

Other Electricities Works from the AGW Collection

Director's Foreword

This exhibition continues the Art Gallery of Windsor's ongoing work to explore the diversity and complexity of its collection. As an ongoing series of collection exhibitions commencing in 2012, this project builds on such projects as *Female Self Representation and the Public Trust: Mary E. Winch and the AGW Collection*, *Two Women's Views on the War of 1812: Joyce Wieland and Catherine Reynolds*, *John Scott / MEAN MACHINES*, *A River that Separates? Imaging the Detroit River, 1804–2001*, *The Walter Carsen Gift: A Memorial Exhibition from the AGW Collection* and *David Blackwood: The Ron and Ginetta Barbaro Gift to the AGW*. To investigate a collection through an examination of themes, subjects, donor histories, acquisition histories, theoretical paradigms and solo artist projects is to play a vital role in generating multiple object meanings and enable viewers to value objects differently across time and place. *Other Electricities* profiles the Gallery's collection from the viewpoint of an independent curator, whose subject position pries open important fissures within our own history — of its imbeddedness in colonial infrastructures and its efforts to address that history within institutional collecting practices.

Guest curated by cheyanne turions, this exhibition draws on her experience in occupying the plural subject position of self-identifying with multiple cultural heritages. In this exhibition turions pairs together groupings of artworks to stimulate discussions between them and to expose some of the complexities involved in establishing both artistic voice and audience reception. Her lens on the Gallery's collection encourages viewers to embrace the diversity of art practice throughout the 20th century, remind us that we are conscious of our subject position when looking at art objects, and that we diversify conceptions of Canada's history and identity.

I thank cheyanne turions and the Gallery's curatorial team for all of their expertise in realizing this project. Thanks are also extended to the Gallery's Board of Directors and ongoing funders and stakeholders including the Ontario Arts Council, The Canada Council for the Arts and the City of Windsor. I would also like to thank Carl S. Cohen for his named space gift of 2008 where this exhibition is presented. Mr. Cohen's gift provided important resources at a challenging time in the Gallery's history. This project is sponsored by Kavanaugh Milloy LLP Windsor and we thank them sincerely for their support.

Catharine Mastin, PhD
Director

Other Electricities

Curated by cheyanne turions

It's no longer a question of knowing the world, but of transforming it.

– Frantz Fanon¹

Conceptual (and theoretical) de-linking is...
the necessary direction of liberation and decolonization.

– Walter D. Mignolo²

I must begin with acknowledgements, many of them. For more than three years now, I have found myself a guest on the land of the Mississaugas of New Credit, having come from unceded Musqueam land, and long before that, born on the farmlands of Treaty 8. My father's presence here in Canada can be traced back through stories of eastern European immigration, and my mother's presence at once Indigenous and settler. Growing up, my time was split between these relations of blood, and another relationship where I was an adopted child of an El Salvadorian family that had immigrated to Canada. Here, now, as a visiting curator at the Art Gallery of Windsor (AGW), I find myself a guest on Anishinaabe territory of the Ojibwa, Pottawami and Ottawa, where also the Haudenosaunee have historically been established. These descriptions situate my voice in one way, while in many other ways they are inadequate to describe my negotiation with place and history, a negotiation that continues along the fault lines of this exhibition, *Other Electricities*.

I am a settler in a colonized land. I am Indigenous. I am adopted by immigrants. I am one person, not divided, not partitioned, but the sum of these parts makes a strange shape. And yet, there is nothing so remarkable about my story, other than I've had a lot of systemic and situational luck extended my way. I am the product of contradiction, privilege, insecurity, labour, joy.

Encounters with Decolonial Aesthetics

There is no way to help it: these negotiations of my own identity inflect the work I do. As a curator, much of my work focuses on translation, be that a movement between languages or an oscillation between ways of knowing the world. My work approaches exhibition space as political space, as a place to think through and perform civic relationships. Discourse is key in drawing out how artistic strategies contribute to the complexity of shared social spaces.

In April 2013, I was approached by members of the Toronto-based organization e-fagia³ to facilitate a discussion focused on the *Decolonial Aesthetics* manifesto,⁴ a document that sets out to circumscribe the terms of delinking from the inseparably twinned charges of coloniality and modernity from the perspective of the global south and former-Eastern Europe. It was here that I was introduced to the school of thought explicitly termed “decolonial aesthetics.” Its tenets outline the necessity of historical disruption and re-telling through a frank reckoning of the underlying assumptions of colonization.

This salon preceded my first site visit to Windsor, where I began my tangible research of the Gallery’s collection, upon which *Other Electricities* is based. The discussions at that salon, and the ideas of the manifesto, permeated my thinking while in Windsor and I began to wonder: Is it possible to look at the works in the collection in a way that performs an aesthetic or cultural decolonization? What can decolonization be as a set of actions? If decolonial aesthetics is about different ways of looking, then how is it possible to look differently at the works in the collection?⁵ As a concept, decolonization is a process that takes space for subjectivities, knowledge and narratives that have otherwise been silenced through forceful and uneven distributions of power. As an action, decolonization is rightfully situated in relationship to land and resources, and their repatriation to Indigenous peoples. Decolonization acknowledges colonial realities as contemporary and mutable, and it begins from positions of Indigenous sovereignty. It is the recognition of the mutual implication of Indigenous and settler peoples through addressing the insidious reach of colonization from land through to culture. Addressing the charge of decolonization as a curator is to stake a claim without pandering to universality. It requires me to acknowledge that I am deeply embedded in a colonial context and to cultivate the borders of where this embeddedness begins to crumble. How can I make strange my own ways of knowing?

