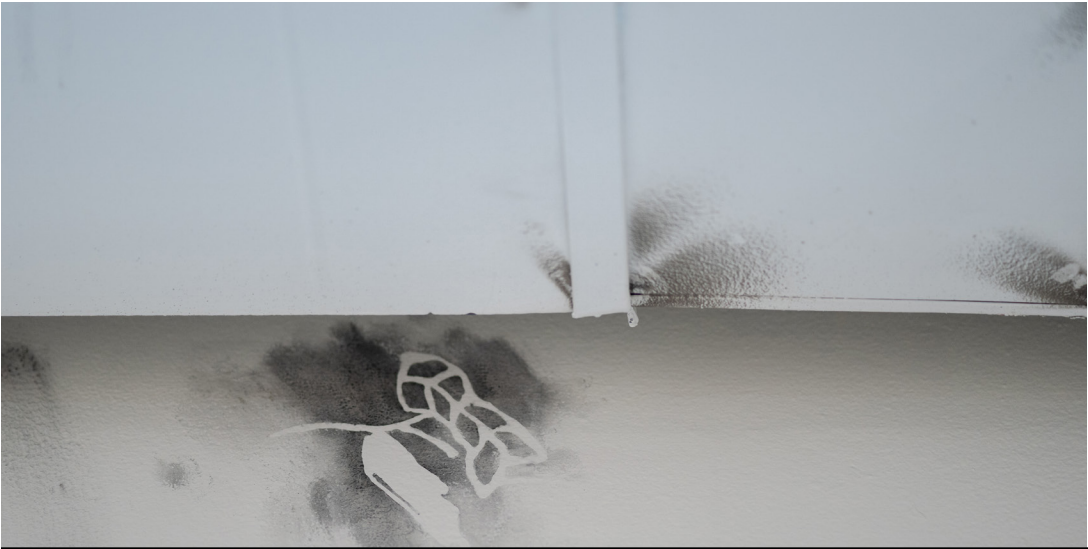
One of the burning riddles of our time lies in the question of how to convey existential risks to communities of the future. The inflated ego of the present routinely casts a shadow over what is yet to come, despite its inevitability and obvious vulnerability. Nuclear activities of the late twentieth-century illustrate this problem more clearly. Researchers around the world have been grappling with how to effectively convey the risk of contaminated nuclear sites to our descendants.

Is it possible to care for and protect civilizations we cannot yet imagine? In 1993, the US Government’s Sandia Laboratories released a report addressing this existential challenge.¹ The report’s various committees studied known catastrophes and civilization collapses, speculating retroactively about how this knowledge has reached us in the present. Proposals for long-term notices of warning are, at their core, theories of communication although they typically do not rely on language as a primary methodology. The report generated ideas ranging from pictograms, architectural and biochemical interventions, and a variety of ‘gestalt’ messages—messages where the total meaning is greater than the sum of its individual parts—in the service of relaying the vital information of nuclear threat.

The Sandia report is coated in a rhetoric of responsibility and fairness, while somehow managing to evade dimensions of culpability or apology. Despite this omission, what is astounding about this project is its emphasis on epistemological systems outside of language as the most critical for survival. The Sandia report is a testament to human creativity and compartmentalization that epitomizes a matrix of human impulses, from destructive tendencies to care and empathy. ➤



Proposals for long-term notices of warning are [...] theories of communication although they typically do not rely on language as a primary methodology.



¹ Kathleen M. Trauth, Stephen C. Hora, and Robert V. Guzowski, “SAND 92-1382: Expert Judgment on Markers to Deter Inadvertent Human Intrusion into the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant,” (United States Department of Energy, November 1993), https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1279277/m2/1/high_res_d/10117359.pdf.





What can we learn about ourselves when we consider communication outside of language? Visual art is often discussed as its own kind of language dwelling in the domain of representation and affect that can be differently “read.” Installation takes form in a myriad of ways, but it is most effective when its audiences can register it somatically. Across the landscape of artistic mediums, it is perhaps the most effective for developing ‘gestalt’ messages.

