The Capilano Review

Summer 2021

I hope for a shift in the way people look

—Tanya Lukin Linklater

THE CAPILANO REVIEW ISSUE 3.44 / SUMMER 2021

Cover: Russna Kaur ***Ironing, bored*** 2019

Editors' Note

Issue 3.44 (Summer, 2021) developed out of early conversations with artists and writers doing the work of "focusing to make the invisible visible" (Russna Kaur). Making use of the generative potential of revisioning, many of the contributions collected here ask us to consider the relationships and subjectivities prioritized within well-established narratives alongside possible retellings.

Through reflection of the exhibit *lineages and land bases*, Tarah Hogue and Ashlee Conery, with an introduction by Találsamkin Siyám Chief Bill Williams, bring forward the aesthetic practices and basketry of Sewiṉchelwet (Sophie Frank) in the discussion of the life and work of Emily Carr. Drawing on the work of Huneault, Moray, Crosby, and others, they demonstrate the difficulty of shifting or "puncturing" institutional thinking around a figure so central to Canadian identity as Carr, highlighting that even when divergent histories are presented, they are often "treated as branches or 'alternative narratives' rather than roots."

When stories continue to go unheard across institutional and individual settings, how do we care for and carry forward our multiple histories? Non-articulations, such as those found within Helen Cho's work, prompt us to consider how space and silence are just as important as utterances. "Nuanced forms of refusal" (Tanya Lukin Linklater) recognize an inability to translate to all readers. The contributors to this issue reveal to us that care may take shape through intentional slowness, by way of multiple paths or directions for reading, or the foregrounding of relationships —including those of human lives past and present and their surroundings.

Each issue involves its own process of revision, slowly moving backwards and forwards through the material to bring together a finite collection that nevertheless contains possibilities for continued revisiting. So, how do we encourage ourselves and others toward the sensibility of an "open receptor" of the kind that Joni Low locates in her review of Ken Lum's work. In the words of Klara du Plessis and Elee Kraljii Gardiner: "how can we create the space and context for listeners to leave the clock world and enter the chronology of the text?"

—*Emily Dundas Oke* and *Matea Kulić*

i elitere lyric poetry

Helen Cho

that
night
in
sea
so
many
wind

but
small
boat

only
ten
metre

we
are
forty-seven
.people

i
always
pray

please

let
me
come
to
land

if
no
land
i
.die

i
cannot
handle
because
just
so
small
boat

but
lucky

in
morning

we
see
land

and
that
land
is
indonesia.

i always

i don't know why

my life

i always too late

i see people with no money
i try to help them

and then
i don't know why
i always have trouble sometimes

i always like that

now i don't need nothing i just live like that

when
i'm
young

i
know
how
to
upset
.myself

my
life

when
i'm
kid

i
never
live
with
my
father
and
mother

i
just
live
with
my
.sister

every
month
my
father
give
some
money
to
my
sister
to
take
care
me

my
sister

only
eleven
my
sister

but
she
take
care
.me

we
are
four
brother
and
sister.

when
i'm
fourteen

i'm
fourteen
in
1975
and
communist
come
to
.vietnam

that
time

my
brother
buy
things
and
sell

and
when
he
make
money
my
older
sister
keep
that
money
for
.him

that
money

for
when
we
find
right
person

we
can
give
that
money
for
boat
so
i
can
left
my
country.

i
try
go
few
time

one
time
some
people
liar
but
that
time
i
still
young
so
communist
get
me
but
they
let
me
go.

time
another

i
go
waiting
for
boat
few
day
already

then

i

hear

my

brother

died.

he

have

accident

he

died

then

i
come
back

i
don't
want
to
go
more.

i
say

no
good
to
.live

i
don't
have
money
to
buy
soy
.sauce

i
don't
have
money
to
buy
soy
sauce
or
.bread

i
don't
have
money
to
buy
soy
sauce
to
put
in
rice
to
eat
with
.tofu

i
don't
have

because

it

no

.good

but
i'm
lucky

when
i
left
my
country

i
hurt

i
hate
my
stepmother
because
when
i
left
she
don't
give
me
one
cent
for
my
pocket
just
wear
one
cloth
and
.go

but
i'm
lucky

because
i
don't
care

i'm
lucky

because
i

live

i

still

live.

when
i
come
from
sea
to
refugee
camp
in
indonesia

first
month
i
go
interview
with
australia
canada

everywhere
i
apply

but

nobody

they
don't
accept
.me

i
in
camp
already
over
three
year

i

still

waiting

what
country
to

take
me.

but

i'm
lucky

one
friend
give
me
one
address
for
one
gentleman

he
work
in
manpower
in
windsor

his
wife
vietnamese
chinese
so
i
just
write
letter
to
her.

i
left
my
country

october
4
.1982

when
i
come
to
canada

it
march
30
.1986

i
hear
for
first
time
at
this
time

my

younger

sister

died.

i
just
sent
money
home
for
first
time
and
my
older
sister
sent
letter
to
say

she

killed

herself

already

she
don't
have
money

so

she

kill

herself.

what?

i'm sorry

you want to eat?

you want to say hello?

you want to say hello to my friend?

i'm sorry my bird want something

lot

of

pirate

lot

of

pirate

boat

in

.sea

they

take

your

boat

your

money

they

take

your

everything

and

kill

.you

when

you

sit

in

boat

in

sea

you

don't

know

where

you

go

you

have

no

choice

where

you

go.

everybody

want

to

go

safety

but

you

cannot

choose

yourself

because

sea

and

wind

make

you

go

where

they

go

so

you

go

where

they

go.

my
stepbrother
my
stepsister
sit
in
one
boat
that
boat
that
bad
boat
lucky
eighteen
men
wind
four
make
women
that
boat
usually
go
they
to
go
pirate
forty
fifty
pirate
sixty
take
people
that
in
boat
one
boat
put
but
eighteen
that
men
boat
in
only
sea
twenty-two
people
keep
four
expensive
women
that
in
.boat
.boat

my
stepsister
she
hear
so
many
yelling
she
see
so
many
hand
in
sea
she
try
to
grab
every
hand
but
pirate
hit
her
head.

she
say
when
she
wake
up
she
just
know
she
in
land
she
don't
remember
more
only
four
women
.alive

my
stepsister
sometimes
something
in
that
boat
she
don't
want
to
tell
me
she
but
usually
pirate
do
that
if
they
don't
they
kill
women
.too

people

when

they

left

their

country they

know

lot

of

people

die

but

you you

need don't

to know

accept where

it you

go.

i'm fine !
how are you ?

good ?
summer coming

sorry

there you go

you want chicken ?
you want pepperoni ?

you want extra cheese ?

okay my friend

how is pizza okay ?

thank you !

okay one pizza you want bag ?

okay eat here
you want drink ?

i need to put it little bit in oven okay ?

hello yes sir

one pepperoni yes sir

tell me story of all these things

beginning wherever you wish tell even us

Helen Cho ***Tai Lam: memory of hunger finds its form*** 2015 video still

As part of *Space Silence,* exhibited at SFU's Audain Gallery in Vancouver from January 16 to March 14, 2020, Helen Cho presented the first two chapters of a video trilogy sharing the life history of Tai Lam, a Vietnamese refugee who currently resides in downtown Toronto.

i elitere lyric poetry came out of the process of transcribing and extending Lam's powerful narration to the printed page, preserving his fractured spoken language as well as applying the principles of Korean grammar. The title of the piece as well as the final two lines borrow from Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*, which is organized into nine parts after the nine Greek muses. In actuality there is no muse named Elitere; Cha invented her as a replacement for Euterpe, possibly "to critique the privileged place of epic as high literature."[1]

Beginning in December of 2020, in lockdown in her studio in Toronto, Cho spent three months positioning Lam's narrative on the page, incorporating Cha's Elitere in(ter)vention, the traditional Korean style of vertical writing, as well as her spatial sensibility that draws on working with landscape. While the text might be viewed conceptually, the title's insistence on the lyrical points to the epic quality of Lam's narrative, his personal history, and its articulation.

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[1] Wong, Shelley Sun. "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Dictée." *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory*., ed. Lynn Keller and Christanne Miller. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1994), 43–68.

Tanya Lukin Linklater ***Slay All Day*** 2016 video still Courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery

Contending with the histories that we contend with

Tanya Lukin Linklater in conversation with Robin Simpson

In November of 2019, Tanya Lukin Linklater read from her first book of poetry *Slow Scrape* at Discourse in Motion — the final event of *An Annotated Bibliography in Real Time: Performance Art in Quebec and Canada* — organized by Emmanuelle Choquette, Barbara Clausen, and Joana Joachim and presented at Artexte and Arprim in Montréal. Edited by Michael Nardone and published by The Centre for Expanded Poetics and Anteism in 2020 (with a second printing in 2021), *Slow Scrape* lives at the interstices of performance, the body, memory, and relationality. For the reading, Tanya selected works for camera to be screened as she read from the book. This was not rehearsed in advance and she had never read some of the works aloud prior to this performance. There were moments where text, image, and voice collided, and this collision will perhaps only ever exist in that moment. The reading was followed by a conversation with Robin Simpson, a cultural worker and educator based in Montréal. In the spring of 2021 as they edited the conversation for clarity, Robin posed additional questions that arose from the transcript and Tanya — at times partially — responded.

Robin Simpson In 2016, you performed *A glossary of insistence* at what was then called DHC, now Phi Foundation, as part of a program curated by Barbara Clausen. After the performance, I asked you if you could send me the scores so I could read them over again. And you refused [laughs], politely telling me that they were intended for a book. Then, three years later, I received your manuscript. It's been a real pleasure to read your texts closely and to anticipate this performance today.

Slow Scrape assembles written works initially emerging from and intended for a range of contexts, among them exhibitions, catalogues, and performances. One through line between these texts is the practice of patterning and re-notation. Patterning emerges through memory and recollection. At times it is embodied and at other times it points to wayfinding. It's there in the description of techniques and it shows up in the formal makeup of the page. Can you tell me more about patterning and patternmaking in your work?

Tanya Lukin Linklater I think about patterning first in relation to "The Harvest Sturdies," a long poem that's in response to Chief Theresa Spence's six-week hunger strike or fast that began in December 2012. I wanted to respond to what felt urgent to me at the time, but I didn't know how to address her political action. I thought it was incredibly significant. It was embodied. It was an incredible sacrifice for a principle that she deeply believed in — treaty. This actually became, subsequently, a series of projects that I've investigated in relation to treaty since. It began with this particular action on the part of Chief Theresa Spence, but I couldn't, as I said, address it head on. Instead, I undertook a number of interviews with some of our extended Omaskeko Cree relatives in James Bay. Theresa Spence is the former Chief of Attawapiskat First Nation, which is located near James Bay.

I called women relatives, Marlene Kapashesit, Agnes Hunter, and Lillian Trapper, who are very knowledgeable about tanning hides, sewing, and beading. I had grown up seeing women bead and sew in Alaska and had deep respect for it as an art form, a way of life, and I consider hide-tanning as a way of being in relation to the land. I asked these women relatives questions. The work became a combination of documentary poetics, where I was directly quoting our relatives at times and visual poetics as I cannot sew or bead, but I can write. I also included Cree language in the poem and worked with relatives on the translation. This became an investigation and a way to gesture towards the beautiful work that these women are undertaking.

They started to speak about their lives. I asked them, "What do you think about when you sew, bead or tan hides?" I learned through this process that I was asking them about the ways in which they cultivate a deep inner life. You can hear it in one of the poems quoting Auntie Marlene Kapashesit. She speaks about this whole way of being when she's sewing and beading. She thinks about her family, about the women who have taught her. She says she is praying. She is with God at that time. Agnes Hunter refused to answer this question. I thought, "I love this. This is such a great moment where she is not answering me, and she keeps that for herself. No one else can access it; it only belongs to her." I also did not include all of their responses. I made what I consider to be ethical choices about what to include and what not to include.

I realized that one of the ways that I cultivate an inner life is through walking. Early on in the book I reference walking. When I was in elementary school, I walked five miles to school one way with my little sisters. These walks became a shared space that only ever existed between my sisters and me, and that no one else will ever have access to or memory of. It was a daily practice, and it was a repetitive practice of putting one foot in front of the other as we made our way from one part of town to school. Walking is a meditative practice that I continue to return to today.

I also think about patterns in relation to historical, colonial, and intergenerational violences. It is also good when we upend patterns rather than making copies of difficult moments and experiences. One of the women I interviewed spoke about working through grief by tanning the hide of a moose, which takes a year to do in her description. I thought that this was a beautiful way of speaking directly to what I'm trying to speak about right now: what we choose to hold onto and what we choose to let go of. There's also a quote in the book centred on the idea of not letting go of some things.

RS In what ways has your long poem "The Harvest Sturdies" informed the projects to follow? How have you transposed or developed further the documentary methods first employed here to other mediums?

TLL I consider both documentation of rehearsal and works for camera that I've generated over time in relation to this question that you've posed, Robin. I've documented performance projects in process, in situ, in rehearsal, as I know so few people attend performances produced and happening in museums or galleries. This is a way for me to archive the work, to build a history that is viewable online to wider audiences.

While conversation is a mode or method in much of my work, I've documented some of these conversations in a performance piece titled, *you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent* (2017). This work arose out of my interest in Maria Tallchief. I asked dancers to reflect on the structure of their dance education and dance lineages (often situated within teachers or schools that arise out of a choreographer's practice — their movement language and approach to the making of a choreography). Four dancers, Ivanie Aubin-Malo, Ceinwen Gobert, Elisa Harkins, and Hanako Hoshimi-Caines, participated in this project. The works for camera are both silent and include narratives — the voices of the dancers regarding their lived experiences in relation to dance. It is quite stunning to listen to at times. I learn in unexpected ways when people share their lived experiences.

RS With your event scores you often present a meeting of two parts — a speaking subject and an audience. Can you speak to the positions at play there and the structures behind them?

TLL I'm undertaking my PhD with supervision by Dylan Robinson, who is doing important work in relation to cultural belongings, sound studies, and repatriation. I was enrolled in a course on Indigenous and settler relations, affect, and writing in 2016 organized and taught by Robinson. We read event scores, and I produced a number of event scores at that time. As I look back on these, I notice that the event scores are spoken through Indigeneity as a lens or a voice, potentially by a visible performer. This does not perhaps allow for the nuanced forms of refusal that I have subsequently employed in some of my work.

RS This brings to mind a text by M. NourbeSe Philip titled "Journal Entries Against Reaction," where Philip speaks of seeking a place from which to write outside the scope of reaction — reaction understood as an extension of the control that spurred it. It's looking for a "position of statement," which she calls the "first statement." How do you understand the relation between refusal and response?

TLL I understand refusal partly to mean the ways in which some knowledges are only intended for specific peoples. Within some contexts knowledge is earned through specific processes. Knowledge also has work to do in the world. Refusal may mean that we refuse certain kinds of labour for settler audiences or readers. In this way we allow for agency to determine our centredness.

I frame response as my choice to look, listen, and be in relation to works generated by Indigenous artists, dancers, and writers. Again, agency comes into play here. I choose which works to be in relation with. In the past this has included works by Maria Tallchief, Rita Letendre, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, and Beau Dick as well as cultural belongings by unnamed makers. In this way, I work to centre Indigenous peoples, our work, our thought, and affective worlds. Like M. NourbeSe Philip, I do not want to be always implicated in resistance to or against "definitions" built through oppression, violence, and settler frames. We cannot ignore our context but, as M. NourbeSe Philip proposes in this text, language coupled with imagination can perhaps offer ways to centre ourselves.

One of the challenges that I have seen over time in spaces where Indigenous people are speaking is a response by white audiences to re-centre settler subjectivity, to make it about their experience of reconciliation, their guilt or shame. That is not really my concern. It is my position that I do not need to, nor should I be, solving these affects for anyone. What I am more interested in is bringing forward moments connected to personal, familial, and larger histories unfolding in my thinking.

I also do not get home enough to Alaska to make work. This is a way for this work to go home. The book as a kind of object that can be held in someone's hands, that they can have a relationship with. I don't know if Alutiiq people or Alaska Native folks will see themselves reflected in this, but they are foremost my concern within the work.

RS For it to travel.

TLL For it to travel, for it to move beyond contemporary art spaces, the museum, or the gallery where a lot of Indigenous folks, my dad, my sisters, cousins, aunties or uncles rarely, if ever, visit.

RS Vision, looking, and image-making come up at other points in your work. "Not Like Us" makes reference to photographs, as you write: "I'm made and unmade in polaroids." In another instance, a photograph fills in a memory when elements are obscure. This poem alternates between focused childhood recollections and shorter segmented phrases. Two of these phrases repeat the action of angling to the light—which I read as an act of exposing oneself to light, an act that is another form of photography of a sort. In the event scores, there is an embodied looking: "The audience looks only to follow with its body," followed by: "The audience listens but does not look."

In "Harvest Sturdies," you write about "composing before I open my eyes." For today's reading you set up an exercise where you had audience members individually work through the instances where the text was grafted to the dancers' bodies seen in the projected video by thinking about where the rhythm in your poetry might match or fall into dialogue with the rhythm of a moving body. All of this so that as we were looking, we had to gauge our role in the space between the silent footage and your reading. This complements the work you do in your writing and performances to resituate, reorient, or reassign vision in one way or another. Vision isn't put aside, but it is moved in your work. There are points when vision is interrogated, and at the same time, you're frequently working with it as a sense to be reactivated. I'm curious about vision and image making in your writing practice and how you see this in dialogue with your performance work?

TLL "Not Like Us" centres on moments I remember growing up. In one of the moments, I am told that when we were small people mistook my sisters (who are twins) and me for triplets. A repetition. In another instance I am told a story of a visit to Washington state away from our home village in Alaska. People were confused about us. They thought my sisters and I were mixed black and white, but they didn't understand why our hair was straight. That is a strange story to grow up with, which speaks to a kind of simultaneous presence and absence, how Indigenous people are both hyper visible and invisible. I also consider how mixed-race bodies are read, and the ways people feel entitled to comment on girl children's bodies, their hair, or the colour of their skin.