The Exhibition

Other Electricities is comprised of eight clusters of work: Barrie Jones’s *At Lake Louise, Banff (Hockey series)* (1981) alongside Andy Warhol’s *Wayne Gretzky* (date unknown); Joyce Wieland’s *O Canada* (1971) alongside Janet Kigusiuq’s *Man Biting Wolf Biting Child* (1976); Etidlooie Etidlooie’s *Aircraft Becoming Sea Animal* (1981) alongside David Craig’s *Expedition Fiord — Northwest Territories* (1991); George Mihalcheon’s *Image of Time #5* (1969) alongside Charles Comfort’s *Lament* (1971); Aganetha Dyck’s *Overtime* (1994–95) alongside Dominique Blain’s *Seed* (1993–94); Betty Goodwin’s *Untitled (Not high but high enough) No. 1* (1994–95) alongside Edward Burtynsky’s *Shipbreaking #21, Chittagong, Bangladesh* (2000); Rafael Goldchain’s *Amusement Park, Guatemala City* (1986) alongside Napatchie Pootoogook’s *Drawing of my Tent* (1982); and Lawren Harris’s *Pyramid* (date unknown) alongside Rafael Goldchain’s *Nocturnal Encounter, Comayagua, Honduras* (1987). Additionally, Carl Beam’s *Two Kinds of Power* (1995) serves as a preface and Peter Fischli and David Weiss’s *The Way Things Go* (1987) as a coda.

Within *Other Electricities*, works are presented in ways that encourage an affective reading between pieces while simultaneously undoing or unlinking from categorical distinctions that would otherwise serve to frame

the works, such as medium specificity, style, tradition or career survey. The focus is not thematic either, but rather a methodology is at play. Having stripped the works of predictable contextualizations, I have left the Gallery as a container and the idea of the collection as glue. It is an experiment that asks if the Gallery’s collection can be exhibited in such a way that challenges inherited paradigms by creating different readings amongst the works.⁶ In putting the exhibition together, my method has often been guided by a strange feeling; it is a collection of relationships that feel queer in the looking. By putting works in relation, I want to suggest that each is capable of speaking to the other, that they meet as equals, and that what rises up between them is both discourse and that which remains untranslatable. Further treatment of the works will follow below.

Decolonization Is and Is Not

In this context, working with cultural objects and thinking through ideologies, it is important to understand that the term “decolonization” is not being used in its strict sense. According to scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, decolonization “requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” to Indigenous peoples,⁷ with a corresponding de-settlement of settler bodies and de-centring of settler perspectives. Rather, I am speaking of a cultural decolonization that seeks paradigms of knowing that do not efface the difficult, destructive and ongoing effects of colonization. Tuck and Yang, in their insistence on not using “decolonization” as a metaphor, would term this kind of work “social justice.” In this given context, working with the specific material heritage of the Gallery’s collection, I optimistically think of this exhibition as a project to generate criticism or dissonance in the ways we come to understand what these inheritances mean. But as Tuck and Yang caution, these pursuits “can also be settler moves to innocence — diversions, distraction, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege.”⁸ This critique stands.

The question of geography, raised through an awareness of one’s situatedness, is not unrelated to an interrogation of the gallery as a colonial institution, and that is why, for instance, territorial acknowledgments are so important. Within this structure, we are literally placed in relationship to complex histories of the land. Our reciprocal responsibility to this positioning, to begin, is to know that history is alive. We are a part of it. We are a part of a system that we merely inherited, but importantly, we bear agency and responsibility for its contemporary manifestations.⁹ David Garneau, artist and professor of Visual Arts at the University of Regina, puts it this way: “Cultural decolonization in the Canadian context

is about at once unsettling settlers and, ironically, helping them to adapt, to better settle themselves as noncolonial persons within Indigenous spaces. More ambitiously, it is also about First Nations, Inuit and Métis people becoming themselves neither through forced assimilation into non-Indigenous modes, nor by retreating to a reconstructed, anachronistic Indigenous cultural purity, but by struggling to make new ways of being Indigenous within the complex of the contemporary negotiations of Aboriginal/settler/international Indigenous identities.”¹⁰ Garneau’s point is, in part, that decolonization is specific. Within the space of a gallery, positioned on Turtle Island and in state of Canada, our identities as artists/curators/viewers/thinkers make specific kinds of culturally decolonizing actions possible and morally obliged.

Other Electricities is not the first exhibition to bring a culturally decolonizing impulse to the Art Gallery of Windsor. Srimoyee Mitra, the current Curator of Contemporary Art, has instituted a three-year research-based platform for artists to develop “nuanced critiques and perspectives on questions of nationhood, citizenship and identity in the border-lands” collectively called *Border Cultures*.¹¹ In the season immediately preceding this at the AGW, Heather Igloliorte’s *Decolonize Me* explored “how the cumulative effects of colonization through several centuries, and the struggle to decolonize in recent decades, have impacted our contemporary identity politics.”¹² Concurrent to this exhibition, Bonnie Devine’s *The Tecumseh Papers* “develops a moving and evocative interpretation of the complex and shared colonial histories that have framed Indigenous and settler relations.”¹³

I believe that decolonization is as old as colonization itself, that there has always been resistance to colonial processes of exploitation and erasure. These efforts to reclaim knowledge, culture and space continue today, as they need to, because the effects and machinations of colonization are ongoing. These decolonial efforts are vibrant and this exhibition at the AGW is continuing a conversation about contemporary manifestations of, and responses to, colonization.

Why?