[What Has Hardened Will Never Win](#) yields a material snapshot of a longform conversation between Sasha Shevchenko and Evgenia Mikhaylova. The exhibition extends the field of the artwork to its total environment with a volume of iterative, fluid, and site-specific gestures manifesting in a thoughtful arrangement of smaller fragments. Their diffuse and composite approach reflects a mutual commitment to the multitude by creating an openended and textural environment where audiences are encouraged to reflect on their individual responses to the culmination of works. Entwined in the project space at Xpace, Shevchenko and Mikhaylova’s artworks nurture a propositional playground that celebrates the human capacity for nuance and plurality in our epistemological strategies.

Evgenia Mikhaylova’s works probe the ways we construct meaning in and outside of linguistic frameworks. Her multidisciplinary installation, [Semantic Noise or Words Do Lie Because Time Happen](#) (2022-2023), emerges from her interest in the concepts of semantic noise and semantic primes. In communication systems frameworks, ‘noise’ is a term that broadly defines any obstruction in the flow of information between two or more participants. ‘Semantic’ noise occurs when language carries an ambiguous pulse and multiple interpretations compete.² The interpretation of specific words, idioms, etc, over others can reveal the hidden barriers between ourselves and others, attuning us to the ways that we are each the product of a particular constellation of experiences informed by our identity, relationships, and environments. Semantic primes are instances where a word or concept is innately understood by any culture, though cannot be easily explained.³ YOU, ME, THIS, NOW, semantic primes are units of thought and speech that are uniquely irreducible.

² Fred E. Jandt, “Intercultural Communication Competence,” An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community 9th Edition, SAGE Publications, 2018, 82–83.

³ See: Anna Wierzbicka, Semantics: Primes and Universals, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Carson Van Vliet
Sasha – Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez

[Semantic Noise or Words Do Lie Because Time Happen](#) (2022-2023) explores how embodied knowledge influences the way we interpret our surroundings. A mosaic of sculpture, vinyl text, sound, and video projection, Mikhaylova’s works spans tangible and intangible media, Mikhaylova’s installation invites the body to decipher its own interpretation of the environment, relying on associations rooted in lived experience. Vinyl lettering arranged on the wall spell out semantic primes phonetically, providing a lyrical script for the accompanying sound component. These fragments explore the dislocation between composition and aurality, illustrating the same thing through radically different means. On the floor, Mikhaylova offers a group of small gestural objects made of clay, bronze, plaster and sand, dried plants and seeds combine intuitive and technical processes, exploring formal modes of translation and intuition: an open-ended text crafted without an alphabet.

The film of ambiguity that coats our daily exchanges is an inevitability that can be generative. Misunderstandings and semantic hiccups do not simply produce dead ends. They can also foster surprising exchanges and present opportunities for novel specificity through the formation of new hybrid words or metaphors that articulate the moment. These exchanges relieve the weight of grammar and syntax, favouring the lesson of the moment over perfect execution. This complexity can also create surprising connections, opening up new vistas for communion and shared understanding that would not be translatable without these imperfect associations. Memory is a serpent that coils itself around the truth, swallowing, and metabolizing it before naming it so. Sasha Shevchenko’s work investigates how certain materials dissolve time and space, using empathy as a strategy for unlocking gated connections of understanding. Working from and through her experience of diaspora as a person born on a different territory, Shevchenko constructs situations that reflect the shifting emergency of cultural maintenance, preservation, and evolution. Here, emergency does not equate to a singular event or context, but refers to the emergence of urgency, emphasizing the momentum of collective resistance and the politics of interpretation. ➤