I am often concerned by, but also struggling with, what it means to be asked to make work as an Indigenous person. Am I instrumentalized within spaces? That is an important ethical question. I have gone through periods of time where I've chosen not to investigate cultural work due to my consideration of audience and whether this cultural work belongs in these spaces. I have shifted my focus and attention to historical moments, to critiques of structures at times. I address the colonial violence that creates this situation where I am in a space of durational grief as an Alutiiq person contending with the histories that we contend with. I struggle with my own visibility in this work and in these kinds of performances.

I hope for a shift in the way people look. Elements of my open rehearsals and performances within museums include a slowing down of time — an experience of being in relation and of being close to dancers. It's my view that these elements shift the experience of the viewer kinesthetically in relation to a body exerting

force in the museum, which is different from the experience of viewing dance or performance on a proscenium stage. Within the museum context, people are not required to sit still and be good viewers, to discipline themselves physically and mentally, or to go through the ritual of what it means to attend a performance. Sometimes they encounter the rehearsal or performance and walk away. Sometimes they stop. I want the viewer to have some choice regarding how they come to be in relation to the performance. For the viewer to sense with the body; to listen in an expanded and enlivened way (Elwood Jimmy speaks to this).

I hope that through my work there might be a rethinking of the way that one looks at performance or art objects, but I don't know how possible that is. I certainly cannot know the outcomes of that particular intention, but that is where that intention lies. My work is often intentionally quite slow. I am gesturing towards this other sense of time, historical time, or this inner life that I described earlier. When we have access to that other kind of time, it can alter the way we are in the world. My work, I often say, is just a tincture; it is not a cure. It is a small moment that gestures towards this larger practice in one's own life, whatever that might be, whether that's walking, or… I don't know what that is. There's a space between the viewer and myself. I'll never know, necessarily, their experience of the work, but, from my perspective, the work is generous as a kind of request or an offer that people can choose to take up. I don't know if that gets to your question — it was quite expansive. ■

From *Slow Scrape*

Tanya Lukin Linklater

Suk

A human being. Afognak dialect: the S is pronounced SH. It sounds like shook but with a shorter o. Perhaps we shake. Or past tense, we shook. When are we shaken?

An Event Score for Indigenous Epistemologies (Eber Hampton)

A person enters and reads

The audience listens but does not look

Then

The audience looks only to follow with its body

Then

The audience's body turns to the east

Then

The audience holds its heart

Then

The audience listens but does not look

An Event Score for Haunting (Eve Tuck)

A person enters and reads

The audience remembers relentlessly

Then

The audience feels no ease

Then

What can decolonization mean other than the return of stolen land?

Then

What must it feel like to be haunted

An Event Score for the Epistemic Violence of Translation (Edgar Heap of Birds)

1. A person enters and speaks in Alutiiq

2. A person enters and speaks in Alutiiq

The audience listens

An Event Score for Afognak Alutiit 1 - 3 (Abridged)

An Alutiiq person enters and says

Our memory marks Afognak.

Afognak marks us.

What are we tethered to? What holds us together?

When I am home on our island I sense that the land exudes grief.

This feeling.

Many of us have left the land of our ancestors

perhaps because the grief becomes unbearable.

An Event Score for Afognak Alutiit 4

An Alutiiq person enters and tells a story about Afognak.

The audience listens

Then

Someone tells a related story.

And so on. And so on. And so on. And so

Suk

A human being. Afognak dialect: the S is pronounced SH. It sounds like shook but with a shorter o. Perhaps we shake. Or past tense, we shook. When are we shaken?

Slow Scrape was published in 2020 by DOCUMENTS, the publishing imprint of the Centre for Expanded Poetics at Concordia University, Montréal. A second printing is scheduled for June 2021 and is available through Anteism Books.

Sick Parties

Russna Kaur

The less free ones, into the deepest trenches — they creep slowly.

Their sick arrival.

They quickly appear to be crucial to life — unlike the hot smokers.
Fixed, faith, freedom.
Their voice offered a bit of touch, a bit of cover.
The echo made — it was a long, tedious sound
it touched the bottom
the depth
lowering to the bottom.

Split away from another someone, echoes will return and reveal far more.
Their voice offered a bit of touch, a bit of cover.

Without it there may be no life, but the cold wind blows to their right
the arrows showing face, stick face, in time, touch line.

The arrows show the cold.

With so many beings that exist, what may be the absolute truth? What may be the absolute truth, with so many beings that exist! Millions of stars?

Down the hill, in the crowd to be cured of their power, it is not easy to find a dark place when the sky seems four times greater. Focusing to make the invisible visible to the naked eye, their voice offered a bit of touch, a bit of cover.

The warm mouth of fog strikes in great piles, rapidly killing clear nights, miracles, and their promises. Burnt away in layers of clouds, they fall slowly… suspended in the air, free as a gift.

Only stars are seen best on dark nights and sick parties.

Previous Page: Russna Kaur ***In the crowd to be cured of their power*** 2021 digital rendering
Courtesy of the artist

Above: Russna Kaur ***They are midway between the sun and the moon*** 2021 acrylic, cold wax, sand, cut canvas, and pastel on wood panel, canvas, raw silk, and cotton 488 cm x 274 cm
Courtesy of the artist and the Burrard Arts Foundation

Russna Kaur ***Veil of Tears* (installation view)** TRAPP Projects 2019
Works shown (left to right): ***Butterfly tattoos Summer Spray Tan Florida for Christmas***
Image credit: Scott Massey Courtesy of the artist and TRAPP Projects

Russna Kaur ***Smiling monsters*** 2020 acrylic, cold wax, spray paint, and pastel on wool and cotton
122 cm x 137 cm

Courtesy of the artist and the Burrard Arts Foundation

lineages and land bases

At the centre of the exhibition, *lineages and land bases*, (Vancouver Art Gallery, 2020) was a case study that assessed the intersections between the basketry of Sewi̱nchelwet (Sophie Frank) (1872 – 1939), a woman from the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and the late landscape paintings of Emily Carr (1871 – 1945). The two women were close contemporaries and friends, and their thirty-three-year-long relationship was shaped by the profound inequalities of their time. The comparison of these two distinct, yet interconnected, perspectives both prefigures and extends the critique of the separation of nature and culture seen elsewhere in the exhibition, urging us to grapple with the troubled inheritance of settler colonialism and the meaning of self tied to the non-human world.

Emily Carr ***Sophie Frank*** 1914
watercolour on paper 23.5 cm x 18.5 cm
Private collection All images courtesy the Vancouver Art Gallery

***lineages and land bases* (installation view)** Vancouver Art Gallery

Works shown: Liz Magor ***Beaver Man*** 1977 (left)
Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Letslo:tseitun ***Burying Another Face of Racism on First Nations Soil*** 1997 (right)

Image credit: Ian Lefebvre

***lineages and land bases* (installation view)** Vancouver Art Gallery

Works shown: by Emily Carr (background) and coiled baskets by Chuchámlut Mary Anne August, Sewi̱nchelwet Sophie Frank, and Sut'elut Monica Williams (left to right, foreground)

Image credit: Ian Lefebvre

Sewin̲chelwet Sophie Frank ***coiled storage basket*** n.d. cedar root and sapling wood, wild cherry bark
Collection of Richard Daly and Liv Mjelde Image credit: Kyla Bailey

Introduction by Találsamkin Siyám[1] Bill Williams

My ancestral name is Találsamkin. My English name is Bill Williams. I'm a great grandnephew of Sophie Frank. My grandmother, Monica Williams, is Sophie's sister. Their baskets are a beautiful example of the types of work that they did. Being a bit of an entrepreneur, Sophie would work diligently to make a whole bunch of baskets, different sizes, and paddle her canoe over from North Vancouver, from a place called Eslha7an; that's how Sophie ended up walking around Vancouver and meeting Emily Carr. They were the same age. The first time they met, Emily really wanted to buy one of Sophie's baskets but didn't have money at the time. Sophie didn't want to lose a sale so agreed to meet again a couple of weeks later and that's when they started talking more about how Sophie puts her work together and what Emily does as a young European-background woman. They really enjoyed each other's company and the dialogue that they had.

Sophie commented on Emily's paintings: "That's beautiful work that you do, but you can't see colour. Your green is one green. The grass is the same colour as the trees, as the bushes. Let's go to this place over here." "Over here" was a place called Stanley Park. They went to the same place on three different occasions — once at sunrise, another time at noon, and another time close to sunset. They looked at the same bushes and at the same trees and at the same grass. This is how Sophie showed Emily that when you look at nature, it isn't one colour. It's multi-coloured and in different hues, and depending on what kind of day it is, it carries a different life to it. It isn't just an inanimate object. It's something that is living.

Emily showed Sophie that she wanted to learn more about the Indigenous culture but more particularly Sḵwx̱wú7mesh culture. Tumuth, for example, is a red ochre that Sophie was using. She told Emily, "This ochre is to let the ancestors know that we're praying to them for help and support to be able to do the things that we're doing." What Emily got in her mind was that she was struggling as a painter, not really selling a lot of her paintings. So she asked Sophie for some of this tumuth and covered her paintbrushes with it to have the help and support [of the ancestors], to be able to do things in a cultural way. That tells me that Emily had some belief of the culture and the passing of the culture from Sophie to Emily in a very deep way. Most non-Native people wouldn't even want to go there at the time… but their friendship was so strong, in such a good way, that it was automatically accepted.[2]

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[1] "Találsamkin" is Bill Williams' Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchim name, while "Siyám" translates to "Chief" in English.

[2] Edited and condensed transcript of an audio-recorded conversation between Találsamkin Siyám Bill Williams and Ashlee Conery, February 3, 2020. You can listen to an extended conversation on the exhibition page for *lineages and land bases* on the Vancouver Art Gallery's website or on their Soundcloud account.

Multivocality: narratives, structures, friendships

Tarah Hogue and Ashlee Conery

Találsamkin Siyám Bill Williams and Sesemiya Tracy Williams were advisors to the exhibition *lineages and land bases*, presented at the Vancouver Art Gallery from February 22nd to August 30th, 2020. The exhibition was curated by Tarah Hogue, a woman of Métis and settler heritage, and, at the time, the Senior Curatorial Fellow, Indigenous Art at the Gallery. Hogue asked her friend and colleague Ashlee Conery, a third-generation settler woman, born and working on the unceded territories of hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh speaking peoples, and, at the time, Curatorial Coordinator—Interpretation at the Gallery, to collaborate on realizing the exhibition. While Találsamkin Siyám's voice remains distinct, Conery and Hogue wrote the following text together, oscillating between an individual "I" and a collective "we."

We took turns writing from our own perspectives, as adjacent to the subjects of the exhibition, as well as weaving our thoughts together to create a bivocal narrative—composed of two but reading as one. The challenges of writing a singular narrative that is nevertheless multiple point, in our context of curation and art interpretation, to the need for multivocality that does not erase or mask the specificity of voice while also being a site of encounter.[1] Using this approach, we reflect on our work together to share the story of Emily Carr and Sewin̲chelwet Sophie Frank, their individual and entangled lives, as well as their creative practices. We also ask how this telling further implicates the telling of what is commonly known as Canadian art history. One way we respond to this question is by using language that tries to both observe the protocols of Sḵwx̱wú7mesh naming traditions as well as reverse the hierarchy of English translations over ancestral

[1] Our use of the word "encounter" follows from artists Ayumi Goto and Peter Morin's consideration of the moment of encounter, "wherein that which we carry with us (consciously or unconsciously, willingly or forcibly) interfaces with and imprints upon another body, another collection of experiences and meetings."

terms. For example, the name Sewiṉchelwet is now held by Sewiṉchelwet's great-grandniece, Jamie Williams, who granted permission for its appearance in texts contributing to and stemming from this project.[2]

Before I was the Senior Curatorial Fellow, Indigenous Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Glenn Alteen, the Programming Director of grunt gallery where I had been curator in residence, introduced me to jil weaving. weaving had recently retired from her role as Coordinator of Arts and Culture for the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, where she was part of the City's efforts to engage xʷməθkʷəy̓əm [Musqueam], Sḵwx̱wú7mesh [Squamish], and səlilwətaɬ [Tsleil-Waututh] in more equitable government-to-government decision-making processes. This work took place in the context of Vancouver's Year of Reconciliation (June 2013–June 2014), its designation as a City of Reconciliation (2014), and the formal recognition that the city was founded on unceded territories (2014).[3] The implications and impacts of these declarations and the events, programs, and policies they catalyzed have been the subject of ongoing civic and scholarly discourse. Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall, for example, have discussed reconciliation as "a problematic narrative about Indigenous-settler relations, but also as a site where conversations about what a just future looks like *must* occur."[4]

In 2016, the Park Board engaged in a series of community consultation meetings in the lead-up to a new community-engaged reconciliation program. In the resulting report by the Cree-Métis community planner and facilitator Kamala Todd, Todd writes that restoring "a strong and visible Coast Salish sense of place" is "the crucial first step to the work of building cross-cultural relationships in Vancouver."[5] This concept was invaluable to me as I thought through my role in relation to the

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[2] Kristina Huneault was the first person to gain permission for the use of this name for her chapter, "Nature and Personhood for Sewin-chelwet (Sophie Frank) and Emily Carr" in *I'm Not Myself at All: Women Art and Subjectivity in Canada* (Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press 2018), note 76, pp. 340. Találsamkin Siyám further confirmed its use for the exhibition and in this text.

[3] Peter Meiszner, "City of Vancouver formally declares city is on unceded Aboriginal territory," *Global News*, June 25, 2014, https://globalnews.ca/news/1416321/city-of-vancouver-formally-declares-city-is-on-unceded-aborginal-territory/.

[4] Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall, eds., *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2015): 8; emphasis in original.

[5] Kamala Todd, "Truth-telling: Indigenous Perspectives on Working with Municipal Governments," Vancouver Park Board Report (2017), 17, https://parkboardmeetings.vancouver.ca/files/REPORT-TruthTelling-IndigenousPerspectivesOnWorkingWithMunicipalGovernments-2017.pdf.

Gallery's responsibilities as a settler institution on unceded lands, and is particularly relevant toward understanding the impetus for *lineages and land bases*.

weaving encouraged me to meet with Találsamkin Siyám and introduced me to Lisa Wilcox, a Wampanoag woman and consultant who worked closely with the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw [Squamish Nation] in the area of intergovernmental relations for a number of years. It was Wilcox who first told me that Siyám, the great grandnephew of Sewin̲chelwet, heard the oral history of the relationship between Sewin̲chelwet and Carr from his grandmother Sut'elut Monica Williams, Sewin̲chelwet's sister.[6] Wilcox facilitated a meeting between Siyám, myself, and other Gallery colleagues in July 2018, where we shared food and learned of Sewin̲chelwet and Carr's friendship.

As uninvited guests in these territories, we recognize that much of the vast knowledge, history, and experience embedded in this place remains unknown to us. Our ongoing learning and the response it seeks shaped the project under discussion. We were further encouraged by a subsequent meeting requested by Siyám where he generously offered to share his knowledge of Coast Salish[7] culture and protocol with the Gallery. Around the time I met Siyám and became aware of this history, in a fortuitous confluence of events, negotiations were underway at the Gallery for the extended loan of Carr's watercolour portrait *Sophie Frank* (1914). As our relationship developed, I came to understand that consideration of Carr's portrait within the context of Siyám's knowledge of the two women's relationship provoked a set of complex questions that implicate the Gallery in multiple ways.

The Gallery's permanent collection holds the largest number of paintings and works on paper by Carr, whose engagement with and representation of Indigenous Peoples and cultural production on the Pacific Northwest Coast has been the focus of much scholarly debate.[8] Carr and Sewin̲chelwet's relationship has most often been presented within the context of exhibitions and publications focused on Carr and largely disregarding Sewin̲chelwet's own skill as a basketmaker as well as her

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[6] Email from Lisa Wilcox to Tarah Hogue, May 28, 2018.

[7] "Coast Salish" is the term Találsamkin Siyám chose to use in this context. Derived more from anthropology than community self-description, the term is often critiqued for flattening differences across distinct Nations that share a common language family.

[8] See, for example, Moray 1993 and 2006; Thom 1987; Cole 2000; Dawn 2006.

community and cultural lineage.[9] This is especially egregious given the Gallery's participation in the ongoing erasure of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and səlilwətaɬ visible presence within a city built on unceded lands.[10] Desiring to contribute to "a strong and visible Coast Salish sense of place," or more precisely, a Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sense of place, I knew that we had to place the portrait and the woman it pictured at the centre of an exhibition, even as I understood this repositioning on its own would not achieve lasting change.

Siyám alerted us to a book chapter by the art historian Kristina Huneault entitled "Listening: Nature and Personhood for Emily Carr and Sewin̲chelwet (Sophie Frank)." The chapter collects Huneault's in-depth research that occurred in dialogue with Sewin̲chelwet's living descendants and other Sḵwx̱wú7mesh community members over a period of three years. In it, Huneault laments that "despite considerable critical attention to Carr's depictions of Indigenous subject matter, and a still more recent willingness to bring historical works of Northwest Coast art into conjunction with her paintings, there has been no substantive discussion of Frank's basketry, still less a comparative analysis of the aesthetic concerns and productions of the two women."[11]

It is important to consider that the aesthetic terms to which Huneault refers when she discusses Sewin̲chelwet's basketry are only partially available to a non-Indigenous audience unfamiliar with the techniques and motifs of Sewin̲chelwet's community. Basketry encompasses a set of skills and specialized knowledge passed from one generation to the next. Teachings of the land figure prominently within this, as Sesemiya, a fifth-generation cedar weaver from the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw, describes:

> The knowledge of the materials aligns you with the landscape, and the ancestors know what the plants and animals and language of the place are

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[9] Shirley Bear and Susan Crean's, "The Presentation of Self in Emily Carr's Writings," in *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* (Vancouver Art Gallery and National Gallery of Canada: 2006) was the first text we encountered that included a specifically Indigenous perspective on Sewin̲chelwet's and Carr's relationship—Bear being from the Tobique First Nation.