So why, then? Why another exhibition that takes up these concerns? The Gallery’s founding director was Kenneth Saltmarche, a college-educated British settler, who proceeded to direct the Gallery from 1946–85. He left an important legacy for Windsor and Canadian artists, but the Gallery remains deeply embedded within structures of power that have, for instance, marginalized works by Aboriginal artists from the region.¹⁴ (However, Saltmarche did collect the works of Inuit artists at a time when Inuit prints

were being produced and exported for southern art buyers, and additional institutional purchases and gifts have included the work of Indigenous artists of Canada.) Saltmarche’s early collecting decisions — for example, acquiring works by members of the Group of Seven, French-Canadian painter and sculptor Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, and English-Canadian painter George Reid — reflect a concern for articulating a unified Canadian identity through a productive navigation of French and English cultures — a concern that is at play in the two solitudes,¹⁵ an idea that still haunts cultural and political discourse in Canada. The idea of two solitudes is fundamentally complicit with the denial of colonization and the obscuring of Aboriginal people’s lives. The residue of this legacy remains at the Gallery.

In describing the collection, the Gallery’s website offers up these claims: first, “The idea of ‘fine art’ as a specialized form of visual expression separate from everyday life was brought to Canada with waves of colonial settlement,” and second, “Artists in the AGW collection, such as George Heriot, Paul Kane, Frederick Verner and William Hind, produced key series of works that represented Canada’s native peoples, a subject popular with collectors across North America and Europe.” Embedded within these claims are the notions that Aboriginal art forms are somehow not “fine” (an obviously absurd claim that not only reveals a calcified, Western idea about what art is, but also, because of its insistence that art be separate from life, denigrates political art for its living connection to civic society) and that settler representations of Aboriginal people are somehow superior to the autonomous expressions of Indigenous people (which they are not). *Other Electricities* takes on these aspects of the Gallery’s history, alongside other recent exhibitions, to continue challenging institutional colonizations.

How?

Walter Dignolo, an Argentinian theorist important in developing a decolonial aesthetic discourse, puts forward the tactic of delinking. Delinking refers to strategies that challenge “the provincial tendency to pretend that Western European modes of thinking are in fact universal ones.”¹⁶ There are many ways to do this. Programmatic possibilities range from situating oneself in relationship to power through a stance of non-belonging, thereby disrupting one’s privileges; to starting the story of history in the Americas earlier than European arrival here; to seeking out non-Western, non-canonized sources of culture and information that destabilize Western hegemonies of knowledge; to denaturalizing totalizing concepts (such as the inevitability of capitalism or the binary of genders); to the effort to actively unlearning our indoctrinations, colonial or otherwise. These are options amongst other options, the recognition of which

amounts to what Mignolo terms pluriversality. The pluriversal is in opposition to the universal. There are many ways of knowing and many stories to know. Delinking is the active recognition of this diversity, be it a positive knowing through encounter, or a negative knowing through holding a space for what remains out of reach.

The Works

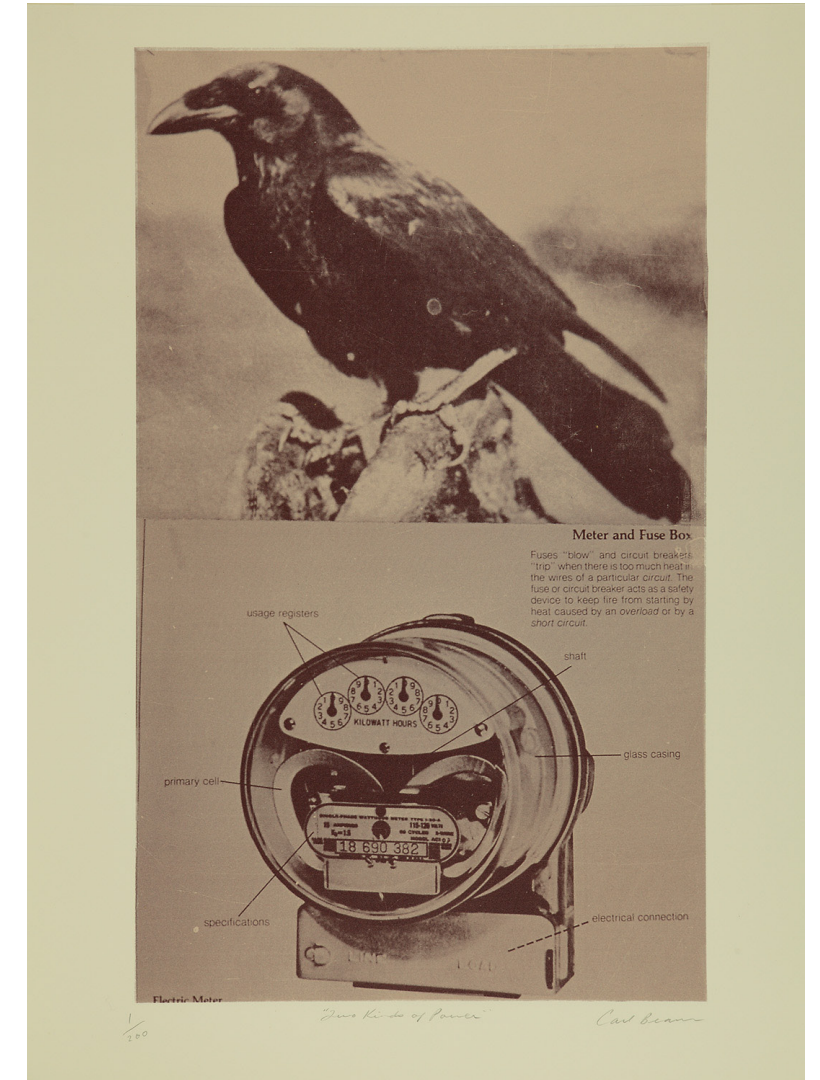
In the works that comprise *Other Electricities*, some of these strategies for delinking (and others) are borrowed and then developed through relationships of juxtaposition, comparison and association. Here's how.