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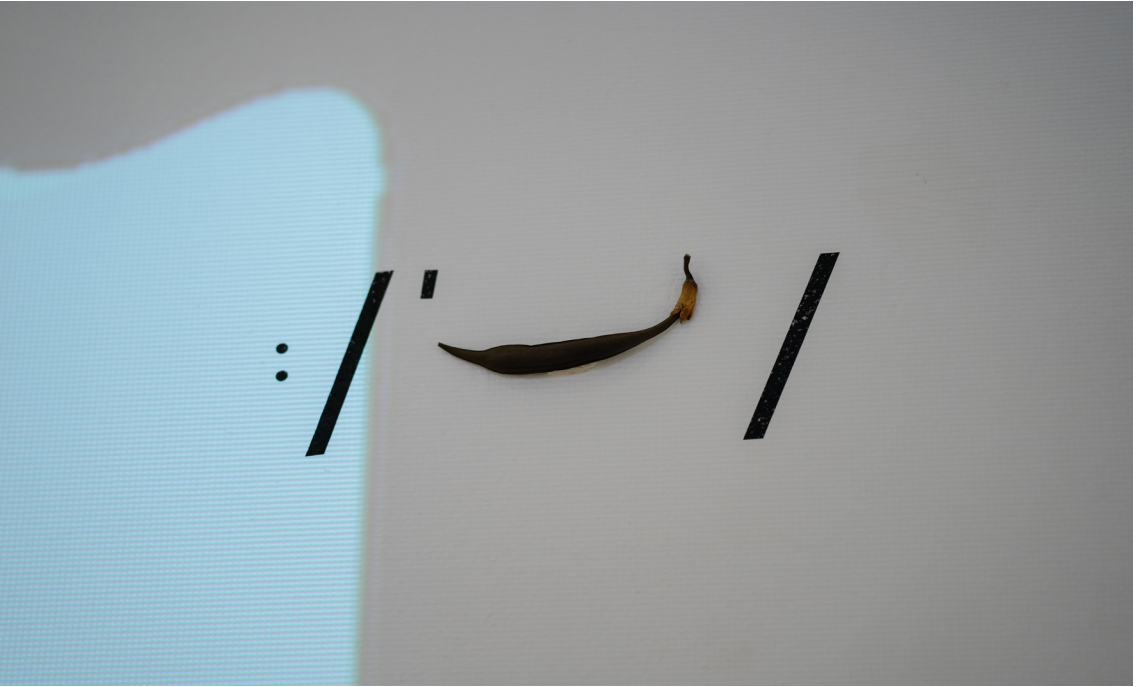
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Carson Van Vliet
Sasha - Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez

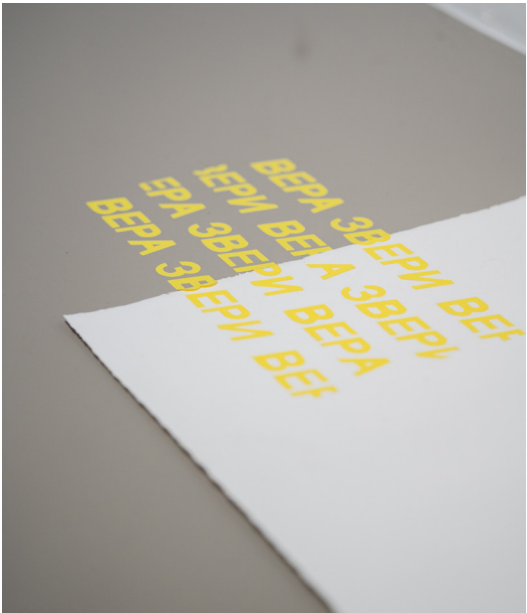
[...] how certain materials dissolve time and space,
using empathy as a strategy for unlocking gated
connections of understanding.



Shevchenko’s work references Ukrainian visual culture and heritage, including embroidery motifs and linen processing and dyeing, but manages to evade one-sided or prescriptive interpretations about national identity. Rather than approaching these references as stable signifiers, Shevchenko proposes new ways of seeing and feeling known traditions by welcoming abstract associations that accommodate today’s context, elucidating their boundlessness in diaspora. Envisioning her projects as *ethnoscapes*, scenes acknowledging the flow of people across boundaries, Shevchenko’s practice is a shelter for nuance, approaching the familiar objects and body parts found in her installations as vessels for meaning that are perpetually in flux.