[10] Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver," *BC Studies* 155, Autumn 2007, 3-30; Ian Thom, lecture, "Work in Progress Curators' Talks," Vancouver Art Gallery, March 21, 2017.

[11] Huneault, 251.

about. It's important to pray: to ask the creator to ask the ancestors to ask the cedar tree to share its wisdom. You have to go to the plant, to watch and learn from the plant over the course of the seasons. The plants are our teachers.[12]

Sesemiya is described by Huneault as an "attentive observer" of Sewin̲chelwet's work: "For Williams, what particularly distinguishes Frank's achievement is her sense of movement, visible in the unusual pinwheel motifs."[13] Sesemiya's perspective on basketry enfolds a sense of continuity across species, wherein subjectivity and material expression extend well beyond human beings. The practice of weaving is a point of access into a worldview in which the maker is enmeshed within a creative, spiritual, and land-based lineage. At the same time, these practices are adaptable to changing contexts, as Sesemiya points out in Sewin̲chelwet's combination of "Salish traditions with technical innovations intended to appeal to a Euro-Canadian clientele."[14]

Sewin̲chelwet Sophie Frank with a child who is possibly Mrs. Tina Cole circa 1919
Courtesy the Museum of North Vancouver Archives, NVMA #7120

[12] Quoted in Huneault, 276.

[13] Huneault, 272.

[14] Ibid.

Huneault's comparative analysis of Salish basketry — including a single basket securely attributed to Sewin̲chelwet — and Carr's late oil on paper landscape paintings, produced after 1934, provided a framework for bringing these works into dialogue within the Gallery and posed multiple challenges that were responded to throughout the exhibition via contemporary artworks from the permanent collection.[15] In "Listening," Huneault asks, "how has women's artistry brought them into contact with forests, fields, and oceans? And how have these contacts affected their senses of selfhood?"[16] These questions were expanded in *lineages and land bases* to consider subjectivity beyond the human, and to "explore differing understandings of the self in relation to what is typically termed 'the natural world.'" However, female artistry and selfhood remained at the exhibition's centre, with a room at its midpoint (from any direction) in which Carr's portrait, *Sophie Frank* (1914), catalyzed a reframing (following Huneault's terms) of the histories and relations of Sewin̲chelwet and Carr.

Huneault's research also pointed us to the differences between the products of looking *at* nature and those that result from working *with* it — a comparison exemplified in the works of Sewin̲chelwet and Carr. Huneault, like Sesemiya, suggests that the principles behind the aesthetic concerns that these two artists share are best understood through their respective worldviews, which are embedded within the materials and processes of basketry and painting:

> Carr's late landscape paintings, particularly the ones made after 1934, are pictorial statements of her faith that everything in the world was "all connected up." Her quest as a painter was to capture that intertwining… Her words are closely echoed by the teachings of Salish makers: "we have learned through experience that everything is interconnected"… Such beliefs, shared across cultures and down through generations, constitute a philosophical bedrock that links Carr's painting to Salish basketry even as cultural differences have meant that the principle of connection has been understood and materialized quite differently across aesthetic practices.[17]

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[15] These included, in one room of the exhibition, Liz Magor's *Beaver Man* (1977/2010), Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Letslo:tseitun's *Burying Another Face of Racism on First Nations Soil* (1997), Jin-me Yoon's *A Group of 67* (1997), Jeff Wall's *The Pine on the Corner* (1990), and Karin Bubaš's *Woman with Scorched Redwood* (2007).

[16] Huneault, 248.

[17] Huneault, 251.

Huneault's research dovetails with many publications over the last two decades: Gerta Moray's 1993 thesis on Carr's Indigenous subject matter—researched with the assistance of the Vancouver Art Gallery (and held in its Library); Marcia Crosby's and Shirley Bear and Susan Crean's texts for the 2006 National Gallery of Canada and Vancouver Art Gallery anthology on Emily Carr; and Leslie Dawn's chapter "Revisiting Carr" in his 2006 book *National Visions, National Blindness*. These authors, among others, have laboured to illustrate facts and important narratives outside the recycled modernist reading of Carr's work that forms our image of her blossoming among the Group of Seven, in her correspondence with Mark Tobey, or her late writings; materials that present an edited and narrativized version of herself and the development of Canada.

For decades collections have been built on the idea of Canadian art that coalesced, in one instance, around Carr's first exhibition alongside members of the Group of Seven in 1927—the context in which she became known nationally. This *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* both appropriated Indigenous cultural material as evidence of a distinctly Canadian art history and positioned Carr as a modern iteration or mediator of that aesthetic history. The exhibition was restaged in 2006 by the National Gallery and Vancouver Art Gallery, and this history, as well as that of Carr's relationship to other (predominantly male) settler, modernist painters in Canada and the US, has remained a constant foundation of Carr didactics since 1927.

The work of Huneault, Moray, Crosby, and others intervenes in this common language around Carr and the subtle hierarchies, beginnings, and conclusions that it has implied, and yet the histories they raise remain largely unfamiliar to Gallery visitors as they are rarely included on the surfaces of labels and introductory panels—places where public memory is created and/or reinforced. These and other diversions from the storied development of a distinctly Canadian identity expressed through its art—in which Carr plays a prominent role—continue to be treated as branches or "alternative narratives" rather than roots of her work, evidence of the "manifest manners"[18] of modernism that continue to guide institutional thinking and meaning making.

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[18] Gerald Vizenor, in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*, defines manifest manners as "the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of indian cultures. Manifest manners court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), vi.

Modernism, a key component of colonialism, is a unifying aesthetic history for what is called the western art world (that has regularly replaced the heritage and community context of Indigenous cultural materials with the story of their influence on the invention of modern aesthetic principles). As in many colonies, in Canada the development of national sovereignty hung on the creation of an image of a modern country engaged with modern European ideas of art and design, and yet unique in its interpretations of those ideas. In Carr's case these narratives are relevant, but only alongside the equally important history of her relationships with makers like Sewinchelwet and others who occupied a much larger period of Carr's creative and personal life. This includes Carr's childhood friend Mrs. Dennis Douglas, the daughter of Sir James Douglas, first lieutenant-governor of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and Amelia Douglas, the daughter of a Hudson's Bay factor and a Cree woman. Mrs. Dennis Douglas, the author of "a book of Cowichan folk tales," defended Carr's "documentary paintings of Indian villages, lobbying the Provincial legislature to buy some of Carr's paintings in 1913."[19] Neither of these women appear as constant figures in Carr's exhibition bios—though Douglas's support is often referenced without naming her—and the weavings of Sewinchelwet and her contemporaries have limited representation within Canadian art collections.[20]

The common alternative or parallel narrative to "modernism and Carr" that has been used to compare her practice to that of both settler and Indigenous makers is Carr's spiritualism and its relationship to her work—substantiated with quotes from sources such as her journals, in which she sumptuously describes her perception of the divine in nature, and from her letters with theosophist Lawren Harris. Huneault also draws from this part of Carr's biography to build the link between Carr and Sewinchelwet's aesthetic practices. In some respects, this repeats traditional settler arguments about a connection between Carr and the Indigenous subjects she portrayed. However, Huneault does not stray into the myth of "Carr

[19] Gerta Moray, "Northwest Coast native culture and the early Indian paintings of Emily Carr, 1899-1913," PhD dissertation. (University of Toronto, 1993), 85.

[20] The Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and the Museum of Vancouver both have collections of Salish basketry; however, basketry—and Coast Salish cultural production more broadly—was not collected by museums with the same vigour as the carvings of the northern Northwest Coast Nations. This established a false hierarchy between the skilled creative output of Indigenous Nations and between gendered forms of production, which continues to shape perceptions to this day.

as mediator" between settler and Indigenous beliefs, recognizing that Carr has no hereditary connection to the ancestors of the territories she explored and occupied. Huneault acknowledges that Carr's experience of nature, while spiritual, was deeply entangled with the societal and religious beliefs in which she was raised, even as these beliefs evolved over her lifetime. She focuses instead on Carr's assertions of the interconnectedness of all things, proposing that Sewinchelwet's and Carr's very different creative practices both rested on this mutual belief.

Although Sewinchelwet and Carr's relationship to the materials and subjects of their creative practices are tied to shared social, political, and racial contexts, their roles, agency, and accessible rights within those contexts were very different. The events that coincided with their lives and relationship include, among many other occurrences: the establishment of the St. Paul's Indian Residential School in North Vancouver in 1899; the displacement of residents from the village of Sen:ákw (where Sewinchelwet's sister, Sut'elut, lived); the 1907 delegation of Salish chiefs to London, England to petition King Edward VII for their land rights; World War I; and the prevalence of tuberculosis as the era's leading cause of death, exacerbated by living conditions in residential schools and on reserves. This timeline, expanded upon in the exhibition's audio guide, puts into context the divergent experiences of these two women whose thirty-three-year-long friendship coexisted with national policies of displacement, assimilation, and willful negligence toward First Nations, Inuit, and Métis that resulted in the widespread loss of life. The clash of Canadian modernist aspirations with Indigenous claims to sovereignty touched these women's lives yet was never remarked upon in their known correspondence or in Carr's writings. While it is necessary to take into account these external conditions when looking at their creative practices or Carr's portrayal of her friend, the dynamics of their personal relationship are perhaps better understood through consideration of the willingness described by Siyám's introductory account—an attitude that characterizes the intimate exchanges which constitute friendship within or despite one's context. Siyám's account encourages us to not lose sight of this very human dimension.

In the process of receiving Siyám's telling of Sewinchelwet and Carr's relationship and its influences on Carr's practice and thought, we were, however, faced with our colleagues' naming of academic standards for what counts as *fact*. This questioning echoes the requirements that have historically determined the role and reception of oral history by the Canadian government—made clear by the 1997 *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* case. Standing within the relations of this project, this resistance

brought new inflection to Siyám's description of what it meant for Sewinchelwet to share ancestral teachings with Carr, that "their friendship was so strong in such a good way that it was automatically accepted."[21]

In the physical exhibition, we decided to visibly layer voices as an act of resistance to singular institutional narratives. On further reflection I now see this choice, and its friction with the context in which we worked, in the words of Trinh T. Minh-Ha, who writes:

> If the project is carried out precisely at the limit where anthropology could be abolished in what it tries to institutionali[z]e, then nobody here is on safe ground. Multivocality, for example, is not necessarily a solution to the problems of centralized and hierarchical knowledge when it is practiced accumulatively—by juxtaposing voices that continue to speak within identified boundaries.

Minh-Ha points to the process of institutionalizing, in which knowledge—and strategies such as multivocality—are appropriated into existing frameworks that, as Ashon Crawley posits, seek "stasis and stillness" through "repeatability and reiteration."[22] Crawley writes, "Institutions are categorical distinctions, they are spaces that have been set apart after the repetition and reiteration of particular performances… they are severances and the effect of memorial."[23]

Minh-Ha and Crawley converge on processes that favour *becoming* over normative function, form, and style, a convergence within which I found the identities of my person and my role as "curatorial interpretation" productively challenged. A series of questions emerged: how to make explicit the positions taken (and inherited) by the works exhibited; how to make transparent the relations curated by those who have access to an object's contexts, its histories, and its creators; and finally, how to share those rhizomes of meaning, with no one narrative positioned as more important or correct.

We took up these questions in *lineages and land bases* through interpretive materials that also described the parallels set up by their physical installation. This approach

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[21] Audio-recorded conversation with Találsamkin Siyám Bill Williams, February 3, 2020.

[22] Ashon Crawley, "Otherwise, Instituting," *Performance Research* 20.4, 86-87.

[23] Ibid., 87.

acknowledged that visitors do not reset as they move about the galleries or between labels; their experience is cumulative and comparative. And as the narrators of these frames, we not only endeavoured to be transparent but to continuously check our own positionality in relation to our words—a component of our working relationship as well as our research. As the exhibition now lives in the pages of this journal, it is important to consider that all voices are further juxtaposed with the content appearing before and after this text—not unlike the experience of moving through exhibitions in an institution. This is the inseverable exchange between things in both physical and cultural relations, between form and content—important to any understanding of this project, our thoughts on friendship and exhibition making, or how a worldview exists within the material of a weaving.

Within the scholarship on Carr, there is much debate as to the truth of her presentation of self and her interactions with Indigenous Peoples. Did she merely replicate the myth of the "vanishing Indian"? Crosby and Cole suggest that we should read her writings as a mixture of memory and literary invention rather than as historical belief.[24] This kind of reading, according to Saul Friedlander, is a form of critical inquiry "essential for understanding what connects a past event to its present representation."[25] Building on Friedlander's ideas, Crosby writes, "by puncturing facile narratives, we contribute to a multivocal history from which no single, overarching meaning emerges unchallenged."[26] However, we are decades into "puncturing facile narratives" and it is evident, in our experience, that institutional practice requires further shifting.

In light of the aforementioned research, Carr and Sewinchelwet's lives and work clearly demand a continuous presentation of multiple readings and are quickly hollowed within attempts to construct singular or thematic histories. Just as these researchers build on the work of each other, so too must the presentation of history by public-facing institutions. The restrictions of time and resources, of course, add to the difficulty of building research on top of building exhibitions. However, these conditions only further indicate the need for change in the dynamics of this

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[24] Douglas Cole, "The Invented Indian / The Imagined Emily," *BC Studies* No 126/126 (Spring/Summer 2000) 147-62; Marcia Crosby, "A Chronology of Love's Contingencies," in *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2006).

[25] Crosby, 158-9.

[26] Ibid.

labour. Thinking and producing in relation depends on internal structures that support the work of individuals working as equals within communities engaged in equitable relations with other communities. Both internal and external structures are needed for either to be authentic, functional, or productive. The possibility of being able to continue to build on the knowledge of each last iteration depends on this collaboration, as does the relevance of institutions to their publics. Embracing contradiction and complexity engenders a more nuanced understanding of place and expands the transformative possibilities of the Gallery's role within occupied Indigenous territories.

In our own context, rather than adjudicating Siyám's testimony as fact, our attempt at a multivocal strategy through comparative sets of objects, texts, and audio was intended to test tangible forms of equitable analysis, while keeping in mind Minh Ha's assertion to practice at the limit of what is categorizable. However it remains that edges and limitations are defined by the knowledges of who or what is speaking. Just as scholars have evaluated Carr's work and words with the benefit of hindsight and from their own positionality in time and space, so too may our decisions be justified or judged by present limitations or future evolutions in thought and practice. This potential failure returns us to the question that has hovered around readings of Carr: how can truth be adjudicated in ways that grapple with the often uncomfortable complexities of changing realities, and is it not *truths*? In saying this, we are not apologists of Carr's Victorian-era outlook and its racist colonial underpinnings. We are advocating for curatorial and interpretive approaches that dwell in complex multiplicity rather than smoothing out competing or contradictory claims for the sake of a unified institutional or national narrative. We are by now well aware of the absences that such narratives replicate.

Our approach tried to step from the terms formed in the texts by the authors mentioned, as well as those formed in dialogue with Indigenous individuals and communities. This includes the use of concepts like *survivance*[27] that echo what Huneault describes as the teachings of Salish makers who "stress the continuity of

[27] Vizenor's term survivance first appeared in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (1994), where he defines it as follows: "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion of an estate, and in that sense, the estate of native survivancy."

ancestral knowledge and traditions that have persisted despite the best efforts of the residential school."[28] The artworks, belongings, and interpretive materials presented in *lineages and land bases* were intended to position Carr's work within the spatial and cultural context of Sḵwx̱wú7mesh territory—spatially activating and extending the territorial acknowledgement oft-recited in programmatic contexts yet not often visible to the everyday visitor in the Gallery. We also structured written content following what Huneault describes as "Indigenous art histories' focus on community, in preference to conventions that too greatly magnify the importance of individuals."[29]

This was done, more specifically, through the language and format of Carr and Sewin̲chelwet's biographies, which were presented on raised panels surrounded by a variety of materials. Carr's panel included her small watercolour portrait *Sophie Frank* (1914); a 1934 photograph of Carr in her Simcoe Street studio in Victoria, seen with the same portrait on the wall behind her; an iPad displaying the chapter entitled "Sophie" from Carr's memoir *Klee Wyck*; and a hardcover copy of the original 1941 edition of the book. Sewin̲chelwet's panel included two historical photographs: one of the weaver posed with a number of her baskets and a young child; and another of a more elderly Sewin̲chelwet with her husband Kwetsím Jimmy Frank and other family members. Also presented were scanned images of four letters: three written by Sewin̲chelwet to Carr in 1915 and 1929; and the fourth written by Kwetsím to Carr following his wife's passing in 1939.

Considered together, the panels tended to decentre Carr as an individual and the ways in which she has been authorized to speak for Indigenous Peoples;[30] instead, they focused on her family and the encounters that shaped her artistic development as well as demonstrating her "love"[31] for Sewin̲chelwet through visual and textual means. To view Sewin̲chelwet through the lens of Carr's writing and art is, as Shirley Bear and Susan Crean have observed, "to be forced to contemplate the way

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[28] Huneault, 253.

[29] Huneault, Ibid.

[30] Crosby, 159.

[31] In a diary entry dated December 5, 1930, Carr writes that she dreamt of Sophie and notes, "I loved her still" (*Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, 47); Huneault also notes that Frank's extant letters to Carr are addressed from "your friend," "your dear friend," and "your ever loving friend." She writes: "My conclusion is that this was no mere epistolary convention is supported by the fact that Frank named one of her children Emily" (356).

Emily Carr in her studio at 646 Simcoe Street, Victoria, BC 1934
Image credit: Harry Upperton Knight Courtesy the City of Victoria Archives, CVA M00699

Carr altered and obfuscated both Sophie and her history."[32] Indeed, in an inscription on the reverse of the *Sophie Frank* portrait, Carr bequeaths the painting to her confidant and editor, Ira Dilworth, which reads:

> the original Portrait of Sophie done probably in Vancouver around 1907 or 1908, at my death the property of Ira Dilworth of CBC from his love, Carr, because the life of Sophie meant so much to him. He understood her womanliness & my love for her. To him she was more than just an Indian, she was a symbol.

