

WAAP Art Toronto 2020 Focus Section



Canada's Art Fair

October 28 – November 8, 2020

Images in this PDF are linked to their respective videos. Please click to view full works.



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Quid Tum?

An exhibition in 2 parts

Text by Lauren Fournier

Artists 1 (Video only presentation online at Art Toronto 2020):

Scott Billings, Bracken Hanuse Corlett, Steven Cottingham, Alex Gibson, Zachery Longboy, Marina Roy, Nicolas Sassoon & Rick Silva, Evann Siebens, Syrus Marcus Ware, Paul Wong

Artists 2 (Physical pop-up presentation at Stephen Bulger Gallery, Oct 28 - Nov 7):

Kim Kennedy Austin, Steven Cottingham, Daniel Giordano, Francisco-Fernando Granados, Vanessa Dion Fletcher, Maegan Hill-Carroll, Lyse Lemieux, Kate Metten, Ryan Quast, Patryk Stasieczek, Julia Rose Sutherland, Mark Verabioff, Nico Williams, Paul Wong

What next? It is a question that many of us have been asking, here in the contemporary art world. What next for our practices of making, exhibiting, critiquing, and collecting art? Will there be subtle shifts and reforms, to accommodate for the logistical pressures of the pandemic? Or will there be major overhaul, a revolution in how we conceive of art and what it can do?

There is an undeniable urgency to the *right now*. With that, the global desire to understand *what next* is almost overwhelming: so much uncertainty makes asking this question a seemingly impossible pursuit. But ask it we must, and the artists here present reflections on possible answers to the what now and the what next. If the world is burning—literally, but also figuratively, socially, politically, epistemologically and ontologically (do we have any shared, objective truth on which we can stand, or have we reached the end-point of post-modernism and the end of meta-narratives, undergirding truths we can stand solidly upon despite ideological differences)—what kinds of art practices are permissible? Do artists continue following their gut, making the work they feel compelled to make, believing in its importance? The curation of this exhibition raises the question of the relationship between abstraction and politics today by featuring works that are ostensibly political next to works that are a seeming reprieve from the “political” via abstraction and form.

First, an opening scene of hell on earth, made entirely through digital rendering and CGI. Steven Cottingham’s video interest in heat death and pyrotechnics finds new charge in this summer of 2020 of sweeping riots, protest, fires. It is a summer when much of the world is quite literally on fire, and when the concomitant focusing of some on private property rather than Black and Indigenous lives leaves many reeling, wondering what this says about the ethics of *living* in an advanced late capitalist world.

Shot on a sound stage, Cottingham’s video which is currently on display at Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art in Kelowna, BC, is a convincing simulation: the effect, for the viewer, is one of watching a Dodge Charger blow up, a slow-mo obliteration of what looks to be a real car into a million infinitesimal fractals and forms. The unsettling and cathartic explosion of Cottingham’s hot rod becomes a way ‘in’ to the exhibition of works that place a committed, artistic attention in formal experimentations without sacrificing political responsibility and self-reflection.

The explosive literality of Cottingham’s video—one form of formal meditation—transitions to works that are other kinds of formal meditations, fervently rooted in the political and aesthetic concerns of these given artists’ practices and their politics. Take, for example, Vanessa Dion Fletcher or Francisco-Fernando Grenados’ move in the direction of abstraction. Working with geometric shapes through processes of digital abstraction, Grenados’ work is “political because I made it,” as the artist notes, long reflecting on ideas of nationhood from his perspective as a queer refugee living in Canada. Patryk Stasieczek’s in-camera experimentations



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with colour meditate on materials like poly-ethylene, while Mark Verabioff's collages recast the word "ANTIFA" across different visual contexts as a way of defamiliarizing this ideologically-weaponized word, ossified as it has become in a hyper-polarized media environment.

In this assembly of works, part of the shift toward fundamental elements of form and geometric experimentation is tied to the idea of unlearning what we have known before—in the 'old world order.' Geometry plays a key role in child development, and in this moment in time, some turn to a childlike state of open-mindedness as we unlearn old patterns and conceive of new ways of being. Kate Metten's geometric studies provide a beat or pause in the conceptual action, colour theory and the physicality of form on display. Zachery Longboy's *Water into Fire*, from 1994, incorporates geometry—in the form of the performer on camera drawing geometric sketches in a notebook, while a matter-of-fact, post-confessional narrative about Longboy's HIV diagnosis and his acceptance of death and dying, is spoken over the sound of Indigenous hand-drumming and song (despite this acceptance of death, Longboy is still very much alive and making work today).