Carl Beam's *Two Kinds of Power*

In *Two Kinds of Power*, two photographic images — one of a crow, the other of an electric meter — are collaged onto a single picture plane. The equivalence drawn between the subjects is blatantly one of nature and artifice, but it is also an equivalence between tradition and contemporary life. It is an acknowledgement of the fundamental differences in form and value between the natural world and the constructed one, between old ways of knowing and newer ones. Both relationships are subjects of negotiation (not dichotomies to be held in opposition), and in Beam's staunch refusal to cast judgment he invokes their deep interconnectedness. It would be too easy to relegate Beam's precise observations to the fact of his mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry, though of course these histories can be read through living embodiment. Rather, as Beam has stated, "My work is not made for Indian people but for thinking people. In the global and evolutionary scheme, the difference between humans is negligible."¹⁷

Carl Beam

Two Kinds of Power, 1995
silkscreen on stonehenge paper, 1/200
Gift of Carl Winberg, 2003





**Barrie Jones's *At Lake Louise, Banff (Hockey series)*
and Andy Warhol's *Wayne Gretzky***

The vast majority of the AGW's collection is focused on works by Canadian artists. Andy Warhol's portrait of hockey legend Wayne Gretzky is presumably present for the way it glorifies a Canadian national hero. Warhol's Gretzky and Barrie Jones's portrait of a goalie-masked man in the midst of an iconic Canadian landscape both relate to the unofficial national sport of the country, but in doing so create moments of humour. Perhaps the hilarity comes from a self-conscious reading of the codes embedded in the pieces, and as Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin has noted, "It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. As a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical it must be brought close."¹⁸ Considering that Warhol himself critiqued celebrity and media by engaging with them, and that Jones is poking fun at the specific mythologies of sport and landscape in Canada, then this small moment of comedy has the potential to undo some of the collective identifications that are represented in these works, beyond their tongue-in-cheek evocation.

Barrie Jones

At Lake Louise, Banff (Hockey series), 1981
cibachrome print
Purchased with financial support from the Canada Council
for the Arts, Acquisitions Assistance program, 1998



Andy Warhol

Wayne Gretzky, not dated
colour serigraph and photoscreen on card, 137/300
Gift of Rod H. Nagano, 1987



(above) **Joyce Wieland**
O Canada, ca. 1971
one-colour lithograph on paper, 20/60
Purchase, 1972

(facing) **Janet Kigusiug**
Man Biting Wolf Biting Child, 1976
colour pencil and graphite on paper
Purchase, 1983

**Joyce Wieland's *O Canada* and
Janet Kigusiug's *Man Biting Wolf
Biting Child***

The greasy lipstick imprints of Joyce Wieland's *O Canada* map her slapstick progression through the syllables of the national anthem. Janet Kigusiug's illustration depicts a wild circle of human-animal interconnection through gestures of hunting and being hunted. Between Wieland's performance and Kigusiug's strange mapping, there is a comedic reading of the power of lips as the frame of voice and consumption, those twinned processes of putting out and taking in. Though Wieland's work is firmly rooted in national mythology, and Kigusiug's work rooted in practical stories of survival, they share a bent of critique. In Wieland's case, a feminist take on the structures used to maintain patriotism and patriarchy by inscribing her belief that "the landscape and ecology of Canada was female."¹⁹ In Kigusiug's case the depiction of humans in animal costumes, and the contemporaneity of people in seal-skin jackets and t-shirts, draws out the complexity of different cultures negotiating proximity, be they Aboriginal and settler, urban and rural, or man and beast.