Huneault similarly argues that Sewi̱nchelwet is:

> lost from view behind… the screen of [Carr's] own emotional needs and romantic projections. Even the watercolour portrait Carr made of her friend

[32] Bear and Crean, 64.

> does little to convey an appreciation of her as a person. In Carr's own words, Sewiṉchelwet was 'a symbol'—of Indianness, of maternity, and of something good and pure that had been damaged and made to suffer.[33]

Huneault subsequently notes that, by the 1990s, "critique of Carr's racially determined paternalism" began to intensify, as did the "rediscovery" of Sewiṉchelwet.[34] Her own research has served to rediscover or recuperate Sewiṉchelwet for art history, not merely by inserting this woman's life and skilled creative practice into Carr's already well-worn narrative, but by reflecting Salish basketmaking and worldview onto Carr's paintings and her relationships with the land and First Nations of this place. This has produced a more nuanced understanding of Carr's work and its prominence, at the same time centring the community of practice that Sewiṉchelwet belonged to. Huneault deftly describes this practice in ontological terms: "As a process where maker and material come together in an intimate familiarity and sensuous engagement, basketry offers insight about what is entailed in being *in relation*."[35]

Each artwork or belonging presented in this exhibition had a counterpart. Baskets woven by Sewiṉchelwet, her sister Sut'elut, and Chuchάwlut Mary Anne August were exhibited in dialogue with Carr's oil on paper landscape paintings, demonstrating Huneault's assertion that "there is a sense in which the better-known artist's heavily metaphorical depictions of trees find a literal counterpart in the basket's coiled arboreal fibres."[36] And, returning to the assertion of survivance and the intergenerational continuity of basketmaking, I included Sesemiya's contemporary dance apron and headband (c. 2017). Finally, we included on labels other Sḵwx̱wú7mesh weavers working in the early 20th century whose names and practices are largely unrecorded within the art historical contexts written by institutions and collectors. These weavers, initially named in Huneault's chapter, include Chuchάwlut Mary Anne August (c. 1881–c. 1971), P'elawk'wia Margaret Baker (c. 1885–1972), Kw'exiliya Madeline Deighton (c. 1858–1948), Skwétsiya or Hak–stn Harriet Johnny (c. 1843–1940), Sut'elut Monica Williams (c. 1875–1972),

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[33] Huneault, 250.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 290.

[36] Ibid.

Swenámiya Mary Anne Khatsahlano (c. 1881–1970), Sxwelhcháliya Mary Anne John (c. 1845/50–c. 1942), Annie Jack (c. 1886–1973), Molly John (c. 1880–1955), Agatha Moody (c. 1887–1967), and Mary Natrall (d. 1959).[37]

Huneault's comparative focus was extended in the exhibition by a selection of Carr's ceramic objects, produced for the tourist market, which crudely appropriated the iconography of First Nations along the Northwest Coast. Carr's ceramic production is, unsurprisingly, not a celebrated aspect of the artist's oeuvre and sits uncomfortably within the Gallery's permanent collection. In her 1946 autobiography, *Growing Pains*, Carr herself wrote, "I hated myself for prostituting Indian Art; our Indians did not 'pot,' their designs were not intended to ornament clay—but I did keep the Indian design pure."[38] The economic impetus for this work—Carr returned to Victoria from Vancouver in 1913, gave up painting for thirteen years, and struggled through years of financial hardship—provided a counterpoint to the economic pressures that resulted in Salish women similarly adapting their practices for the tourist market. The inclusion of a goblet-shaped basket by P'elawk'wia Margaret Baker exemplified the adaptation and innovation of Salish women as basketmaking increasingly became a primary source of income for their families, in spite of the increasing difficulty of sourcing their materials due to the encroachment of settlement and industry on their lands. As Huneault notes, "far from bringing her into the kind of rapturous communion with nature"[39] that Carr sought in her paintings, the new circumstances of Sḵwx̱wú7mesh existence drew Sewin̲chelwet further from the land: "I buy all our food…I have not been working in my garden for I am in Vancouver every day trying to sell baskets."[40]

The stark realities of Sewin̲chelwet's life, spoken in her own words in letters written to her friend Emily, return us to the relationship between the self and the natural world that *lineages and landbases* sought to explore. This relationship threads through the historical circumstances and societal structures that shaped the world Carr and Sewin̲chelwet were born into—a world that impacted but did not fully determine

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[37] Ibid., 273–4.

[38] Emily Carr, "Growing Pains" in *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr*, ed. Doris Shadbolt (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 439.

[39] Huneault, 271.

[40] Quoted in Huneault, 271.

their view of one another and the encounters they shared. The skill and sensuous engagement with animate materials embodied in the basketry of Sewinchelwet and her contemporaries is knowledge still held in their communities today. The continuity of this practice undermines the modernist narrative of Canadian art history as told through a tradition of landscape painting premised on the erasure of Indigenous presence — a narrative in which Carr is implicated but to which her work and life do not neatly adhere.[41] Rather, Carr and Sewinchelwet's relationship and the connection between their creative practices prefigures and extends a critique of the separation of nature and culture taken up by artists in so-called Canada since the 1960s and explored throughout the exhibition. Their contributions compel us to think anew about the meaning of self and its entanglement with the non-human world and to recentre Indigenous understandings and stories of place — which should profoundly alter the way museums engage Indigenous Peoples, collection practices, curation, interpretation, programming, and more. ■

[41] In his book *National Visions, National Blindness*, Leslie Dawn also effectively details the fissures within this narrative, from its very inception, in relation to European and settler Canadian art.

Three Poems

Abigail Chabitnoy

LETTER TO THE DAUGHTER I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE

I still wake weeping after dreams
of my grandmothers

wonder if they would like my small dog
what they would say to the cat.

Don't ask me how the dog knows
each time I wake regardless
of my body's tendency to set hard when I think
no daughter of mine shall weep for me.

Fur fills my lungs til my own breath
won't:

Breathing is a costly act/
I wish to return
to sleep.

My black-haired grandma didn't want to be a bother
when she felt the water rising in her lungs.

My mother's mother went into the earth in her finest
leopard self.

I want to build a boat

a body
large enough to carry us all

these days these waters not fit for wading,
this mud hungers
for our living.

The blood stops
in my veins
aware of every other body at rest
and my threat to that state
of ease.

I would sooner let every particle of dust
all the dirt and salty water
seal every opening

sooner let the fluid petrify / in
my womb than risk
awaking others, but already

arnat qutmi et'ut[1]
imat kuingtut[2]

we, the break in time—

[1] The women are at the beach.

[2] The waters are walking.

WHEN YOU SAY THE DEER SWEPT OUT TO SEA WAS "SAVED"

to amass
to deposit
to heap
to hoard
to invest
[a] hill
to lay aside
to lay away
to keep
to deliver
to take
to economize
to redeem
to tender

Ayaquq egtaakait cuumi.[3]

a marginal propensity [to save]
(a neck)
[possibly an] egg
a stitch in time saves nine

(to snatch)

[one requires] the ark
[otherwise a] flotation device
([a] Noah)
a people saved is a land earned
([a] reserve)

[3] They used to throw a harpoon before. As a drag on the wound(ed). To make the animal visible in the water.

your hide or theirs
your peach
your pinch
your stone

the key to
the human race
with the help of
the day god
killer
king
know it all—

Know it all.

I TOO GROW TIRED OF THE PLOT

In conversation with Taije Silverman's "In the Middle of the Myth"

The wind is not a river
Someday
It will end

The river or
The wind
I can't recall

But if we give that same river
The same rights as any person
We must have seen
She is vulnerable

We must have seen
The end

Meanwhile more hot air blows
Unconcerned by persons
Raising the likelihood of
Drought
So they say

How then does the river fare?

I guess it's true
Women are still talking about the weather
One can't be too careful
With the currents
These days

Once there was a river with one hundred thirty-four ribbons in her hair

These days the river gives up
The ghost

Once there was a beautiful river
Maligned for her long hair

These days the river thinks
She would like to be more
Or moored

When she left there was no more water
For drinking or for washing
When she left there were no more fish
Bones in the mud in place of ribbons

These days the river likes to think
We all wash out in the sea

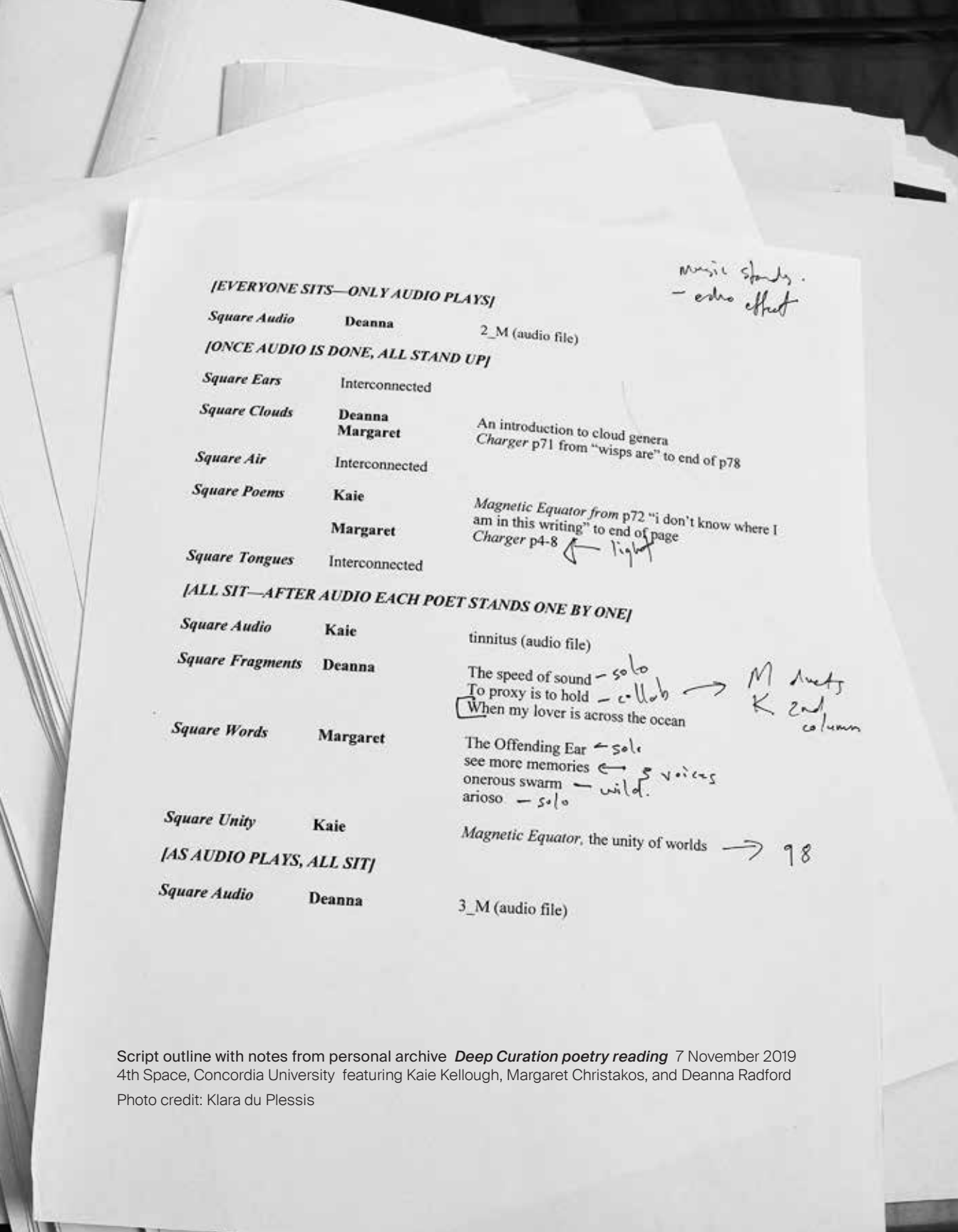
The soles she kept of each shoe
collected on her shores
caught in her knotted hair
she held aloft and fixed
a ribbon to each small vessel

These days the river thinks
are overdue for a flood.

Exiting the Schedule of the Poetry Reading

Klara du Plessis and Elee Kraljii Gardiner in conversation

Klara du Plessis is a poet, critic, and literary curator experimenting with a new practice of poetry event organization that she calls "Deep Curation." From 2012 to 2018, she curated the monthly, Montréal-based, Resonance Reading Series, a catalyzing experience that also prompted her to think critically about the literary event as a form. Elee Kraljii Gardiner is a poet, mentor, and curator of The Whole Cloth Series. The moveable aspect of the series recalls her work with Postal Code Reading Series programmed in 2012 and 2013, which brought contributors in the anthology *V6A: Writing from Vancouver's Downtown* Eastside to different neighbourhoods in British Columbia's Lower Mainland. In the fall of 2020, Klara and Elee initiated the following conversation to elaborate on their respective experiments with the poetry reading as relational form. Their curatorial projects question the rote format of the poetry reading and challenge writers, curators, and audiences alike to imagine more intentional modes of affective event organization, ranging from comfort to critique.



[EVERYONE SITS—ONLY AUDIO PLAYS]

Square Audio	**Deanna**	2_M (audio file)

[ONCE AUDIO IS DONE, ALL STAND UP]

Square Ears	Interconnected	
Square Clouds	**Deanna** **Margaret**	An introduction to cloud genera *Charger* p71 from "wisps are" to end of p78
Square Air	Interconnected	
Square Poems	**Kaie**	*Magnetic Equator from* p72 "i don't know where I am in this writing" to end of page
	Margaret	*Charger* p4-8
Square Tongues	Interconnected	

[ALL SIT—AFTER AUDIO EACH POET STANDS ONE BY ONE]

Square Audio	**Kaie**	tinnitus (audio file)
Square Fragments	**Deanna**	The speed of sound To proxy is to hold When my lover is across the ocean
Square Words	**Margaret**	The Offending Ear see more memories onerous swarm arioso
Square Unity	**Kaie**	*Magnetic Equator*, the unity of worlds

[AS AUDIO PLAYS, ALL SIT]

Square Audio	**Deanna**	3_M (audio file)

Script outline with notes from personal archive ***Deep Curation poetry reading*** 7 November 2019
4th Space, Concordia University featuring Kaie Kellough, Margaret Christakos, and Deanna Radford
Photo credit: Klara du Plessis

Klara du Plessis I love poetry readings, but am often bored by them, whether attending or participating. Both in my creative and curatorial practice and in my scholarly research, I've been driven to think critically about literary curation and to knead the discipline into a more intentional site for the presentation and sharing of poetic work in performance.

It's tricky to generalize, and there'll always be many wonderful counterexamples, but I do wonder why the conventional, contemporary North American poetry reading as a relational form often fails to engage the poetic work (as well as the poet and the audience) it aims to present. As we've discussed privately before, Elee, many poetry events expect the poet to appear *cold*, without context beyond a factual bio, without links to poets presenting alongside them, and without the requisite space to expand into their own performance or for the audience to sink into a sense of activated comfort with the poetry performed. Since 2018, I've been experimenting and developing Deep Curation,[1] a practice of literary event organization. This curatorial practice attempts to move beyond the variety show model of the poetry reading to create events that allow for dialogues between poets and poems. It deliberately navigates structures of scripting, improvisation, and collaboration, and includes methods such as excerpting and choral performance towards a complete reconfiguration of literary works into a new, collective production. In a brilliant, co-authored essay, Karis Shearer and Erín Moure call for "a new paradigm for the poetry reading and its study," suggesting that "the best poetry readings to see and hear are self-reflexive performances that deliberately disrupt the notion of the author as definitive interpreter of their own work."[2] Materializing this kind of thinking intrigues me…

Elee Kraljii Gardiner Yes! A catalyst for me to start doing things differently as a host and programmer was the publication of my second poetry collection, *Trauma Head*, a long experimental poem-memoir about having an arterial dissection and stroke. I was aware that retreading excruciating details night after night on tour

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[1] Since its inception in 2018, Klara has hosted eight Deep Curation events across Canada and internationally, with the intention to continue once COVID-19 protocols allow. Further reflections on how the event has evolved can be found on The SpokenWeb Podcast, Season 2, Episode 1: "Deep Curation–Experimenting with the poetry reading as practice."

[2] Erín Moure and Karis Shearer, "The Public Reading: A Call for a New Paradigm." *Public Poetics: Critical Issues in Canadian Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Bart Vautour, Erin Wunker, Travis V. Mason, and Christl Verduyn (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 271-87.

could be dangerous to my mental health and my reading of the work. I made some rules towards protection: I would read sequentially through the book, picking up on the page I had ended on in the previous reading and never excerpting the poem so as to avoid returning to the "high-drama" place a short-term audience might attach to instantly: the sexy, movie-trailer clip of the book that could also seduce me as a default choice at the cost of understanding the process of the text. This has been a helpful rule because I am experiencing the book as a *whole object*, becoming familiar with the flow and narrative, learning what the book does as an entirety. It also makes the hours before a reading very calm: no agony about choosing which poems to read!

With *Trauma Head* I knew I needed positive energy around me, so I thought about the best conditions, dream conditions, for a reading. What I came up with was a pre-launch event, an intimate circle by invitation. I wanted to be with people who are not only clever readers of poetry but also either know me or know what it is to deal with neurological alterity. We met the night before the launch at Massy Books in Vancouver, where the public launch would be. I placed chairs in a circle, lit candles (since artificial light can be really taxing, visually) and we had a mellow discussion before I read from the book a bit. I spoke about the genesis of the project and how I wrote it. Sitting around me were Patricia Massy, Fred Wah, Pauline Butling, Daphne Marlatt, David Chariandy, Sophie McCall, Stephen Collis, Amanda Rheaume, Kevin Spenst, Juliane Okot Bitek, Miriam Moses, Adrienne Gruber, and Anne Stone. Several people took turns trying out reading techniques for the poems such as two voices reading parts of a poem over each other. We tried positioning ourselves back-to-back and facing each other, reading the poem backwards, and reading lines in call-and-response. We were talking the book into existence and I felt that I was discovering it in some ways for the first time. I found myself wondering why the poetry community doesn't make the type of space necessary for this kind of discovery more, why we shortchange the author when it comes to experience *with* the book.