In Julia Rose Sutherland's *Rest In Peace Rodney Levi* (2020), the political is very much—devastatingly so—personal. Using porcupine quillwork as a form of Indigenous embroidery practice on paper, Sutherland memorializes her late cousin Rodney Levi while calling attention to the injustice of his murder: an RCMP officer shot him twice in the chest during a "wellness check" at his home in Redbank, New Brunswick in June 2020. Starting from a place of obliterating grief, the work reads *Fuck The Police*, and has expanded into an ongoing, iterative ritual of Sutherland making quillwork, including her *Defund the Police* (2020) and *Refund the Communities* (2020). Nico Williams' *NDN Status* (2019) is part of a stunning body of work that bring together practices of wampum, delica beadwork, and collage to create small pieces whose formal beauty does not bely their voicing the very real, ongoing concerns of living Indigenous nations here in so-called 'Canada'. In this exhibition is Williams' "NDN Status Card," with the artist's name and registration number next to a pixelated image of the artist's portrait. A formal practice of beading, grounded in longstanding tradition, is also a political practice of contemporary Indigenous art as vital and reflective on the "status" of Indigenous identity and becoming in the neo-colonial—or de-colonial?—present.

While the shift toward geometries and ideas of unlearning is part of the politics of abstraction and formally-focused work, so too does pleasure and *aesthetics* play a key role in these works. At a time when everything about art seems up for question, pleasure emerges as an important part of the experience of making art as well as looking at and listening to art—where a return to *aesthetics* in the sense of *aesthesis*—the realm of sensorial—is part of the politics of BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ artists and others. From Wuikinuxv and Klahoose Nations, artist Bracken Hanuse Corlett created the digital animation *We See Monsters*, originally shown at Facade Festival 2019 in Vancouver, as a way of highlighting Wuikinuxv forms and iconography in a present-day world. Paul Wong's *Five Octave Range*, which was originally a four-channel public art video installation commissioned by the inaugural Vancouver Opera Festival in 2017, is a trippy operatic adventure that is vibratory and queer, the pleasures of vocalization at work as a small choir of opera performers sing their own voice warm-up exercises followed by an aria of their choice. This vibratory register extends to Alex Gibson's *VAL Sex Dream* (2019), where the illustrated lines, like strokes of paint, acts as a formal interlude that gives a queer couple privacy in a scene of sexual intimacy. Across these works, the artists shift the audience's attention to a more formal register, allowing gorgeous sensorial experience to exist alongside complex political, personal, and cultural stories that the artists share with their audiences.

As Indigenous, Black, POC, queer, women, and other artists have maintained for decades, there is a politic to making work grounded in one's embodied experience in the world, even if the work might not appear outright "political." Evann Siebens extends her practice in dance and performance to her ongoing project that commemorates the late artist Helen Goodwin as part of a project of collective memory in Vancouver's 1970s art scenes; the project was first exhibited at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery in 2018. Dancing alongside Anne Ngan, one of Goodwin's collaborators, Siebens work is a political practice of feminist art



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historiography, an exercise in physically mourning, and a visual meditation on aging gracefully. As Siebens looks considerably to the past, the artist and activist, Syrus Marcus Ware turns his attention to what lies ahead. His *Ancestors*, initially exhibited as an eight-channel video in the first Toronto Biennale in 2019, is shown here as a single-channel video; it follows a group of people who speak back to their ancestors. These time-travelling descendants plead with their ancestors to change their ways so that they can do their share in preparing for a better future.

As we find ways, both individually and collectively, to navigate the omnipresent contradictions and tensions that characterize this present moment, an exhibition that welcomes such tensions with curiosity and an open-mind promises to be refreshing, if not outright insightful. For some artists in this exhibition, returning to concerns of form with all of the insights and developments of life today is a way not only of re-energizing formalisms but re-politicizing them. When formalism was at its peak in postwar America (with Clement Greenberg's desire for a supposedly apolitical art manifested in the form of post-painterly abstraction), art became a political tool, used as an ideological pawn in the cold war between the US and the USSR. The pandemic in many ways feels like a global "refresh," where nothing can be assumed. By putting a range of political and abstract works on display without parsing out which are which, or limiting one to a straightforward reading, WAAP re-opens these questions for the current moment and makes space for an aesthetic "refresh" too.