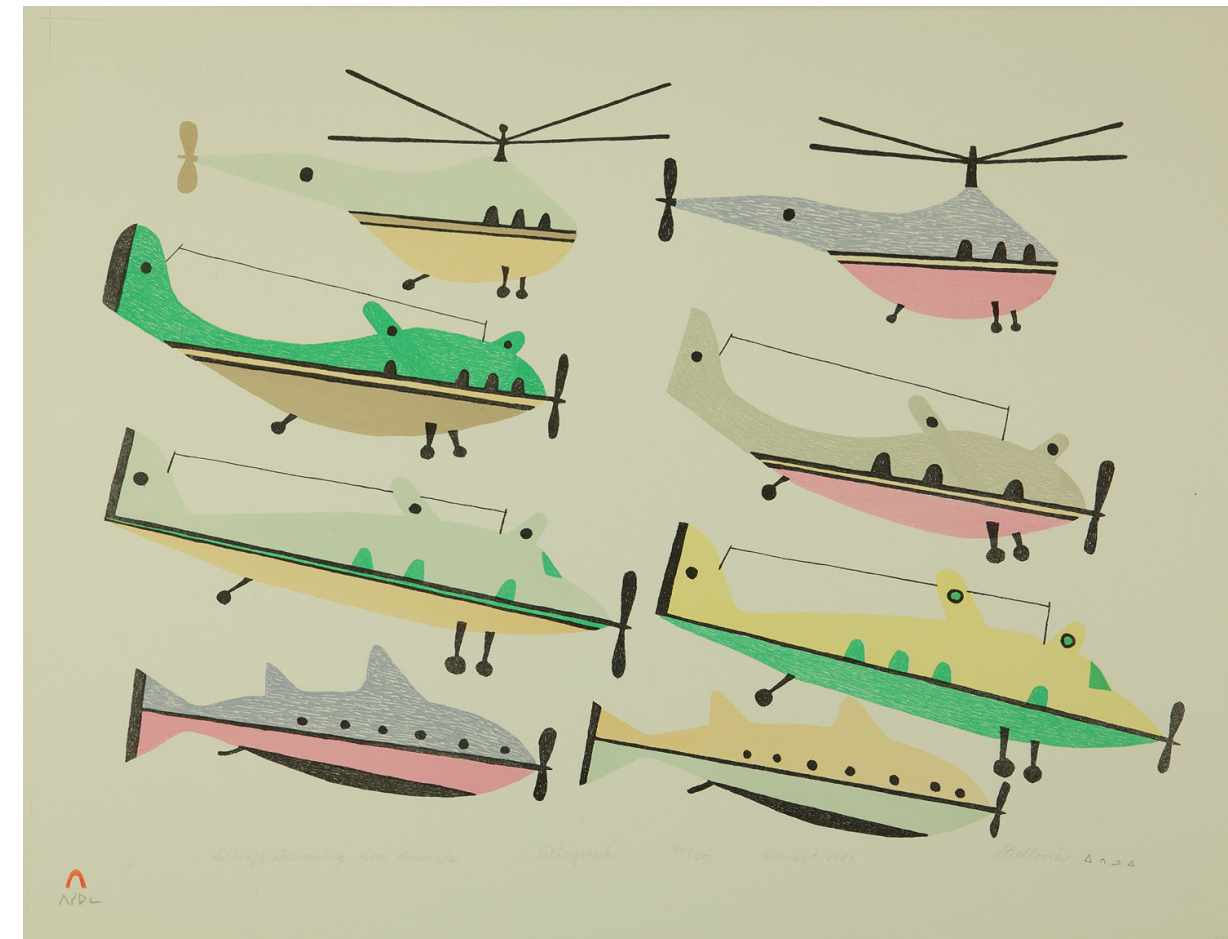




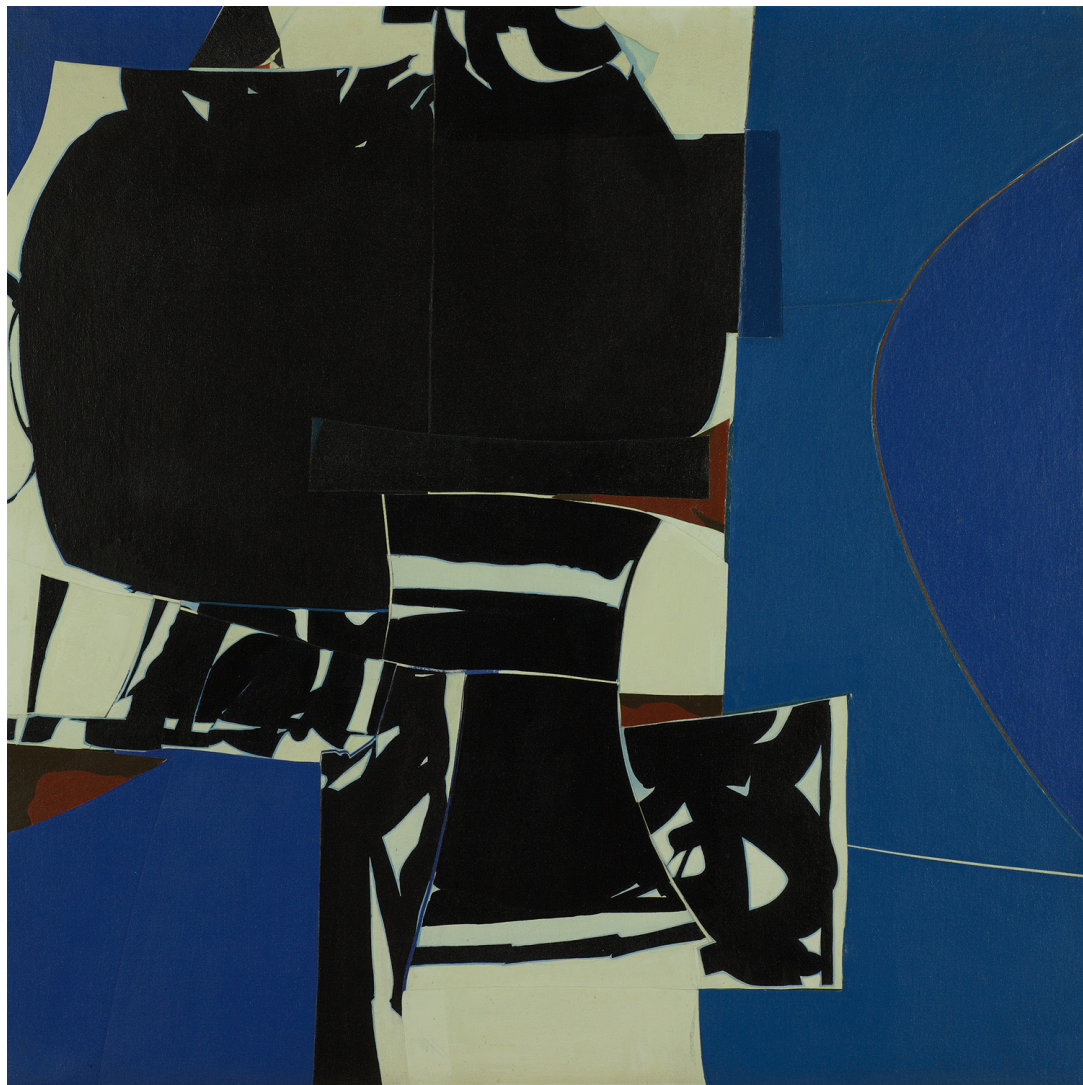
Etidlooie Etidlooie's *Aircraft Becoming Sea Animals* and David Craig's *Expedition Fiord — Northwest Territories*

In the work of the Group of Seven, the writing of humans on the landscape is often erased. By contrast, in these pieces that writing is shown to be both adamant and in dialogue with nature, the inscribed mark of humans shaped by reference to the creatures and forms of the earth. Etidlooie Etidlooie and David Craig use distinct media to convey the fluidity of relationships, coming from very distinct perspectives: that of the Indigenous inhabitant and that of the parachuted traveller. Craig's use of large-scale photography evokes the pretense to documentation from a highly aestheticized perspective. His presence in the north with a camera is part of a long tradition of the medium being used as "an essential tool in... colonial exploration."²⁰ Etidlooie's print imaginatively translates between sea creatures and airplanes in a way that doesn't fully become either, yet knits together the sea and the sky. Etidlooie's morphing of elements of the south and the north is a frank recognition of "such intrusions into the Inuit way of life...because he could not pretend they did not exist."²¹