KdP I admire your awareness of what you needed from a book launch of *Trauma Head* and how you were able to navigate that need with gentleness but also precision. We talked on the phone about this maybe a year ago and I enjoy thinking about your embodied choice to warm the bookstore space a day before the public event with an intimate group of friends and writers.

With the advent of COVID-19, I similarly felt the need to experiment with organizing a non-standard book launch for my new book *Hell Light Flesh*, keeping it as small as possible rather than the default: as large as possible. I scheduled three six-person discussions in Montréal's Jarry Park. Each event centred around three short readings from the book, followed by a dialogue that lasted between sixty and ninety minutes in total. In attendance were a varied group of colleagues and friends who all brought their mindsets and experiences to the event. Discussions were rich and thrilling. This series of events, held among people I trust, served as a workshop for me to think about how I want to talk about my new book. It was a challenging and even risky experience of exposing myself and my book in a way that is not usually required at a book launch. Probably as a result, it was also the most satisfying engagement with my writing I've ever experienced: an activated, durational listening and analysis that celebrated my book through real generosity of time, energy, and thought. The beautiful intimacy of these events makes me reflect on the potential value of insular communities and consider how a warmth from closeness might be transmitted to the more democratic, public-facing event. I've started thinking about these *Hell Light Flesh* park launches as part of my Deep Curation practice. Although the Jarry Park discussions were way more minimal in their presentation of poetic material than most of the other Deep Curation poetry readings I've created, they similarly sprung from an intention to frame the structure through which authors and their poetic practices engage with an audience through performance.

EKG I would *love* to see a script for a Deep Curation event. My own experience of deeper attention made me wonder about a place that could hold a book for as long as the text needs. Sachiko Murakami told me the term for what I wanted to try was a "whole cloth" reading, which comes from the term for when the pages of the book are not yet cut and the text appears on one long roll of paper or cloth. So, the series was born under that name.[3] Sherwin Bitsui's *Dissolve* had just come out and it had the necessary threads: the book is cohesive, it builds a world, and it isn't longer than is manageable to absorb in one sitting. Selfishly, I also love listening to Sherwin read. I knew that the environment mattered. People had to be able to relax into listening well. UBC's Green College offered to host us in their cottage living room, which was the perfect venue.

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[3] The Whole Cloth reading series launched in February of 2020, with plans to hold sessions featuring authors in different locations across North America. Future events will be posted at eleekg.com/readingsevents/the-whole-cloth-reading-series/.

Here are some personal notes I wrote about The Whole Cloth series:

> *Sherwin read Dissolve cover to cover for the reading series. Small audience, intense audience. No mic. Low, dimmed lights. Armchairs and couches. I liked how he loosened as he read and tried different timbres and gestures and phrasings as we all loosened and melted into the upholstery. It took about 15 minutes to get in the groove, which is when a normal reading shuts off. What does this tell us…*
>
> *His Whole Cloth reading lasted only 37 minutes, but it felt timeless. Time was honeying. It could have been 10 minutes as far as I knew. Afterwards the air was thick, like cave air. His poetry persona left. The listeners didn't want to speak. Most of us could only react to sound, as if language had been so exhausted by his sharp images and contradictions that nothing was left for us.*
>
> *Later, Sherwin said he thought Dissolve had achieved its goal, had fulfilled itself through this reading. He was surprised by how it felt, too. "Beautiful," he said. "Something beautiful happened here and I don't understand it."*

KdP The poetry reading often favours the lyric poem. A short reading features a little selection of one-page poems as extracted from the complete book of poems. For any longer-form poetry, excerpting becomes necessary. I love that The Whole Cloth series is able to maintain the integrity of the poetic work as originally envisioned, a continuity by the author in book form. I'm also struck by the similar concerns driving The Whole Cloth and Deep Curation, but how they proceed with reverse tactics — reading a title in its entirety versus splintering different poetries to reconstruct a new, collective entity.

In my Deep Curation experiments, I try to use excerpting strategically, conceptually, and thematically, so that parts of different authors' oeuvres enter into dialogue with one another. The Deep Curation process usually starts with a prolonged period of reading, immersing myself in as many texts as possible by the invited poets. Once I start noticing touchpoints between the different works, I create a document with single lines or excerpts from poems or notes about longer poems that could work well together. Questions of shape and form impact the decision-making around the event: will it have movements, refrains, progressions — these decisions are almost musical. Then there are considerations about the placement of poems and pieces of poems within that formal structure.

Because I approach this process through the lens of curation rather than performance, I think of this scripting as a process of adjacency. I imagine the kind of connections and conversations that can take place between different works through proximity. All of this is a huge amount of work. Creating the first draft of a script usually takes me three to four months to plan and that feels rushed (having more sustained time to also work with the poets themselves would be a huge asset to further develop this project). I usually circulate the script with the poets a week or two in advance of the performance with the intent of receiving feedback. We then meet the day before the event when we are all in the same city to brainstorm more integrated and collaborative cues for maximizing the choral dimension of having two, three, or four poets performing together.

The result of all of this is a new literary whole constructed through the hybrid rearticulation and recombination of pieces of distinct works, vocalized collectively by the poets themselves. Deep Curation poetry readings can be playful and messy, but they can also be deeply poignant and succinct as different strands of poetic work come together. I like to say that Deep Curation deliberately retains the minimalism of the poetry reading—poets reading poetry—even as it rubs up against performance and performance art, improvisation, and more. I have been fortunate to work with, and be challenged and inspired by, phenomenal poets including Kaie Kellough, Margaret Christakos, Deanna Radford, Oana Avasilichioaei, Liz Howard, Tess Liem, Aaron Boothby, Canisia Lubrin, Erin Robinsong, Sawako Nakayasu, Lee Ann Brown, Fanny Howe, and others.

EKG The collaborative energy here is superb. No two events could be the same, could they? And that ephemeral, irreproducible quality is so like a poem itself, which exists in all moments and only one at the same time.

I realize in hearing your ideas, Klara, that what I am reaching towards in new considerations of the poetry reading is a way to expand time: to stretch time around the poem and to create pockets of time within the poem that the audience can inhabit. Chronology runs into different boggy or luge-like environments inside the poem—that's its magic. So how can we create the space and context for listeners to leave the clock world and enter the chronology of the text? Some poets are skilled at drawing the cloak around themselves and captivating listeners so easily that the world of the bookstore or café falls away within the first few feet of verse. It comes easily to some people…and I have opinions on why, connected to performance.

What, for example, made it possible for M. NourbeSe Philip and Cecilia Vicuña to alter the Zoom parameters of distance between three hundred-and-fifty people last night (November 18th, 2020) for Harvard's Woodberry Reading? Aside from their proximity to the screen, their calm energy, the intimacy of their close voices on the mic (particularly Vicuña's high whispery voice that came across like a lullaby or wind song), I noticed the event was set up for the authors to be supported, relaxed, and for the audience to know what vibe was in the planning. We were invited to mingle before the event. Each poem as well as the event itself, including the format and musical selection, was well contextualized by the host, Christina Davis. The word "hospitality" pops into my head. Both readers, who had never met, seemed like dinner guests in the midst of a great evening. The tenderness, the care-fulness, was palpable! The Woodberry Reading was an exceptionally exploratory and intimate event because of the way it was guided in by the hosts and helpers, and how they made a direct place for the readers to engage, concentrate, connect. My sense is that the poets and programmers wove a unified purpose through the digital fabric of attendees towards an idea of attention or exploration. They signaled that my digital presence made me part of the reading even though I was silent and had my video off.

KdP It was so nice seeing your name on the guestlist for that event, with me listening from Montréal, you in Vancouver, and the event in Cambridge! This new phenomenon of the online event allows for the contraction of geography, playing with space in perhaps a similar way as an engaging poetry reading plays with time. It's about exiting scheduled, processual time, and entering a fluctuating, fluttering, poetic time. It's also about forgetting the dimensionality of the page for a while to listen. For me, that listening is often a merging too—being with the words spoken, but also inhabiting my own thoughts, reactions, unrelated reflections, and being present in that partial, imperfect attention. ■

Slice-Selective Excitation (Brain Scans 1 – 5)

Jim Johnstone

$\Delta F = y \cdot G_{ss} \cdot \Delta z$

1.

I

apologize

for

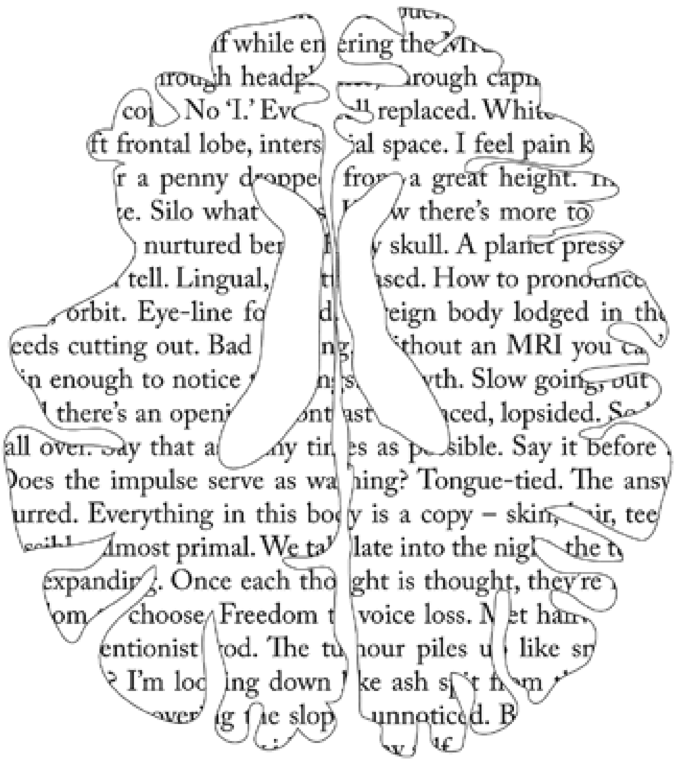
the

times

I'm

not
my self.

2.


f while en ering the
rough headp rough capi
co No 'I.' Ev replaced. White
ft frontal lobe, inters ial space. I feel pain k
r a penny droppe from a great height.
e. Silo what w there's more to
nurtured be y skull. A planet press
tell. Lingual, sed. How to pronounce
orbit. Eye-line fo d, eign body lodged in th
eeds cutting out. Bad ng, ithout an MRI you ca
n enough to notice vth. Slow going, out
there's an openi ont ast nced, lopsided. S
all over. ay that a ny tin es as p sible. Say it before
Does the impulse serve as wa hing? Tongue-tied. The ans
urred. Everything in this bo y is a copy – skin, ir, tee
lmost primal. We ta late into the nig the t
expandir . Once each tho ght is thought, they're
om choose Freedom t voice loss. M et ha
entionist od. The tu nour piles u like sn
I'm loo ing down ke ash s t m
ver g he slop unnoticed. B

3.

Uncontrolled spread, uncontrolled touch. The tumour a proxy for the mind itself—mind yourself while entering the MRI wing. Skeleton. Uncontrolled beats slicing through headphones, through capillaries, a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy. No "I." Every cell replaced. White dwarf, whiteout applied to the left frontal lobe, interstitial space. I feel pain knife down my cheek, the tumour a penny dropped from a great height. There's no other way to apologize. Silo what hurts. Know there's more to motherlessness than what's being nurtured beneath my skull. A planet pressing down, as far as anyone can tell. Lingual, palette-based. How to pronounce this wilderness? Obit, orbit. Eye-line forested. Foreign body lodged in the body—what needs cutting out. Bad lighting. Without an MRI you can't see in. Sliced thin enough to notice tree rings. Growth. Slow going, but there and there until there's an opening. Contrast enhanced, lopsided. So big I'm going to fall over. Say that as many times as possible. Say it before a neuron fires. Does the impulse serve as warning? Tongue-tied. The answer comes out slurred. Everything in this body is a copy—skin, hair, teeth. Learning is possible, almost primal. We talk late into the night, the tumour out of mind but expanding. Once each thought is thought, they're rearranged into the freedom to choose. Freedom to voice loss. Met halfway to the summit by an interventionist god. The tumour piles up like snow. Asking: are you awake yet? I'm looking down like ash spit from the mouth of a volcano. A slow rain covering the slopes, unnoticed. Beyond what's been forecast—uncontrolled spread—my identity, my self.

4.

5.

Every cell

hurts

—

lopsided

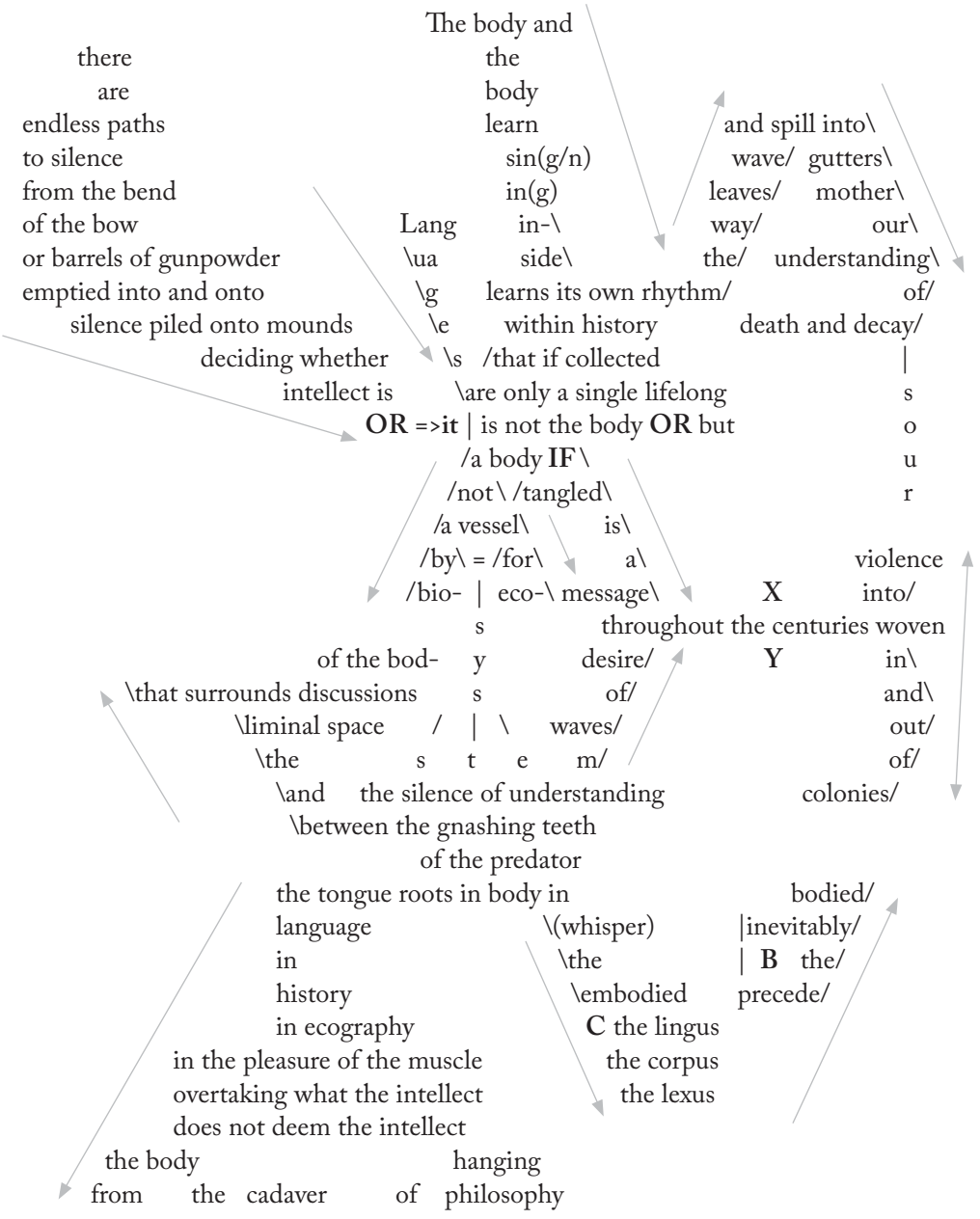
t
ongue-tied

volcan
ic .