Something in Everyone (2022-2023) is a recurring, site-specific installation in which Shevchenko’s material investigations work toward a floating visual metaphor. Repurposed bottles are dressed with linen and are staged differently each time, allowing the work to fade in and out of contact with global concerns. More recently, the bottles have drawn a formal resemblance to Molotov cocktails, a symbol of Ukrainian resistance and resilience, casting it with a political valence in light of the intensification of the Ukrainian-Russian war in 2022. The bottles’ frenzied display on the floor incites a feeling of disturbance and anguish, but their grouping also carries a sense of communion and vitality. On the wall, another component of **Something in Everyone** features a yellow vinyl applique that combines patterns found in Ukrainian embroidery and Soviet-era Persian carpets from former USSR countries. Blurring these visual contexts, Shevchenko points to histories of soft power taking place in the realm of aesthetics.

What Has Hardened Will Never Win, a sentiment propagated from filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, reflects Shevchenko and Mikhaylova’s embrace of softened contours and open metaphors. Noting the futility of fixity, the statement supports the necessity of melting down our assumptions of what must be so. Evidently, the renunciation of totality in favour of increased sensitivity and adaptation is as potent a gestalt message as any before it.➤



Carson Van Vliet
Sasha - Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez



Carson Van Vliet

Sasha - Evgenia

Jill Smith

Anahi Gonzalez

hum before hymn

back and forth
to pass a hum

freckled pepper evades plate
finds pleated napkin
forecast ritual interruption

trespassing into hymn
find a new way home

changing course on thought channel radio upstream from reason
calculating hope

reckoning with the means
that make it mean

units of because
bundled around new nerves

a system measured in harmony
assessments by tongues, teeth, lips, throats, a universe bound to blinks,
bellies, bounty

cresting above inferno
tumbling autonomy







Objects in mirror are closer than they appear

Jill Smith
Essay by Angel Callander

March 10, 2023 - April 22, 2023

Carson Van Vliet
Sasha - Evgenia
Jill Smith
Anahi Gonzalez

Recurring dreams of a childhood home and its various schemas. Both architectural and emotional—sometimes empty, sometimes filled with people throughout a lifetime; at once comforting and haunted. To *be* is, at many turns, involuntary and absurd. With fantasies of ever being made whole, we are in essence the accumulations of chance encounters and experiences. Following Simone de Beauvoir in her writing on what it means historically to become a woman in [The Second Sex](#), the body is a situation rather than a thing, encompassing our perceptions of the world around us and shifting throughout our endless processes of individuation.¹

I might imagine myself as the earth: ancient and resolute. Geological layers of self, stratified and faulted, and irrefutably weathered. Covered over by the dirt, feeling deceived by the assurances of personhood, my embodiment is a record of one-in-a-million prospects. Mediation of the divine accelerates the process of becoming, a long purgatory within the dialectic of “being” and “nothingness.” There must always be an internalized force in order to determine where one truly belongs.

What and where is home, again?