David Craig
Alex Fiord — Northwest Territories, 1991
 chromogenic print
 Gift of the artist, 1999



Etidlooie Etidlooie
Aircraft Becoming Sea Animals, 1981
 colour lithograph on paper, 30/50
 Purchase, 1984



George Mihalcheon
Image of Time #5, 1969
canvas collage on masonite
Gift of the Toronto Dominion Bank, 1993

**George Mihalcheon's *Image of Time #5*
and Charles Comfort's *Lament***

Charles Comfort is known for his realist paintings where “the visible world is the valid point of departure for a work of art. This does not mean that [my] purpose is to imitate nature, but rather to recreate it, remoulding and harmonizing it to agree with [my] own idiomatic mannerisms and [my] own personal concepts.”²² George Mihalcheon, for his part, experimented with both realism and abstraction over his career, using different media along the way. Here, a complement of palette and shape is read between Comfort's landscape and Mihalcheon's collage. It's an old but still charged dichotomy between realism and abstraction, a continuum between “faithful” representations of landscape and portraiture, and images that, supposedly, resemble only the art object in and of itself. However, the pixelated background in Comfort's work (painted in 1971, before the ubiquity of computer technology), finds compliment in the cut-up layers of Mihalcheon's work. In one, a tree; in the other, a series of shapes that mimic that living form, drawing out the absurdity of a strict dichotomy between representations of the world and interpretations of it.

Charles Comfort
Lament, 1971
oil on canvas
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Louise Comfort, 1973





Aganetha Dyck's *Overtime*
and **Dominique Blain's *Seed***

In these sculptures of Dominique Blain and Aganetha Dyck, an emblem of femininity (high-heeled shoes) and an emblem of masculinity (war paraphernalia) are transformed in ways that employ or evoke the natural world. Through processes of augmentation, the gendered iconography of adornment is disrupted, drawing out the constructedness of a feminine/masculine duality. Blain has melded together two steel helmets to evoke the form of a seed, though gigantic and infecund: the props of a process of destruction are altered to evoke regeneration. Dyck, characteristic of her practice over the last many years, worked alongside honeybees to transform a pair of pink pumps into an extravagantly ornate image of themselves as a forceful comment on the taken-for-grantedness of some labour practices — those of women and those of bees — the types of work that are integral to sustaining life as we know it.

(left) **Aganetha Dyck**
Overtime, 1994/95
women's shoes with beeswax, pen and ink on tissue paper
Purchase, 1998

(right) **Dominique Blain**
Seed, 1993–94
military helmets, welded, 3/25
Gift of the artist, 1997





Betty Goodwin's *Untitled (Not high but high enough) No.1* and Edward Burtynsky's *Shipbreaking #21, Chittagong, Bangladesh*

Betty Goodwin is an artist known for "lamenting... the cruelty of the human condition."²³ Her work here, which features a human form struggling against, yet bound to, the earth explores Goodwin's concern for the passage from life to death and our colloquial refusals against that awaiting reality. Edward Burtynsky is an artist known for his large-format depictions of the effect of industry on the land. Though Burtynsky often avoids speaking about his images as political, one way to think about his aesthetization of industrial practices is as a document of the cruelty of human enterprise in scarring the earth, impacting the quality of life for future generations, and here, exploiting the labour of a workforce where human rights laws are far from progressive. Alongside each other, these works share a colour palette and sense of movement (though Goodwin and Burtynsky are known for utilizing, and here employ, distinct media), managing to draw attention to manner in which the interconnectedness of life is written on the body, always in reference to our relationships to the earth.

Betty Goodwin

Untitled (Not high but high enough...) No. 1, 1994–95
graphite and oil stick over gelatin silver print on translucent mylar film
Purchased with funds from the Estate of Anna Marie Gravenor, her friends and anonymous donors, 1998



Edward Burtynsky

Shipbreaking #21, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2000
(printed 2001)
chromogenic print, 3/10
Gift of the artist, 2001



Rafael Goldchain
Amusement Park, Guatemala City, 1986
 dye coupler print, 2/5
 Gift of the Director's Fund, 1989

**Rafael Goldchain's *Amusement Park*,
 Guatemala City and Napatchie
 Pootoogook's *Drawing of my Tent***

Depictions of landscape can serve various purposes, from aesthetic pleasure (as with commercial landscape paintings) to practical abstraction (such as is the case with reading maps). Here, Rafael Goldchain and Napatchie Pootoogook both offer satirical depictions of idealized landscapes. In Goldchain's photograph, titled *Amusement Park*, a three-dimensional topographical map of Guatemala is being maintained by a landscaper. The title may point to the context of the map's upkeep as part of an amusement park, or it may instead point to Guatemala's history of colonization characterized by the economic exploitation of Indigenous people and the ecological exploitation of land. In Pootoogook's print, the artist herself figures front and centre, holding an illustration of, as the title of the work tells us, a drawing of her tent. But there is a moment of discord between the proclaimed subject matter and the actuality of the home she stands in front of: in the drawing, a traditional caribou-hide structure is depicted; in the print, Pootoogook stands in front of a canvas tent with a wooden door. On the one hand, Pootoogook portrays herself exporting a romanticized narrative of life in the north for art buyers in the south (or to us, as viewers). On the other hand, she portrays life as she was living it.