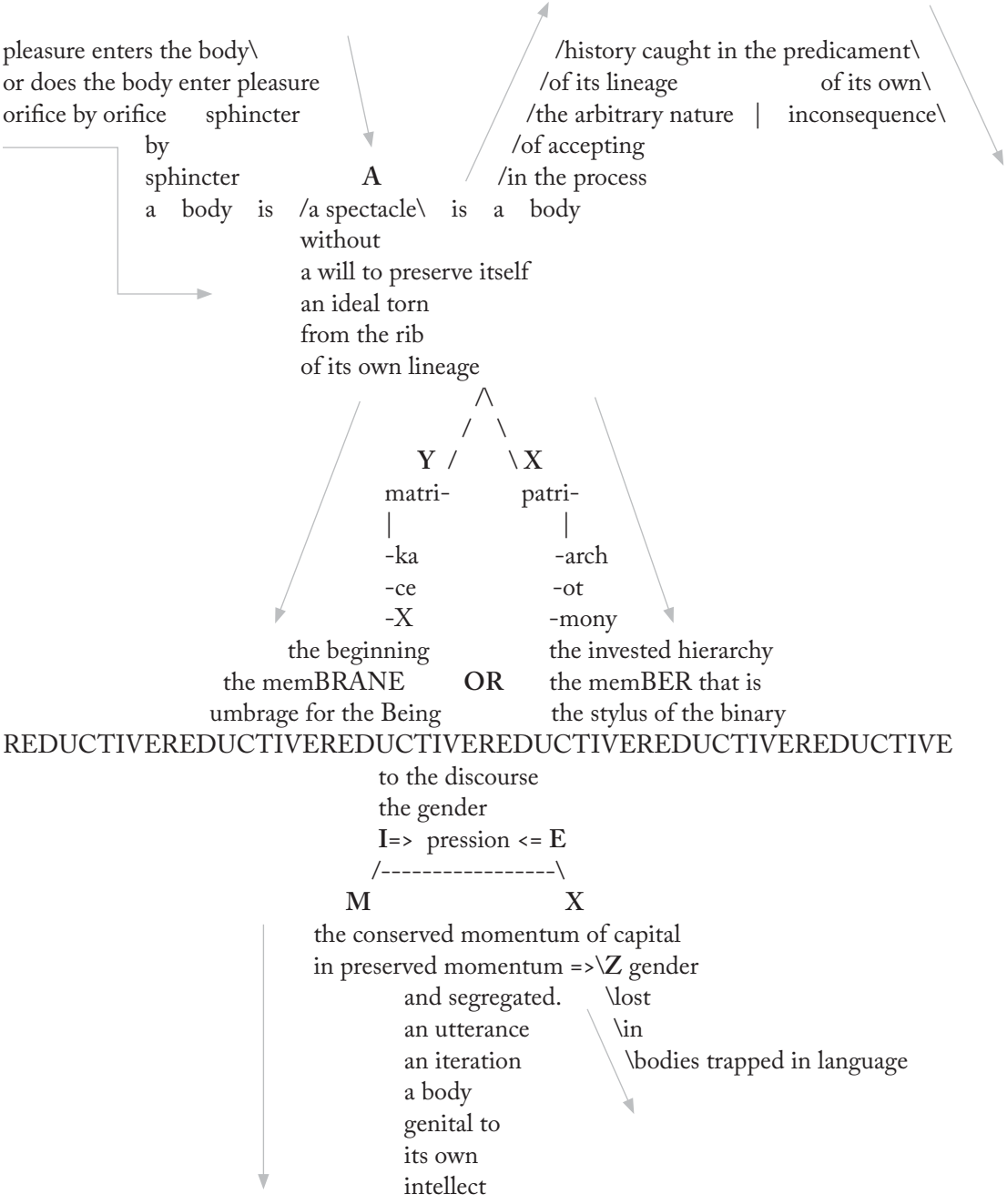
The Body in 3 Utterances

Khashayar Mohammadi

1. Asked and asked...until



2. Pleasure enters and...



3. Footprint

to stand
feet planted
and scale yourself
to your footprint

Two Poems from *Choreography of Forgetting*

Isabella Wang

拼图[1]

[1] jigsaw puzzle [拼] *to command* *piece together with the hand*
an image / charter of the walled city and its territories[2]
memory of parts[3]

[图] inside 口 the walled city there is winter 冬
simplified from the traditional
圖 a walled city and 啚 territory

variations of 啚 exists between
the Chinese Korean Japanese and Vietnamese uses of the word
due to national differences
histories of perceiving[4]

the art of carving a border around the body *cartography of its sums*[5]

the earliest puzzles originated from maps

[2] Winter thaws around the fringes of a country forgetting its maps
body and political thought re-puzzled to become bordered
on someone else's land
Does a country retain its form
remember a thing like that

Does it wander familiar streets
under new names asking *who am i* *who am i*

Winter appears the harshest season on paper
for within 冬
冫 ice signals 夂 the end

Children went ice skating on rivers their souls left with the fish

But an oral legend foretells of an incoming war
with the shifting of January to rain

The Tumen River conceals a memory on public markings
Korean signs in Chinese nightclubs
visible to the spaces inside 口
puzzling over the belongings of a former self

[3] On the news Bruno Catalano's *The Invisible Man*
bronze immigrant statue with pieces of his body
missing felt like a confrontation

Is the man stationed before the sea briefcase in hand
a puzzle of what's left or what's been left behind?

[4] Ocean Vuong's parents crossed by boat
in a poem his father burnt their only violin

to keep his mother's feet warm

That violin was a piece
of his father's puzzle

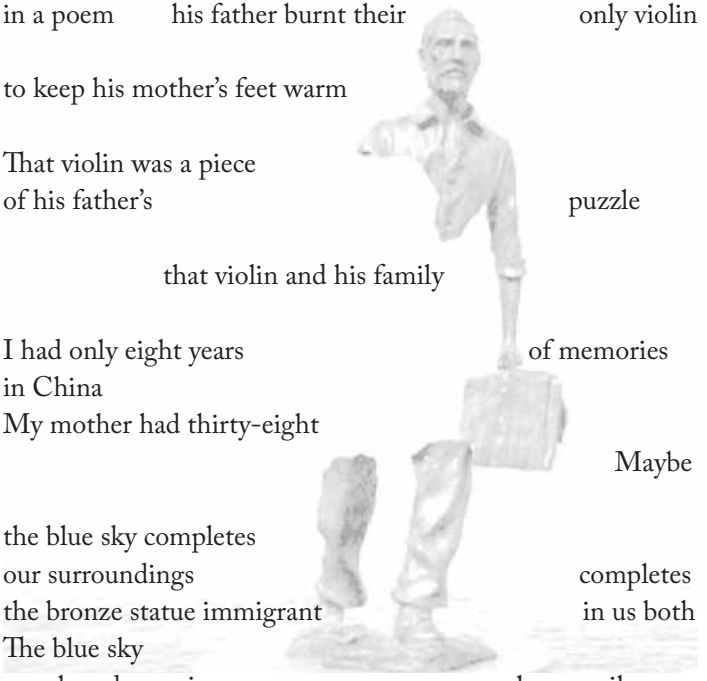
that violin and his family

[5] I had only eight years of memories
in China
My mother had thirty-eight

Maybe

the blue sky completes
our surroundings completes
the bronze statue immigrant in us both
The blue sky
our shared experience also our silences

She speaks to me in Mandarin I answer in English
Our words like gentle earthquakes rocking us
a souvenir puzzle of our old selves in a dream



梦想[1]

students
learned
to
write
using
ink
from
rays
of
moonlight

over
the
clear
water's
reflection

night
brought
good
dreams

forest
by
the
entrance
of
his
elementary
school
yard

sound
of
a
river
cruising

under
夕
the
moon

my
father
a
木

his
mother
a
木

also
a
teacher

the
木木
they
planted
formed
a
little
jujube

my
people
knew
how
to
dream

the
kind
of
dream
where
a
village
of
people
formed
little
trees
with
their
bodies

[梦]

[1]Parts of this poem, written in the form of a traditional Chinese scroll, is intended to be read vertically, from right to left.

longingly	[木]	[想]
at		
a	*tree*	
tree		
and	[目]	
witness		
the	*eye*	
desires		
of	[心]	
the		
heart	heart	
though		
she	to	
is	want	
no		
longer	to	
here	look	

In a dream the heart's desires manifest
enough eyes to see past the forest

their tired lids archiving dust precipitating
from the cargo of an incoming train

the red guards, the arrest, date of interrogation
nailed over the family's clay hut walls

long scrolls of calligraphy in her handwriting
formed a little river and were burnt

suddenly there was only one 木
the tree of a boy age four missing

his mother's complexion
on the jujube trees planted by his mother

my father wanted to be hugged and carried by her
to hear her name called one last time

the road to the city bypasses the forests
of many villages and many dreams

but always the same road to see his father
take a college entrance exam

my father walked following the trains
all so his daughter

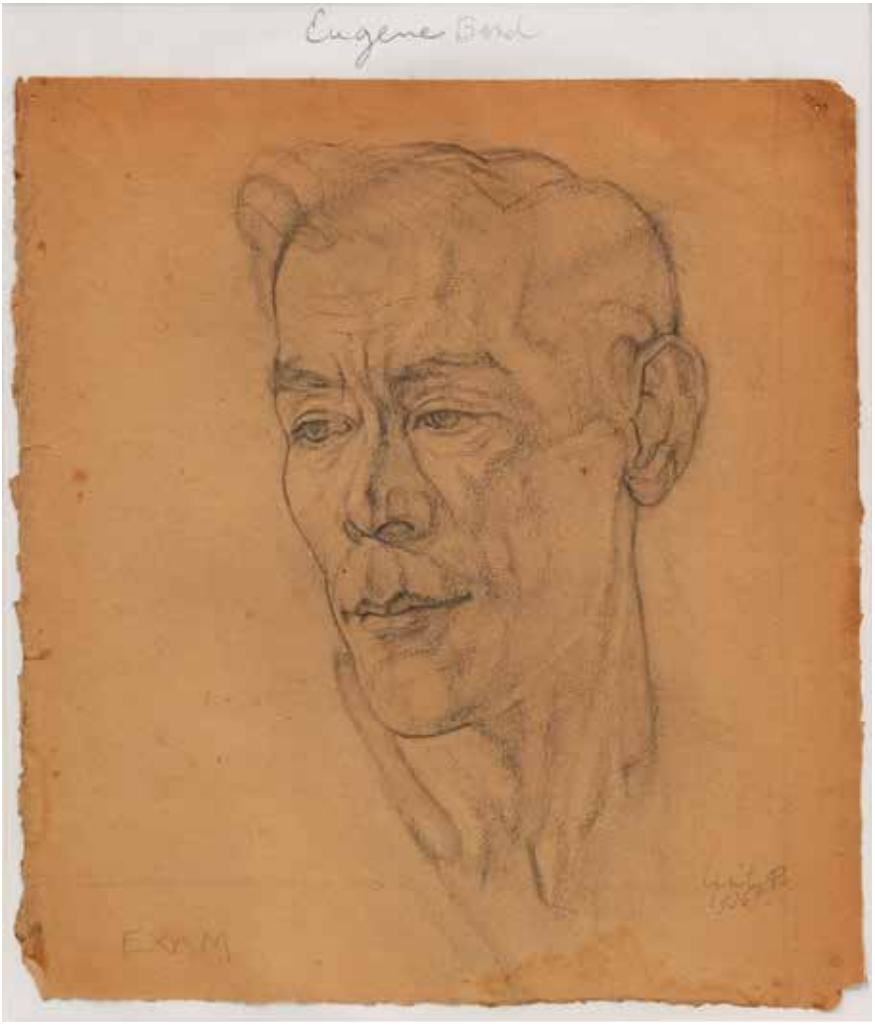
would not have to make
the same trek by foot someday

Whose Chinatown?

Whose Chinatown? Examining Chinatown Gazes in Art, Archives, and Collections exhibited at Griffin Art Projects from January 29th to May 2nd, 2021 brought together an art history of Chinatowns and their importance to communities as centres with works by historical and contemporary Canadian artists. Assembling artworks, artefacts, and archival materials, curator Karen Tam created a dialogue around cultural community and place, mapping the histories and changes in North American Chinatowns over the decades while asking viewers to imagine the future of Chinatowns and their heritage.

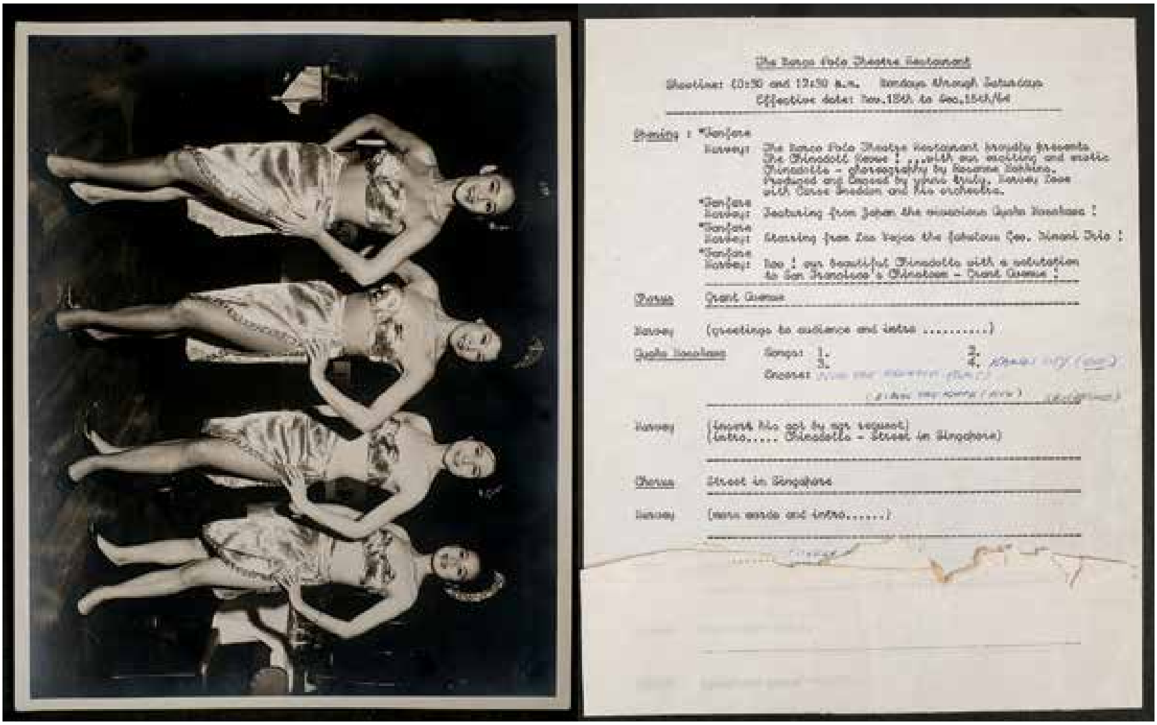
Morris Lum ***Xam Yu Seafood Restaurant, Toronto*** 2016 ink jet print 50.8 cm x 60.96 cm
Courtesy of the Artist

Morris Lum ***Chinese Cultural Centre, Calgary*** 2015 ink jet print 50.8 x 60.96 cm
Courtesy of the Artist



Unity Bainbridge ***Eugene Bond*** 1936 pencil on manilla 27 x 25 cm
Collection of Deborah and Richard Ryan

Born in Manchuria, Eugene Bond (née Bong) was a commercial artist and cook. He was also one of two Asian models for the anatomy, drawing, and painting classes at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art in the 1920s and 1930s, and during the summer art school trips to Savary Island where he worked as the cook for the Royal Savary Hotel. Bond may have also attended VSDAA part-time. As yet, no existing artworks by Bond have been located, though there are a number of sketches and paintings of him by VSDAA art students and other artists. While Bond may have been active artistically in the Chinese community, he may not have had opportunities to show at venues like the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Installation view, from left to right:

Yucho Chow ***Unidentified Black Couple with Cowboy Hat*** c. late 1930s photograph
Yucho Chow Community Archive: John Howard Fair Collection

Yucho Chow ***Unidentified South Asian Couple*** c. late 1930s photograph
Yucho Chow Community Archive: Nirmal Gill Family
Marco Polo Club Scrapbooks, 1960-1983, Collection of Tom Carter, now in the collection of the City of Vancouver Archives

Photo by SITE Photography

Following Page: **Gim Foon Wong** ***Personal Artifacts*** Collection of Karen Cho

From left to right: Patriotic Aviation Bond, 1941; National Defence Loan Bond, 1938;

The Last Spike lapel pin; Silver Bracelet, Between 1939-1945; Correspondence between Gim Foon Wong and Karen Cho, 2003-2005; Gim Foon Wong's Motorcycle Goggles, 2005.

MARCH 15, 2005.

DEAR KAREN –

IT WAS "CHRISTMAS MORNING" WHEN YOUR LETTER AND PHOTOCOPIES ARRIVED. I'VE READ EVERYTHING 3 OR 4 TIMES, AND IT WAS HEART WARMING TO SEE THE CO-OPERATION LIKE THE JEWISH – CHINESE FOR THEIR PREMIERE AT WINNIPEG. LIKEWISE THE BREAKTHROUGH IN THE PROGRESS SUPPOR[T] PEOPLE

(2)

HARV OUTLINED A PLAN TO IMPLEMENT MY "RIDE FOR REDRESS" MDAIGN. MY SON JEFF AND I WILL RIDE TO OTTAWA FOR THE ADA DAY CELEBRATIONS, LEAVING EARLY IN JUNE. SEE INFORMS ME RE IS SUPPORT IN PLACES AND AVAILABLE, ACROSS THE COUNTRY. ORGANIZATION ETC. SOUNDS LIKE "D" DAY – BE FUN AND EFFECTIVE BUT A HUGE CHALLENGE – I'LL KEEP YOU UP TO DATE. HE ICING ON THE CAKE IF THE CREW "CAME ALONG!?

18-07-03

FEB. 20, 2004.
BURNABY, B.C.

DEAR KAREN –

THANKS FOR THE VERY INFORMATIVE BROCHURE, AND YOUR MOST SINCERE LETTER.

IN SPITE OF JUSTICE IT CERTAINLY SEEMS THAT IF SOME I MUST DO WHAT I CAN TO BRING THIS ABOUT. AND WITH SO MANY OF MY COMPATRIATE, ESPECIALLY THE CHINESE VETS, WHO SEEM, EN MASSE, TO BE

GOT TO LOOK THROUGH THE ND RE-READ YOUR LETTER OF T SAY MANY THANKS, AGAIN. IT'S BEEN A MONTH BUT "WE HAD FUN, DIDN'T AT 80, AND AND MAKING N MY AGE. MINE. REALIZE THAT THE CORNER OF ERS! (MOST OF THEM.) IS THE ONE YOU HIND ME. THIS BRINGS ITIES AND THROUGH SHE WAS "MISS CHINATOWN", JUBILEE AND I WAS YFRIEND. (THAT CELEBRATION WAS MAY YEE AND I LIKED FORTUNATELY SHE, LIKE SO "FELL BY THE WAYSIDE". ING SINGLE; SHE MADE SAD; BUT LIFE GOES ON. TTERS, I HOPE THIS ONE ME WHY I'M DOING THIS."