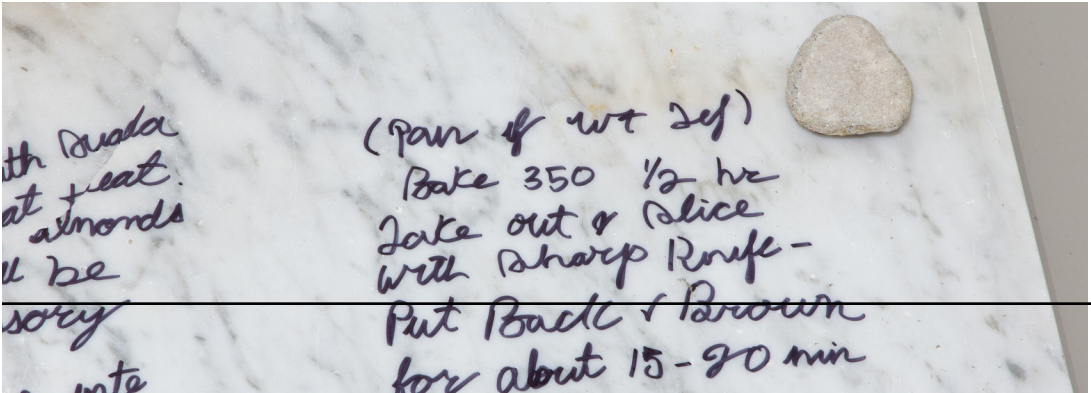
In Jill Smith’s work, the absurdism of forming an identity with the objects we keep is complemented by an understanding of the inherent need to do so. The spaces we create for ourselves are museums of curiosity, sentimentality, and memory. They contain not just physical objects, but also entire histories, with spectres of who and where they—and we—came from.

I could not say it better than Dorothee Sölle: “Things themselves have a song and a language, pointing beyond themselves and praising God in hidden, divine names.”²

[Objects in mirror are closer than they appear](#) is a study in domesticity, memorialization, grief, entropy, fallacy, and yearning to become. In a site-responsive installation, a series of works in ceramics and handmade paper are adorned with found jewellery, collected flowers and greenery, chains, and pearls. Ultimately an exploration of materials in flux, Smith uses the physical and emotional properties of each individual piece to create what feels like a home. By turning familiar objects into approximate entities in and of themselves, their hybridity between thing and body ushers in a means of identifying with them on more than one level. >

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), p. 46.

² Dorothee Sölle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Fortress Press, 2001), p. 423





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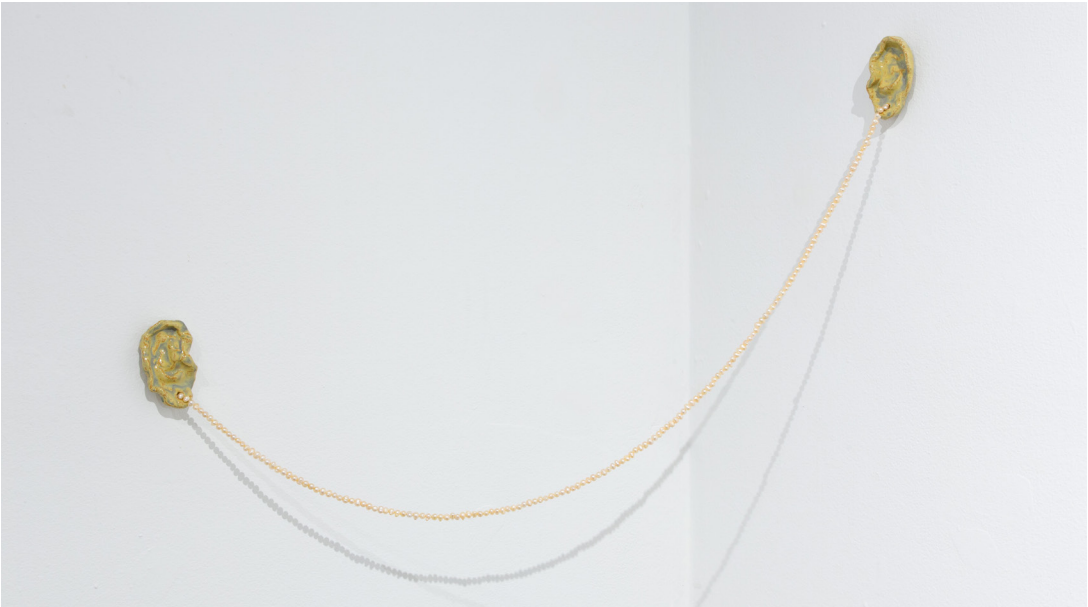
A large, floor-bound vessel is filled with water; five cups hang from the rim by lengths of chain. Made to be reminiscent of the 5 of Cups card—a card about loss, defeat, and sorrow—the overflow of water presents a dual perception challenge: the prospect of abundance, or the burden of excess. Playing with unions of function and non-function, a crossbreed of goblet and hourglass sits in its own leaked sand, an emblem of time as it both accumulates and slips away. Ceramic candle holders and picture frames are abstracted to new forms of their assumed purpose; a frame contains gifted dried flowers in resin, a portrait of a person’s objects rather than the person themselves.