Napatchie Pootoogook
Drawing of My Tent, 1982
 colour stonecut and stencil on japan paper, 25/50
 Gift of the Director's Fund, 1982



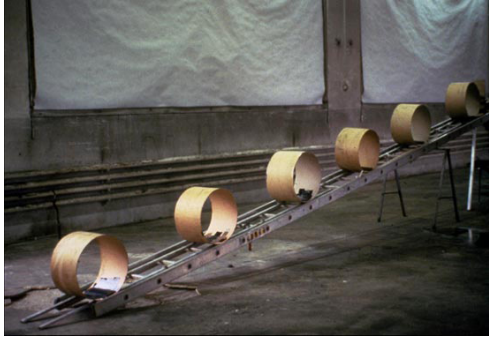
Lawren S. Harris
Pyramid, date unknown
oil on masonite
Gift of Yvonne McKague Houser, 1964

**Lawren Harris's *Pyramid* and
Rafael Goldchain's *Nocturnal Encounter*,
Comayagua, Honduras**

Lawren Harris, a wealthy financier and member of the Group of Seven, was integral to constructing a Canadian national mythology around artistic practice, which focused on idealized landscape paintings. Rafael Goldchain immigrated to Toronto, from Chile by way of Israel, in the late 1970s, and has since become a celebrated photographer known for his deft oscillations between the imaginary and the real. Biographically, the two artists bear little in common other than their shared (though temporally distant) presence on the land of the Missisaugas of New Credit. And yet, these diverse subject positions somehow give rise to two works that compliment each other in an affective way. This later work of Harris' is an abstracted landscape of a levitating pyramid, and this photograph by Goldchain is a street-style image focused on two human figures in a romantic embrace. Between the works, a play of shape and colour eerily knits the works together. And yet, between them, each is a little bit undone by the proximity of the other, one representing a historical vision of the Canadian nation, the other a reflection of the country's contemporary character.



Rafael Goldchain
Nocturnal Encounter, Comayagua,
Honduras, 1987
dye coupler print
Gift of the Director's Fund, 1989



Peter Fischli and David Weiss's *The Way Things Go*

In Jeremy Millar's consideration of Peter Fischli and David Weiss's *The Way Things Go*, the film is described as illustrating the idea that history is "just one thing after another."²⁴ But, history is decidedly not just one thing after another but rather a constructed mess of power plays where always other explanations exist. In Fischli and Weiss's film, a tremendous chain reaction unfolds in a way that at first appears inevitable, but at second glance is revealed to be carefully orchestrated and aesthetically manipulated, so that the dissolves and cuts mask the meticulous set-up required for such a spectacle to play out. If this film is a metaphor for history, then the take away must be one of the agency embedded within narratives: the story told is that which the teller desires, and what remains concealed or denied are the machinations on the other side of that desire. History is the product of many forces, some perceptible and some hidden. If history is constructed, then as Millar says of the film, it is "an ongoing process of creation in which we too are involved, rather than an automatic procedure of which we are no part" (emphasis his).²⁵ To be moral participants, to truly engage (or in this case, to be active viewers), then we must recognize these many other forces and hold a space for their agency.

Peter Fischli and David Weiss

The Way Things Go (German: *Der Lauf der Dinge*), 1987 (film stills) film, converted to DVD; 30 minutes

What Else?

I am not sure that these artworks deconstruct each other in their proximity, or that they challenge colonial habits per se, but in an expanded sense of the term, I hope the clusters reshuffle the histories embedded in this objects and muck up the parameters of meaning associated with them. I hope that ideological cracks appear, creating a space for histories I do not have access to, that I can't predict, but that I know are out there to be told because one story is never ever enough. These kinds of delinkings are one tactic. One! There are many. Many! The objective here is to tell a different story by positioning the works in ways that encourage multiple and unresolved readings, thereby refusing any myth of singular truths or clear meanings. Returning to my earlier claim that the space of exhibition is an active one, capable of real contributions to civic society, and referencing Garneau one more time, cultural decolonization in Canada is "a dialogue between Indigeneity and Canadianism in a field that belongs exclusively to neither... Art as a form of decolonial activism is the result of contact; it emerges from cultures in collision."²⁶ What the gallery makes possible is a radical kind of imagination that can refocus how we see, understand and relate to each other. The "others" of *Other Electricities* are these stories, the ones that emerge when totalizing settler perspectives begin to rupture. Decolonization is not a single gesture, but a sustained engagement composed of hard reflection, careful listening and straight-up change. If the strategies used here have not worked to perform a delinking (or even if they have), what other tactics can we take?

The Courtyard

In addition to the exhibition proper, *Other Electricities* extends into what I am calling the courtyard: a lounge area full of reading materials where visitors are encouraged to engage the thinking of others who are wrestling with this idea of cultural decolonization. Some materials have been drawn from the AGW's resource library, and additional materials have been acquired specifically to accompany this exhibition. The books, journals and articles that are new to the AGW will become part of their library after *Other Electricities* closes. In calling this space "the courtyard," I am invoking curator Yuko Hasegawa's articulation of the social function of courtyards in historical Islamic architecture as places where "elements of both public and private life intertwine, and where the objective political world and the introspective subjective space intersect and cross over. The courtyard is also seen as a plane of experience and experimentation — an arena for learning and critical thinking of a discursive and embodied kind. It marks a generative space for the production of new awareness and knowledge."²⁷ I hope that those who visit the

exhibition take some of these ideas away with them, telling new stories of what our shared presence in Windsor (and elsewhere) can be, and further, that the materials are drawn upon in the curatorial and educational projects that follow mine at the AGW, these traces becoming part of the material history and futurity of the Gallery itself.

Thanks

Foremost, I must extend gratitude to Srimoyee Mitra and staff at the Art Gallery of Windsor for offering an opportunity to think alongside their institution, and for being so generous with the millions of questions and concerns I had along the way. Gabby Moser and Gina Badger helped me locate the specific words and forms I needed to articulate these ideas. Pip Day and Kim Simon are talking cures. And Eric Emery, if it wasn't for him...