ARROWS IN PUTING THE WON'T DO ANYTHING BUT TO YOU. MIKE, NICK

BYE NOW
Jim

Sept 3. 2005.

ren –

Thanks for the lovely letter and clippings in your last mailing. in attempt to reply to your letter bout the 5TH or 6TH try. I'm e dumps, both physically and since the cross country trip. I ed way too much for some one Then I never did act like other ight now, as I pace over some ity and letters about my with the Redress issues, I find between who I was and who if I suddenly aged 10 or In other words these photos eatly seem dated. Me? Bike? V? Yak Yak? attawon? I foresee that I'll be back n and I've no regrets attempted – To get a chance Prime Minister.

need copies of some of news ttached and I hope they're and letter of Lorentola Mayer, David Miller, is the document that says it all.

KY WINDWARD-AN I CARABIAN 2: Some-

HART Project

Gallery Gachet

Nicole Desrosiers grew up living off the land for most of her childhood, until her mom and sister moved to the city. Escalators and fizzy pop fascinated her.

She sold her first painting in preschool and has since sold commissions and original works. A year ago she started her own gallery, studio nikki, and has a professional background in curating, gallery management, custom framing, and stained glass teaching. Nicole works in multimedia, using her photography as a reference. She explores the cycles of life and death and the balance between the two, as well as cloudscapes and waterscapes. In her youth her work was mostly figurative, however, her work is currently progressing into abstract expressionism.

My name is Sabrina Lynn Hilton. I was always a shy person but very nice, and I would give the shirt off my back for a person in need. I've always been like that; I grew up in a dysfunctional household where I had to raise my sister and me basically by myself. I was also there when my Auntie OD'd on heroin in 2006. She was an amazing artist; I learned a lot from her. I took on art because she was gone and I knew my Auntie would be proud of me, of the way I had become a good painter. I've learned a lot from painting—it helps me with my anxiety and my depression from losing most of my family members. It helps me stay on the right track and keeps me busy. Art is very important in my life today.

Roberta Naziel is a 2spirit person from the Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan Nations currently working on the stolen lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. Her art practice was influenced early in her life by her mother and grandmother, who taught her how to bead, make birch bark baskets, and tan

moose hides. These days Roberta works more with paint, drawing, and mixed media. Drawing upon Indigenous ways of seeing the world, she is reimagining traditional stories passed down through oral tradition. Roberta is currently working on a piece that seeks to upgrade the story of the wild woman.

Geraldine Brake is from Marystown, Newfoundland. Coping with the loss of her son, Shawn Gerard Brake, Geraldine moved to Vancouver in 1989 with her daughter, Lesley. She found an apartment and a job, but life was difficult. She got into a drug scene that took her downhill. Now, for her, drugs and life don't mix. Art takes her to a different world. She paints plants and flowers — daffodils, tulips, and poppies. At first when I got into art, my head was into it. Now I am much more focused. I'm still learning, and I love it. I can picture a lot of things in my mind, but when I see it on the canvas it's so much more beautiful.

Vanessa Webster is of the Nuxalk and Cayuga nations residing on the unceded territories of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh). Living in so-called Vancouver for many years has shaped her experience as an urban Indigenous person. She is a multi-faceted artist who uses many different media in her practice. Trained as a graphic designer, Vanessa currently incorporates ceramics, beadwork, sewing, illustration, and hand lettering. Vanessa started her own business in 2018. She uses her digital and sewing talents to produce Indigenous-themed wearable items such as patches, pins, and tote bags. She produces the items almost entirely herself. She continues her artistic endeavours in art and through her business, Renovatio Creative (total rebirth).

Tina Terrie Desnomies, Native Spirit name Whispering Wind, was born August 25th, 1959 in Regina, Saskatchewan. She was raised by her grandmother, a kind, loving, and positive role model until she was twelve years old, after which she grew up through the streets all over Canada and the United States. For the last five years she has been focused on her art practice, working with painting, beadwork, carving, sculpture, and mixed media. Art helps me relax and deal with stress and emotional and financial issues; it helps me to problem solve, to clear my mind, and to see things in a more positive way. If you look into the darkness, you can choose to see the darkness as the negative or as the positive — we all have a choice to a certain degree. Art is balancing and gives me a new outlook on life, a new direction.

Letter from Gallery Gachet's Outreach Coordinator

Dear Tina, Roberta, Vanessa, Nicole, Geri, and Sabrina,

Thank you for allowing me to experience your art. I have such fond memories of meeting you all on the rooftop, doing collages together, and learning about your philosophies of life and ways of being. Tina, you shared a phrase with me—"the perfectly imperfect"—that has become a guiding force in my life. Roberta, it was such an honour to listen to your stories and ideas about medicine, creator, and ancestors—it was truly transformative for me. Vanessa, I felt such common ground with some of the experiences you have lived through, and my sister loved those earrings you made! Sabrina, your creative output is so inspirational and prolific. Your orcas seem so vibrant and resilient! Geri, I love your sense of humour, your tulips, and your dedication to keep going. And Nicole, your collage addressing themes of life and death is layered with so much meaning—this small image doesn't do justice to its scale and level of detail.

While working with you these past months, a reciprocity has been offered in the stories we have shared with each other. Transitioning our time together to the virtual world was less than ideal, but I'm glad that the dual pandemics of the Drug Poisoning Crisis and COVID-19 that have transformed our communities didn't stop us from getting art supplies to you and forming these new connections. I hope the publication of this work is a truly celebratory moment for you, as it is for me. And I hope all those reading these pages can witness the vitality of these artists and allow this project to uplift your spirit, as it has ours.

Your friend from Gallery Gachet,

Manuel Axel Strain (Manny)

see to see—

A Consciousness of Belonging: On Ken Lum's *Everything is Relevant*

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020

Joni Low

I first met Ken Lum in 2005, when working at Centre A gallery in its former location at 2 West Hastings. After closing the gallery one spring afternoon, my colleagues and I had walked south to the opening of his public artwork, *A Tale of Two Children: A Work for Strathcona*, on Produce Row at the city's National Yard. As part of Lum's Portrait-Repeated Text Series, these two panels—each with a photograph on one side, and text on the other—juxtapose two different childhood fates, depending on the voices internalized. One shows an unhappy Caucasian boy, alone, hunched against a fire hydrant, alongside the text: "What an idiot! What an idiot you are! What an utterly useless idiot you are!" In the other, a young Asian girl smiles, relaxed, looking up to an older woman, beside the phrase: "You so smart. You make me proud you so smart. I so proud you so smart." The body language is revealing, but it is the text—with its charged colours and repetition—that complicate the picture's meaning, raising issues of class, ethnicity, gender, and upbringing in the mind of the viewer. As we stood on the grass near the piece, Ken told me how he grew up nearby and that his mother, who emigrated from Guangzhou to Vancouver a day before Ken was born, worked at Keefer Laundry, where her exposure to laundering chemicals may have led to her early passing from leukemia.[1]

In the same frank and accessible ways, Lum seamlessly interweaves autobiography in *Everything is Relevant*—a collection of his writings on art

[1] Email exchange with Ken Lum, April 2021. See also Dorothy Woodend, "Ken Lum, an Artist Double Crossed?" *The Tyee*, February 11, 2020. https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2020/02/11/Artist-Ken-Lum-Is-True-Child-Of-Vancouver/.

Ken Lum ***A Tale of Two Children: A Work for Strathcona*** from the Image-Repeated Text Series 2005
Courtesy of the artist

and life over the past three decades that demonstrates his commitment to pushing boundaries in contemporary art and engaging with a growing community of contemporary artists and intellectuals speaking from diasporic experiences and the so-called margins. The book looks back on his journey, from a first generation Cantonese-Canadian child raised in poverty to a science student completely taken by contemporary art in university; from his critiques of Canadian cultural policy and identity debates as an artist and professor of colour to his international posts as an artist, teacher, curator, and journal editor during the contemporary art world's globalization from the 1990s onward. This journey took him from London and Paris to D'akar, Martinique and Sharjah to Hong Kong, Hangzhou, Beijing, and Japan with stops in Toronto, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, and home to Vancouver in between—a peripatetic travel pattern not possible in our current pandemic times, and far less realistic now given our present climate crisis. The last third of the book charts Lum's move to Philadelphia to become a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design, and his persistent critical questioning of and experimentation with art in public space—specifically, how public memory can act as future speculation at a time when colonial monuments are being toppled. Ken will always be one of Vancouver's greats: an artist who defied expectations of his working-class, immigrant background

to become an internationally renowned artist and passionate critic of contemporary art, and whose important contributions to the field were in many ways ahead of his time.

*

"One of my interests as an artist and teacher is how institutions today frame art in ways that ignore or subjugate the question of difference," Lum writes at the book's opening.[2] This question of difference propels his practice and is inflected throughout the book. The strongest pieces are his most personal, where he draws from lived experience to analyze, dissect, and question identity formation in relation to external perception, buoyed by the ambitions of postcolonial theory to challenge Western universal worldviews. In "Seven Moments in the Life of a Chinese Canadian Artist," 1997, written for Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist's internationally travelling exhibition *Cities on the Move*, Lum recounts moments of prejudice and misrecognition. During introductions at a dinner in France, one artist looks surprised, exclaiming to him: "Why, I did not know you were Asian. Your work looks like it could have been made by a non-oriental." Ironically, during a protest at the Vancouver Art Gallery advocating for greater representation of visible minority artists in its exhibition programming, Lum and Stan Douglas are cited by a Gallery curator as proof of its commitment to this, followed by several voices shouting that they no longer considered them artists of colour. At a dinner in Montréal with several Chinese artists, someone remarks in Cantonese how great it is to have so many Chinese artists together. One artist, not knowing Ken could understand Cantonese, replies, "Well, Ken Lum cannot even read Chinese."[3]

It was this absence of belonging that led Lum to explore questions of identity and difference across global contexts. Writing on the Dak'Art Biennale of 1998 in Senegal for *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Lum pinpoints the imperialist tendencies of how "[o]ver and over again, the development of Western art is predicated on claiming non-Western art forms for itself." Yet he also points to "the multiplicity of modernities in the world," such as Dak'Art itself, and the need to let go of Euro-American

[2] Ken Lum, *Everything is Relevant* (Montréal: Concordia University Press, 2020), xxv.

[3] Lum, "Seven Moments in the Life of a Chinese Canadian Artist," 20-22. Originally published in Hou Hanru and Hans-Ulrich Obrist eds., *Cities on the Move* (Vienna: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1997).

concepts of art in understanding perspectives beyond the so-called West.[4] Revisiting Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* for the same journal in 1999, Lum critiques past art historical interpretations of this painting while providing a decolonial dissection of it as a "liminal picture," seeing resilience and potential where normative social hierarchies have collapsed. He writes: "Although the depicted scene is a tragic one, the grouping of bodies on the raft can be read unitarily as a community."[5] Addressing this "interlocked structure of interchangeable and multiple identities," Lum focuses on Géricault's dislodging of racial and masculine sexual identities from fixed meanings of the time; notably, the black male figure at the painting's apex is an expression of unspoken social truths: "the composition of the human pyramid aboard the raft is meant to mirror the social composition of France's apparatus of empire, built to a large extent as it was on the backs of male African slaves."[6] Lum saw in Géricault's artistic strategies a new subjectivity of alterity amidst crisis—"the idea that difference and individuation do not threaten the whole, but may even advance it."[7]

Lum's deep intellectual curiosity and fervent belief in persisting against colonialism to hold space for diverse perspectives and representations—to dissolve the imaginary construct of the "Other" as aptly theorized in Edward Said's *Orientalism*—remains inspiring, particularly at a time of rising xenophobia simultaneous with protests for racial and social justice worldwide. In Lum's inaugural editorial for *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* in 2002, he reflects on the history of Western imperialism in China from the Opium Wars of 1840 onward, which produced in China an identity crisis and a complex manifestation of modernity. Observing the contemporary art world's increased attraction to perspectives of alterity and diversity alongside its neocolonial entanglements with the marketplace and global capital power relations, Lum calls for a genuine openness to cultural difference: "Only

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[4] Lum, "Dak'Art 98, The Dakar Biennale," 32. Originally published in *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art 9* (Fall/Winter 1999), Duke University Press.

[5] Lum, "On Board *The Raft of the Medusa*," 36. Originally published in *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art* 10 (Spring/Summer 1999), Duke University Press. For these pieces, Lum undertook extensive research at the archives in D'akar.

[6] Lum, 36.

[7] Lum, 41.

after claims to cultural fixity are dislodged can a mutual interrogation of traditions and alternative modes of conduct be possible, and only then can a dialogic democracy be developed, one of which is based on the authenticity of the other."[8]

By 2005, Lum's weariness towards the art world is apparent: the dissonance between his work as associate curator of *Sharjah International Biennale 7: Belonging*—managing high-maintenance artists, meeting with Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, the Biennale's director, and coordinating the arrivals of art world cognoscenti—stands in stark contrast with nearby geopolitical strife. During the Biennale's installation, he notes how a local newspaper headline, "Car bomb at Qatar theatre kills Briton, wounds 12," sits beside an advertisement of a massive five-star residential development being built on a nearby artificial island. At the Biennale's opening night party, he looks across the water thinking, "to the north, on my left, a war rages in Iraq."[9] In his curatorial text for the Sharjah Biennale, "Unfolding Identities," Lum questions—as he simultaneously lives—the trope of nomadism that had become increasingly popular in discussions around globalization, mobility, and the role of artists as figures of creative resistance as they transcend borders. Situating the nomad's theoretical and idealized characterizations—notably by male intellectuals including Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Homi Bhaba, and Arjun Appardurai—in relation to the hard realities of migrants and refugees forced from their homes and across borders, he exposes the "artist as nomad" rhetoric as one of privilege and power, abstract, and romanticized: "Nomadology as a tool to theorize the multiple means by which travelling individuals negotiate and renegotiate subject positions in the context of codifications of family and community groups, gender, skin colour, economic and social class, and nation states is useful but problematic in terms of the often devastating psychological and physical damage borne by these same individuals during the very process of negotiating subject positions."[10] He goes on to describe the stress, loneliness, powerlessness, and

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[8] Lum, "Inaugural Editorial," 97. Originally published in *Yishu: Journal for Contemporary Chinese Art* (1:1), 2002.

[9] Lum, "Surprising Sharjah," 125 and 129. Originally published in *Canadian Art* 22:3 (Fall 2005).

[10] Lum, "Unfolding Identities," 140. Originally published in Kamal Boullata ed. *Sharjah Biennial 7: Belonging* (Sharjah: Sharjah Art Foundation, 2005).

feelings of exclusion that this metaphor of the nomad neglects to register. Yet feelings are exactly what art can affect, Lum insists, particularly in sites of the so-called periphery, where artists are freer from entrenched art systems. He closes with a personal and revealing statement: "Artists also long to belong, but the curse and saving grace of art are that it can never entirely belong."[11]

*

Deep existential crises can beget great writing. In "Something's Missing" (2006), Lum candidly reveals that the past eight years "was a time when I felt great disillusionment about art and great disappointment in myself, a crisis of being that I believe afflicts all artists from time to time." This very crisis brought him to the margins of the art world, searching for answers. Lum reflects, "I had a choice: I could either stop being an artist or I could enlarge my frame of understanding of art by looking away from what I was accustomed to."[12] To become re-enchanted with art's purpose, he sought a more philosophical view of art through his everyday life, letting go of the art world's expectations and all its limitations, and widening his ideas of what contemporary art could be and who could participate. We seldom hear from mentors how hard it has been for them, so this passage is particularly striking.

Three moments in *Everything is Relevant* stand out as igniting Lum's core artistic inquiries — moments of existential questioning where he finds stillness and inspiration on the spectrum of alienation and belonging. The first is an early diaristic piece, *Homes* (1993), where he muses how "a home can be created out of just about anything. Home can be a shack built from refuse. Home can be the space under a viaduct or bridge … the problem is not even so much about the idea of home as it is about the ideal of home, which is rooted in an ideology of the home."[13] In his *Furniture Sculptures* (1978-present), composed of rented couches turned inward to obstruct the viewer from their function, Lum brilliantly locates the boundaries of private and public space and questions the nature of access and class, while cleverly poking fun at minimalist sculpture and bourgeois ideas of taste. In *There is no place like home* (2000), a large-scale billboard of six Portrait-Text

[11] Lum, "Unfolding Identities," 143.

[12] Lum, "Something's Missing," 158-159. Originally published in *Canadian Art* 23:4 (Winter 2006).

[13] Lum, "Homes," 9. Originally published in *Viennese Story*, curated by Jérôme Sans (Vienna: Wiener Secession, 1993).

works presented outside the Vienna Kunsthalle and depicting a range of social types responding to ideas of home in a multicultural society, Lum transposes these questions of belonging internationally in the contexts of immigration, citizenship, and nation.[14]

A second moment occurs in 1995 when Lum visits Chen Zhen, an artist from China living in Paris. Lum, then teaching at L'École des Beaux-Arts, is introduced to a group of Chinese artists and curators that had immigrated to France after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and crackdowns. Lum observes Chen's "sense of dislocated habitation" in his artwork—particularly *Maison Portable* (2000), a wood sculpture that reads simultaneously as a cradle, cage, wagon, playpen, Chinese sedan, and prison. Reflecting on the work, Chen describes how "[t]he house can be a utopian space, virtual, immaterial, spiritual, a space 'between.'"[15] This concept of "homelessness" allows him to circumvent contemporary art world expectations to represent a particular ethnic community or nation. Chen also drew inspiration from Daoist philosophies, particularly Lao Tzu's invocation to "abandon knowledge and discard self" in order to live beyond social convention, in fluidity with the Dao 道 / The Way.[16] Regardless of ideological or physiological container, home becomes both nowhere and everywhere—a consciousness always with oneself. Conversing with Chen, Lum seems to find a peace and affinity, inhabiting the ontologies undergirding Chen's views of life, art, health, and spirituality, and feeling all in holistic relation. "During a period of disillusionment for me, he reminded me of the need to always form and express new connections in one's art, especially in terms of the ways in which one inhabits the world."[17]

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[14] *There is no place like home* was originally intended to be a modest poster project. In response to its attempted censorship by conservative factions of Vienna's city government, the organizers, Museum in Progress, with the Vienna Kunsthalle, the Canadian Embassy, and several human rights groups, banded together to expand the work into a large-scale public project. For a detailed account of events and analysis of this work, see Grant Arnold, "Ken Lum: The Subject in Question," in *Ken Lum* (Vancouver Art Gallery and D&M Publishers Inc., 2011), 35.