“YOU REALIZE THAT YOU’RE ALWAYS
SHEDDING PARTS OF THE BODY
AND LEAVING MEMENTOS EVERYWHERE.”³

*

Tarot references call upon explorations into the relationship between symbolism, divination, and combinations of archetypes to produce various ideas about the universal search for affinity. Jung believed in archetypes as parts of the collective unconscious that emerge, unspoken, as organizing principles for human societies. The persona, the shadow, and the anima, and the self are the results of embodied experiences and shared memories, which persist in social contexts and forms of art.

As Jung said, we have “always felt the need of finding an access through the unconscious to the meaning of an actual condition.”⁴ Our need to discover what lies beneath the surface is both mystical and primordial. The inextricable link between suffering and desire, as a conduit for identification, expresses itself heavily in the dreamworld through vignettes of who we believe ourselves to be and to have been. Perhaps they are aspirational, too.



³ Jenny Holzer, from the Living series, 1980-82.

⁴ Visions: Notes of the Seminar given in 1930-1934 by C. G. Jung, Vol. 2, ed. Claire Douglas (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 923.



“In a dream you saw a way to survive and you were full of joy.”⁵

In a dream it is your mother’s hand reaching for you.

*

My skin is thin but my blood is hot, burning occasionally like various small fires. At times I feel as though I am filled with viscous molten rock.

Infinitely performing various ceremonies of self-assurance, awareness, fulfillment, or determination—extrapolated out to achieve a breadth of knowledge about others. Those geological layers of self, connecting generations.

My cup runneth over with v H  l  ne Cixous referred to as the combined accidents of history.⁶

Being at home in one’s own body is a feat of purpose. It is a lifelong reckoning with the weight of becoming, constantly encountering the most intimate strangers: mother, monster, time, and God.

In what way do I resemble my creator, when I am so intertwined with my own tragedy and farce?

In a dream there were no clouds overhead. In a dream, I met the angel of my retribution and awoke with tears on my face.

■ Angel Callander

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⁵ Jenny Holzer, from the Survival series, 1983-85.

⁶ H  l  ne Cixous and Catherine Cl  ment, The Newly Born Woman (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 70.

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Anahí González walks through towns marked by industrial and agricultural labour. Walking as a method for research and observation allows her to uncover the visual culture of movement—whether it is the movement of objects or human beings. González’s hometown, known as a place of industry, is in Mexico, about three hours from the American border. Many who live there work in factories, creating objects or parts that are then exported to the U.S. or Canada. She explains that red trucks pick up the goods and drives them to the border. The trucks’ trailers are passed through the border and loaded on American trucks. As the objects pass through, human beings stay behind.

Canadian Tuxedo was photographed in the parking lot of a trucking company in Northern Mexico, with the worker posed wearing a Canadian tuxedo. As González explored this space while speaking with the workers, she photographed the inside of a truck trailer with sleeping quarters set up for drivers to sleep while alternating driving duties. The image of the red truck lies on the pillow cover of the worker, marking, as the title suggests, their dreams of movement while their body is resting inside the red truck itself. Walking through these towns creates serendipitous moments of connection and close looking for González. In a different parking lot in the same town, she finds a red truck piñata—the object symbolic of transnational movement made into a toy to be destroyed during a child’s birthday party. ›

Hacia Arriba / Upwards

Anahí González
 Essay by Maya Wilson-Sánchez
*this essay was published with permission in Draft format

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Walking through these towns creates serendipitous moments of connection and close looking for González.