Endnotes

1. Fanon, Frantz. *Black skin, white masks* (trans. Richard Philcox). New York: Grove Press, 1967, page 1.

2. Mignolo, Walter D. (2007) "DELINKING." *Cultural Studies*, 21:2 (2007), page 456, http://waltermignolo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WMignolo_Delinking.pdf.

3. As their website states, e-fagia is "a Toronto-based organization of artists and writers created to produce and disseminate electronic art projects with emphasis on contemporary Canadian and Latin American artists." See here: <http://www.e-fagia.org/index.html>.

Arlan Londoño, one of the event's co-organizers and member of e-fagia, suddenly passed away a few weeks after the salon. Though I did not know him well, I must acknowledge his graciousness and careful intellect in thinking through the ideas of decolonial aesthetics with those present on that afternoon. I recognize that this is an inadequate eulogy, and so I'd like to quote Jorge Lozano, an artist, filmmaker, curator and friend of Londoño's, as originally published by Sky Goodden for *BLOUIN ARTINFO*: "Many of my conversations with Arlan had to do with time, becoming time, the unsettling feeling of feeling alone, our strategies to create a strong cultural community, our permanent state of displaced melancholy, and our endless discussion about what was good or bad art. Arlan was a provocation to think, always questioning the laws of an obscure and endless conformity. And whenever we agreed about something, I was always fascinated by the striking bright smile in his eyes. I take those smiles with me to lighten the emptiness that his departure has left, the dreamer dreamed. Timelessness neither begins nor ends." See here: <http://ca.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/908716/remembering-arlan-londono-1962-2013#sthash.mkAASlz4.dpuf>.

4. Co-authored by Alanna Lockward, Rolando Vásquez, Teresa María Díaz Nerio, Marina Grznic', Michelle Eistrup, Tanja Ostojic', Dalida María Benfield, Raúl Moarquech Ferrera-Balanquet, Pedro Lasch, Nelson Maldonado Torres, Ovidiu fiichindeleanu, HongAn Truong, Guo-Juin Hong, Miguel Rojas-Sotelo and Walter Mignolo in May 2011. For a full transcription of the manifesto, see here: <http://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/>.

5. In the *Decolonial Aesthetics* manifesto, the authors note that artists "have removed the veil from the hidden histories of colonialism and have re-articulated these narratives in some spaces of modernity such as the white cube." This exhibition is an attempt to perform such a re-articulation. See here: <http://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/>.

6. I am not the first to ask such questions about the collections of galleries and museums. Important historical precedent is found, for instance, in Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum at the Maryland Historical Society*, where he reshuffled the society's collection in radical ways.

7. Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1, 2012, page 21.

8. Ibid.

9. In describing his daughter's reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin, anti-racism activist Tim Wise describes her new-found awareness of being an "American in the fullest and most horrible sense of that word, by which I mean she has been truly introduced to the workings of the system of which she is both a part, and, at the same time, merely an inheritor." Wise is referring to a legal system, bolstered by cultural "norms," which fails to render justice blindly. The inertia of these systems is real, but I am suggesting that they need continual maintenance, which is where critical awareness and the possibility of revolution meet.

10. Garneau, David. "Extra-Rational Aesthetic Action and Cultural Decolonization," *FUSE* 36-4, 2013, page 15–16.

11. "Border Cultures: Part One (homes, land)." <http://www.artgalleryofwindsor.com/exhibitions/upcoming/369>.

12. Igloliorte, Heather, Brenda L. Croft and Steve Loft. *Decolonize Me*. Canada: The Art Gallery of Ottawa/The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2012, page 20.

13. "Bonnie Devine: The Tecumseh Papers." <http://www.artgalleryofwindsor.com/exhibitions/upcoming/388>.

14. To the best of my knowledge, there are no works in the Gallery's collection from local Aboriginal artist.

15. The two solitudes is an idea specific to Canadian society, which holds that French and English populations consider themselves to be socially and culturally distinct with a corresponding lack of will to communicate in order to articulate a unified Canadian identity.

16. "Decoloniality." <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decoloniality>. As taken from Quijano, Anibal. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1(3), 2000, page 544.

17. Grande, John K. "Carl Bean: Dissolving Time." *Balance: Art and Nature*, Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1994. Accessed via <http://ccca.concordia.ca/c/writing/g/grande/grande019t.html>.
18. Millar, Jeremy. Fischli and Weiss: *The Way Things Go*. London: Afterall, 2007, page 57. As taken from M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," op. cit., page 23.
19. "Joyce Wieland: 1930–1998." <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artist.php?iartistid=5908>.
20. From his artist file.
21. Taken from the didactics for *INUIT ART: from the Permanent Collection* (19 January – 30 March 2008).
22. "Charles Comfort: 1900–1994." <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artist.php?iartistid=1093>, notes as "Charles Comfort, writing about himself, 1974."
23. Hustak, Alan. "Betty Goodwin, Artist of Mourning," *The Gazette*, 2008. As republished here: <http://www.dailyundertaker.com/2008/12/betty-goodwin-artist-of-mourning.html>.
24. Millar, Jeremy. *Fischli and Weiss: The Way Things Go*. London: Afterall, 2007, back cover.
25. Millar, Jeremy. *Fischli and Weiss: The Way Things Go*. London: Afterall, 2007, page 81.
26. Garneau, David. "Extra-Rational Aesthetic Action and Cultural Decolonization," *FUSE* 36–4, 2013, page 21.
27. "Re:emerge: Towards a New Cultural Cartography." <http://www.sharjahart.org/biennial/sharjah-biennial-11/welcome>.

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Other Electricities: Works from the AGW Collection

September 13, 2013 – January 5, 2014

Guest curator cheyanne turions

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