[15] Lum, "Encountering Chen Zhen: A Paris Portal," 166. Lum quotes Chen Zhen from *Chen Zhen: Invocation of Washing Fire* (Gli Ori: Prato, 2003), 190.

[16] In the *Tao Te Ching*, the Dao is described as the natural order of the universe whose essence humans can intuit and find harmony with, realizing the interconnectedness of all life everywhere. See Moss Robert trans., *Laozi: Dao De Jing* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

[17] Lum, "Encountering Chen Zhen," 175.

The third moment is in 2005, when Lum is in Delhi for a conference and takes a bicycle-cab ride to Chawri Bazar in Chandi Chowk, a bustling 17th-century market considered to be the soul of the city. In a striking passage, Lum describes this phantasmagoric, hallucinatory, and immersive sensory experience — a collision of diverse populations and offerings filling a maze of narrow lanes and brightly-coloured posters:

> Interspersed throughout are countless eateries engulfed in steam and filling the air with a plethora of smells. Barking voices from megaphones clash with music from loudspeakers. There are mosques, Hindu and Sikh temples, and Catholic and Protestant churches all in close proximity to one another … Teams of long-limbed, yellow-brown monkeys darted from the shoulders of one person to the next, their sudden appearance surprising no one but me.[18]

Marveling at this cacophony of life, Lum asks himself: "How can art compete with what I have just experienced? How can art even come close to all that I have seen, smelled, touched and heard here? I realized that art cannot compete. Life is infinitely more complex … And yet art should be about life, and draw from it sustenance and relevance."[19] In this moment, Lum is an open receptor, immediately at home in this state of mind, accepting and surrendering to everything around him in fluid recognition of the currents between self and universe. "Everything is relevant," he so inclusively writes. Art's modest role is simply to evoke this. ■

I am Baudelaire: On Lisa Robertson's *The Baudelaire Fractal*

COACH HOUSE BOOKS, 2020

Ted Byrne

The author has said publicly that *The Baudelaire Fractal* is not a memoir.[1] The epigraph reads: "These things happened, but not as described." Nonetheless, on the inside front cover, Robertson's young self gazes at us in an old-style mirror-bound selfie. The author has hazel eyes and brown hair. The narrator is named Hazel Brown but has grey eyes.

On the back cover, the book announces itself as "Lisa Robertson's first novel." My initial reading was experimental. I wanted to test the hypothesis that this book *is* a novel.

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[18] Ken Lum, "Something's Missing," 163. Originally published in *Canadian Art* 23:4 (Winter 2006).

[19] Lum, 163.

[1] Lisa Robertson, reading at Emily Carr University, October 2019.

One characteristic of a novel is that you can read it in a single sitting. That's part of the pleasure, not being able to put it down, as we repeatedly say. It would not have displeased me to find that *The Baudelaire Fractal* is *not* a novel. However, I did manage to read it in one sitting. The outcome was not simply the result of a wish to succeed at the task. I know this because of the pleasure the reading provided, the story pulling me along beneath the complex spiral of the plot, which is fractal, a constant returning of the same. But this forced approach to Lisa Robertson's latest book also robbed me of a pleasure. I missed entirely the *volupté* of slow reading, the depth that the surface entwines in its texture, the kind of reading anatomized here and there in her earlier book *Nilling* ("I *do* will myself to submit to the difficulty of a text…").

Upon this first reading, a couple of things became apparent to me. First of all, the book's continuity with earlier works, as the furtherance of a body of work, an *oeuvre*. For example, with the opening heroic address, "I, Hazel Brown…" (I was there, I read, I invaded cities, I brought back treasures), I fell immediately back into the epic space of Debbie, and the overall "heroization" of the present that occurs there — that which constitutes modernity for Baudelaire (*héroïsation* is the word Foucault uses,[2] citing "De l'héroisme de la vie moderne," especially the passage on the black funereal garb of the contemporary hero). It also, at times, brings forward the prosed automatism of *Seven Walks* ("We were equally maligned and arrogant, performing our tired doggeries against a sky inlaid with phrases"), and the occasional *écritsurlart* issued by The Office for Soft Architecture. Or the dreamlike

[2] In "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?", *Dits et écrits*, vol. iv (Paris, 1994) Originally published in English as "What is Enlightenment", in *The Foucault Reader* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984).

aphorisms of *Cinema of the Present* ("For you, rhetoric and erotics are irreparably aligned and give support to a needed life").

Secondly, looking at *Nilling* again, I realized that *The Baudelaire Fractal* could also be read as a series of essays. Reading it a second time, I found myself retitling the sections with topical headings, so I could try each one out as an essay: "Painting," "Rooms," "Sex," "Bleeding," "Tailoring," and so on. But the topics are multiple within each section, and they refract back and forth across sections, so that in the end they elude that kind of labelling. It would have been smarter on my part to concentrate on the titles as they are given, allowing them their slippage, and then to read each section with the title hovering over my attention: "Windows," "Anywhere Out of the World," "Vocations," "Twilight," "Drunk."

What became clear is that the apparent central conceit of the novel — the protagonist awakening in a hotel room to find herself the author of everything Baudelaire ever wrote, as promised on the back cover — was not fulfilled in the way that a novel typically delivers on its publicity. During my second reading, I made the following note regarding the assumption of Baudelairean authorship:

> It happens, it is mentioned from time to time, but it is not the plot. It is a figure of reading. It is the topic of the section called "Which is Real?"

My third reading engaged in a third hypothesis, re-examining the extent of Baudelaire's presence in the text, testing the ways in which it may have eluded me, like the purloined letter. As it turned out, of course, there was no failed promise at all — Baudelaire is a constant presence in the book, which can't be read fully without this subtle knowledge, like the author's own subtle knowledge of her responsibility for his works. But I was right to note that it's not the plot, not the letter, but rather the envelope.

The novel has three times. The narrator, Hazel Brown, a solitary, sits, in the present, beneath a linden tree eating plums, writing herself, writing to us, in a kind of calmed disquiet, a disquiet about the project of literature that differs from her youthful unknowing only by the addition of this element of calm resignation ("of all stupid art the poem is the most stupid"). Young Hazel Brown, the eventual hero of the narration, newly embarked on the dream of literature, appears to stand centre stage where the main events occur. However, if we consider that she is entirely an object of description, the centre rests with her supposed older self. In an intermediate time, *in the middle of the way of this life*, as Dante puts it, this authorship is circumscribed

by the arrival of the Angel Baudelaire (*un ange du mal*), not a tutelary guide like Virgil for Dante, but a figure of the prison house of literature whose male wardens her work subverts from the inside, authorship becoming augmentation by way of an etymology that she hints may be illegitimate (it can be found in Benveniste). She says:

> To augment would be my work—to add the life of a girl without subtracting anything else from the composition, and then to watch the centre dissolve.

The assumption of the Baudelairean authorship resembles Baudelaire's becoming-Poe, as he himself describes it:

> The first time that I opened one of his books, I saw, with fear and ravishment, not only subjects dreamed of by me, but s*entences* thought by me and written by him twenty years before.[3]

Baudelaire is, famously, a "feminine man." In the poem "Sed non satiata," in the "Jeanne Duval Cycle," he says that he can't become Proserpina to hold her furious, and by implication masculine, desire at bay. He fears becoming woman. Michel Butor uses the term *dévirilisation* when describing the effect of the placement of Baudelaire's financial affairs under judicial counsel. "He was no longer a man, but only a child or a woman. His majority was taken from him." The assumption of his authorship by a woman is a marvelous subversion, even a subversion of his abjection, which according to *The Baudelaire Fractal* "was defined by the poet's self-recognition in the grotesque mirror of the social abjection of women." It's not a recuperation of women's writing within the house of literature, but rather an act of property theft or repossession. The project was announced long ago in the words of Debbie's calling card:

Baudelaire, or his authorship, arrives, appropriately, in the first section of the book, where the arrival is simply described, almost uneventful, mundane as epiphanies go. Thereafter, he wanders into and through each of the sections in repetitions of the same. From the

[3] Letter to Thoré-Burger, 1864, cited by Michel Butor in his *Histoire Extraordinaire : essai sur un rêve de Baudelaire*, Paris, 1961, a book dedicated "*à la beauté insultée de Jeanne [Duval]*" (my translation).

simple address to the reader (*Lecteur, mon semblable*) to the recovery of Jeanne Duval — the "Giantess" as Baudelaire called her, among other mythical epithets — a counter-version of the story that's so often been told of her role in his ruination. From the thematic of dandyism, an ethic and a poetic, the opposite of the *flâneur*, according to Foucault, citing Baudelaire:

> …this man…has a purpose more elevated than that of a pure flaneur, a more extensive purpose, and one other than the fugitive pleasure of circumstance. He is after something that we may call modernity. For him it's a matter of drawing from fashion that which it contains of the poetic within the historic.[4]

"My outfits and their compositions," we're told, "were experiments in syntax and diction." (The hilarious tale of the moth-infested nineteenth century frock coat, bought at a flea market, is a self-mocking of this "dandiacal woman" concept). To a series of loving, careful descriptions of paintings, in the manner of Baudelaire's Salons: Courbet's and Deroy's early portraits of Baudelaire; Courbet's allegorical tableau "The Artist's Studio"; Deroy's "La petite mendiante rousse"; Dürer's "Melencolia"; Manet's portrait of Jeanne Duval; Delacroix's epic biblical depictions in Saint Sulpice and his watercolour of an unmade bed.

In a subsequent reading, the omnipresence of Baudelaire could easily slip back into the distance, like the unobtrusive interweaving of a minor theme. I could regain the innocence of my first idle summertime reading and read it once again as the amusing comic novel it sometimes appears to be. Or I could read it more thoroughly in terms of the proper noun it applies to itself: fractal. In such a reading the comedy would be darker, involving a repetition of the same in which the same is not readily identified, until its accumulation culminates in disgust. ("Yet I am completely disgusted with literature. That's why this is erotic comedy"). Above all, however, this book is governed by a poetic. The more you pursue it, the more you will find it to be unreadable, which is to say inexhaustible. This is the principle of poetry, that it slows reading down, so much so that the reading can never be completed. ■

[4] My translation.

Contributors

Ted Byrne is a poet, translator, and essayist who lives in Vancouver. He was a member of the Kootenay School of Writing collective for many years. For the past decade he has been an active participant in the Lacan Salon. His most recent books are *Duets*, a book of translations from the sonnets of Louise Labé and Guido Cavalcanti (Talonbooks, 2018), and *A Flea the Size of Paris*, translations of the Old French fatrasies and fatras, with Donato Mancini (Black Widow Press, 2020).

Abigail Chabitnoy is the author of *How to Dress a Fish* (Wesleyan, 2019), which was shortlisted for the 2020 International Griffin Prize for Poetry. She is a mentor for the Institute of American Indian Arts MFA in Creative Writing and a member of the Tangirnaq Native Village in Kodiak.

Ashlee Conery is a member of FormContent (London + Vienna) and an independent curator who has worked at ICA London (UK), The Florence Trust (UK), Co-Directed PANDO at Enclave Labs (UK) and collaborated with artists on exhibitions in Budapest, Istanbul, and Paris. Publications include: *Sarah Derat: Atelier-résidence du Pavillon des Indes 2013-2015* (ENSBA, 2015), *Incident Reports* (Verlag Für Moderne Kunst, 2019), and "Simon Tookoome" in *Inuit Art Quarterly* (2020). From 2017 to 2020 Conery was the Curatorial Interpreter at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Helen Cho is an Ontario-based artist whose practice spans sculpture, video, drawing, performance, text, and photography, and draws from translations of language, tradition, and the sites and materials of everyday habits. She holds an MA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, University of London (UK) and has exhibited internationally.

Gallery Gachet is a unique artist-run centre located in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver, the stolen homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Through artistic means, we aim to demystify and challenge issues related to mental health and social marginalization and promote social and economic justice. Our outreach programming connects artists to resources, skills, funding, community-building, and art opportunities. We provide workshops, support creation and research, and facilitate access to art exhibition, publishing, and funding opportunities. Funded by the Vancouver Foundation, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver (Homelessness Action Week), our 2021 programs build community resilience among artists who are Two-Spirit, Trans, and gender non-conforming, as well as artists facing housing precarity or socio-political barriers, with a focus on the Downtown Eastside.

Elee Kraljii Gardiner is the author of two poetry books, *Trauma Head* and *serpentine loop* (both Anvil Press, 2020) and editor of the anthologies *Against Death: 35 Essays on Living* and *V6A: Writing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. She is a director of Vancouver Manuscript Intensive.

Tarah Hogue is a curator, writer, and cultural worker based in Saskatoon. She is currently Curator (Indigenous Art) at Remai Modern and was previously the Senior Curatorial Fellow, Indigenous Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Raised on the border between Treaty 6 and 7 territories, Hogue is of Métis and settler descent.

Jim Johnstone is a Toronto-based poet, editor, and critic. His most recent book of poetry, *The Chemical Life* (Véhicule Press, 2017), was shortlisted for the 2018 ReLit Award. Johnstone is *Arc Poetry Magazine*'s 2021 Poet-in-Residence.

Russna Kaur (b. 1991, Toronto; lives and works in Vancouver) explores how the surface of a painting can reveal a narrative that addresses complex personal and cultural histories. Her large-scale and multi-surface paintings are developed through rigorous explorations of colour, text, digital sketches, and mixed media.

Joni Low is an independent curator and writer whose research explores interconnection, intercultural conversations, public space, diasporic memory, and sensory experience. She has presented exhibitions across Canada; her essays and criticism are published in catalogues and journals including *Canadian Art, ESPACE art actuel,* and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*.

Tanya Lukin Linklater's performances, videos, installations, and writings work through orality and embodiment—investigating histories of Indigenous peoples' lives, lands, and structures of sustenance. She often produces performances (live and for camera) with dancers in relation to scores and cultural belongings. She is Alutiiq from Kodiak Island, Alaska.

Khashayar Mohammadi is a queer, Iranian-born, Toronto-based poet, writer, and translator. He is the author of poetry chapbooks *Moe's Skin* (ZED press, 2018), *Dear Kestrel* (knife | fork | books, 2019), *Solitude is an Acrobatic Act* and *The OceanDweller* (both above/ground press, 2020). His debut poetry collection, *Me, You, Then Snow* is out with Gordon Hill Press.

Winner of the 2019 Pat Lowther Memorial Award, **Klara du Plessis**' debut collection, *Ekke*, was released from Palimpsest Press in 2018. Her second book is *Hell Light Flesh* (Palimpsest Press, 2020). She is nominated for the Pavlick Poetry Prize for contributions to the literary community. Klara is a poet, critic, and literary curator, and resides in Montréal.

Robin Simpson is a cultural worker, educator, and writer. Living in Tiohità:ke/Montréal, he is the Coordinator of Public Programs and Education at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University.

Manuel Axel Strain is a non-binary, 2-Spirit artist with Musqueam/Simpcw/Inkumupulux ancestry based in the stolen homelands of the Katzie/Kwantlen peoples. Creating artwork in collaboration with their kin and with reference to their lived experience becomes a source of agency that resonates through their work in performance, land, painting, sculpture, photography, video, sound, and installation. Strain's recent works confront and undermine the realities and imaginaries of colonialism to propose a space beyond that matrix of power. They have worked with Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver Art Gallery, Surrey Art Gallery, and programming at Gallery Gachet.

Karen Tam is an artist whose research focuses on the various forms of constructions and imaginations of cultures and communities. Through her installation work, such as *Whose Chinatown?* exhibited at Griffin Art Projects from January to May 2021, she recreates Chinese restaurants, karaoke lounges, opium dens, Chinatown curio shops, and other sites of cultural encounters. Since 2000, Tam has exhibited her work and participated in residencies across North America, Europe, and China. She has received grants and fellowships from the Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts du Québec, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Isabella Wang is the author of two poetry collections, *On Forgetting a Language* (Baseline Press, 2019) and *Pebble Swing* (Nightwood Editions, forthcoming 2021). Her poetry and prose have appeared in over thirty literary journals, including *Prairie Fire*, *Prism*, and *The New Quarterly*. She is the Editor for Issue 44.2 of *Room magazine*.

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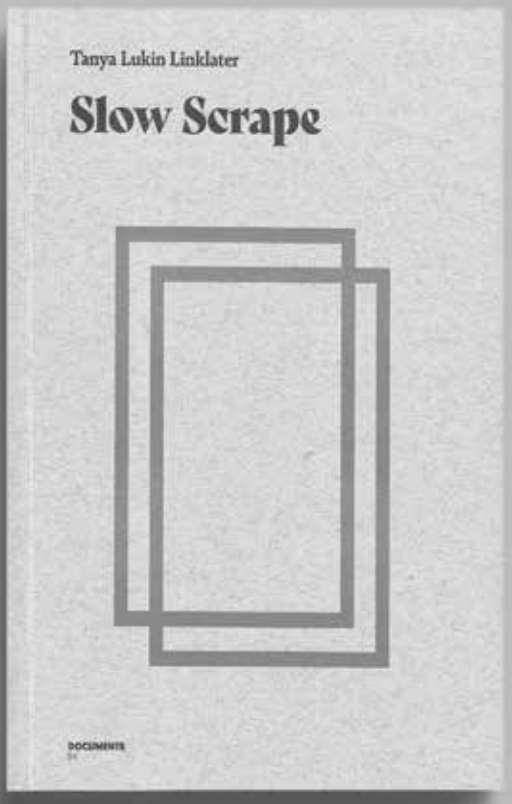

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Helen Cho ***Urban Suseok*** 2015 photograph
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& Tarah Hogue, Jim Johnstone, Russna Kaur,
Tanya Lukin Linklater, Khashayar Mohammadi,
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