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International agreements like NAFTA, and its updated version USMCA, have facilitated the movement of goods between Canada, Mexico, and the United States since the mid-1990s. However, the movement of people between these borders has increasingly been regulated and controlled. Recently, American pandemic policies forced migrants, even those seeking asylum, to wait in Mexico until their hearings. Two months ago, Justin Trudeau closed the loophole that allowed migrants and asylum seekers to bypass the Third Safe Country Agreement (which dictates you must seek asylum in the first “safe” country you land in, which includes all three countries in North America) if you crossed into Canada using unofficial border crossings. As migration into the U.S. and Canada becomes more and more inaccessible, many choose to come to Canada undocumented to work in factories, restaurants, and grocery stores, while others come in through the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program, which allows employers to hire foreign workers to fill temporary jobs when qualified Canadians are not available.

González’s work moves from Northern Mexico to Southern Ontario, now documenting the presence of migrant labourers who work in Leamington and other nearby towns through the TFW program. In one photograph, the word “IMMIGRATION” stands alone on a large advertisement board, its purpose unknown. Is it exclaiming “immigration!” so as to warn Canadians of foreigners? Is it offering help for migrants? Its bizarre nature perhaps stands simply as a statement of fact: immigration and Leamington are tied together. González, however, tells me that the other side of the board advertised security cameras: another chance encounter, this time connecting the movement of human beings to the inhuman practices of surveillance, control, and power imbalance that mark the TFW Program. Another image taken in Leamington features the unstaged front yard of a family home. The house, framed by a white truck and the Canadian flag, showcases a scene of wooden figurines: a person wearing a sombrero while pulling a donkey, with the donkey’s cart pulling two Canadian geese. Behind the scene is a bald eagle. In González’s photographs of Southern Ontario, she brings together the visual evidence of Canadiana and a white Canada with the visual space of migrants, both existing in the same place. She says that Canadians only think of agriculture when they think of Mexicans. Still, her photographs insist that there is more beyond these stereotypes.



González’s work deals with the simultaneous invisibility of migrant labour and the hypervisibility of the stereotypes of Mexicans that portray them as happy workers. In the middle of the room is a vending machine with an image of a loonie instructing viewers to insert a \$1 coin. The coin portrays the scene from the Leamington front yard and refers to the hourly wages set by the Canadian government for Temporary Foreign Workers, all set at or close to the minimum wage. When you insert a loonie, the machine puts out Mapa de Norte America Invertida, a small screen-printed map created by González drawing from two of the most famous artist-made maps of the 20th century. London-born Canadian artist Greg Curnoe’s Map of North America (1972) is brought together with Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García’s 1943 map América Invertida (Inverted America). Curnoe’s map famously portrays his anti-American sentiments as he leaves out the U.S. from a map of North America, while Torres-García’s map shows an inverted view of South America, automatically forcing a change of perspective—a critical view from the South.

González’s map draws from both in their composition and style, and adds symbols of extraction, profits, pollution, and movement. She adds train tracks to visualize this movement, noting that the formation of the three North American states is built on the expansion of railways that facilitated the foundation of settler-colonialism, slavery, Indigenous dispossession, and capitalism. The Canadian Pacific Railway was established in 1881 as a dream of John A. Macdonald, and only a couple of months ago, Canadian Pacific bought Kansas City Southern. Now named CPKC, it is the only single-line railway connecting Canada, the U.S., and Mexico.

In González’s work, this circulatory movement between the North and South is a cycle of extraction and inequity: humans and products are always in transit—never permanent, always temporary, expandable, and replaceable. Here, the American Dream and the myth of Canada as a benevolent and peaceful country, and the darker side of these states as colonial powers with national and international labour and human rights violations, are on full display, all while trying to give the migrants a voice, a hint of existence, a presence.

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