And what better time to do this, then when the world is proverbially and literally on fire? WAAP underlines the need for political activism while conceding the exhaustion of said political activism—especially for those marginalized artists who do so much of the activist labor.

There are works engage politics all along the spectrum of abstract to figurative.

Quid Tum? translates from the Latin as *What next? What's next? Then what?*

Reflective, the artists' works on display in this exhibition provide some possible responses.



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EVANN SIEBENS

The first time I came to Hornby was with Helen Goodwin, 2018

4K HD single channel video

Edition 3/3 + 1AP

About the work:

The First Time I Came to Hornby Was with Helen Goodwin (2018), is an homage to choreographer and dancer Helen Goodwin (1927–1985), who had an important role within the Vancouver art scene in the 1960s and influence on the development of improvisational dance, but her legacy is poorly preserved and is not known to the general public. Evann Siebens asks: why was Helen Goodwin's legacy erased? Since she was a female artist? Or that her artistic field was performance, which is difficult to archive and conserve? Since she committed suicide (infamously by filling her pockets with stones and walking into the waters off Jericho Beach in Vancouver) or has not left an archive of her works? Siebens believes that the archive sits in the bodies of those who were there, and in this work, Anne Ngan, a dancer who performed in the Goodwin troupe, becomes not only a witness to history, but also a source of knowledge about it.

This single-channel work was developed from a large video and sculptural installation work created by Siebens for "Radial Change" at the Belkin Gallery, Vancouver, in 2018. Siebens recently exhibited at the Melly Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (formerly known as Witte de With), and will be presenting a new large-scale public art work at Vancouver Art Gallery Offsite in spring 2021.



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About the artist:

Evann Siebens makes media, performance and photos with movement. Her lens-based practice negotiates the human body as an archival site and the politics of the female gaze. She danced with the National Ballet of Canada and the Bonn Ballett before studying film production at New York University. Recent exhibitions and screenings include: Witte de With (Rotterdam, 2020), WAAP (Vancouver, 2019), Belkin Gallery (Vancouver 2018), Vancouver Art Gallery Façade Fest (Vancouver 2017). Evann recently screened a film at Lincoln Center in New York City and won the 'Outstanding Overall Work' prize at the Light Moves Festival in Limerick, Ireland. Her work from 'A Performance Affair' in Brussels, Belgium was featured on the front page of the International New York Times in 2019. She is represented by Wil Aballe Art Projects in Vancouver, Canada.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia



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ALEX GIBSON

VAL Sex Dream, 2019

Hand-drawn animation, 1080p single channel video, audio, 57 seconds, looped

Edition of 3 + 1AP

About the work:

Alex Gibson's *VAL Sex Dream*, a hand-drawn animated dreamscape, is an exploration of queer isolation and trans-geographical longing, with figures that ripple with tension and anxiety. Barbadian born and raised, Gibson's practice investigates queer identity as it pertains to their Caribbean background, having since immigrated to Canada. The animation is a reflection on the loss of home, queer desires, and repressed emotions. Initially presented at Vancouver Art Leisure (VAL) in 2019, an underground, queer art and party venue, *VAL Sex Dream* has since been shown in New York at Brooklyn's Tomato Mouse.



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About the artist:

Alex Gibson is a queer Barbadian artist based in Vancouver, BC, as a guest on the unceded territories of the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, and Skwxwu7mesh First Nations. They are interested in investigating queer sentiments in relation to their Caribbean background, and through the exploration of gender and identity, their practice seeks to reveal new realities of queer Caribbean potentials. Gibson's works have been exhibited at Tomato Mouse, New York; CBC Arts, Canada; WAAP, Vancouver; Queer Arts Festival, Vancouver; Mahognay Culture, Barbados; Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Vancouver.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *The Magic Floot 3*, Tomato Mouse, Brooklyn, NY
- Vancouver Art and Leisure, Vancouver, BC, Canada

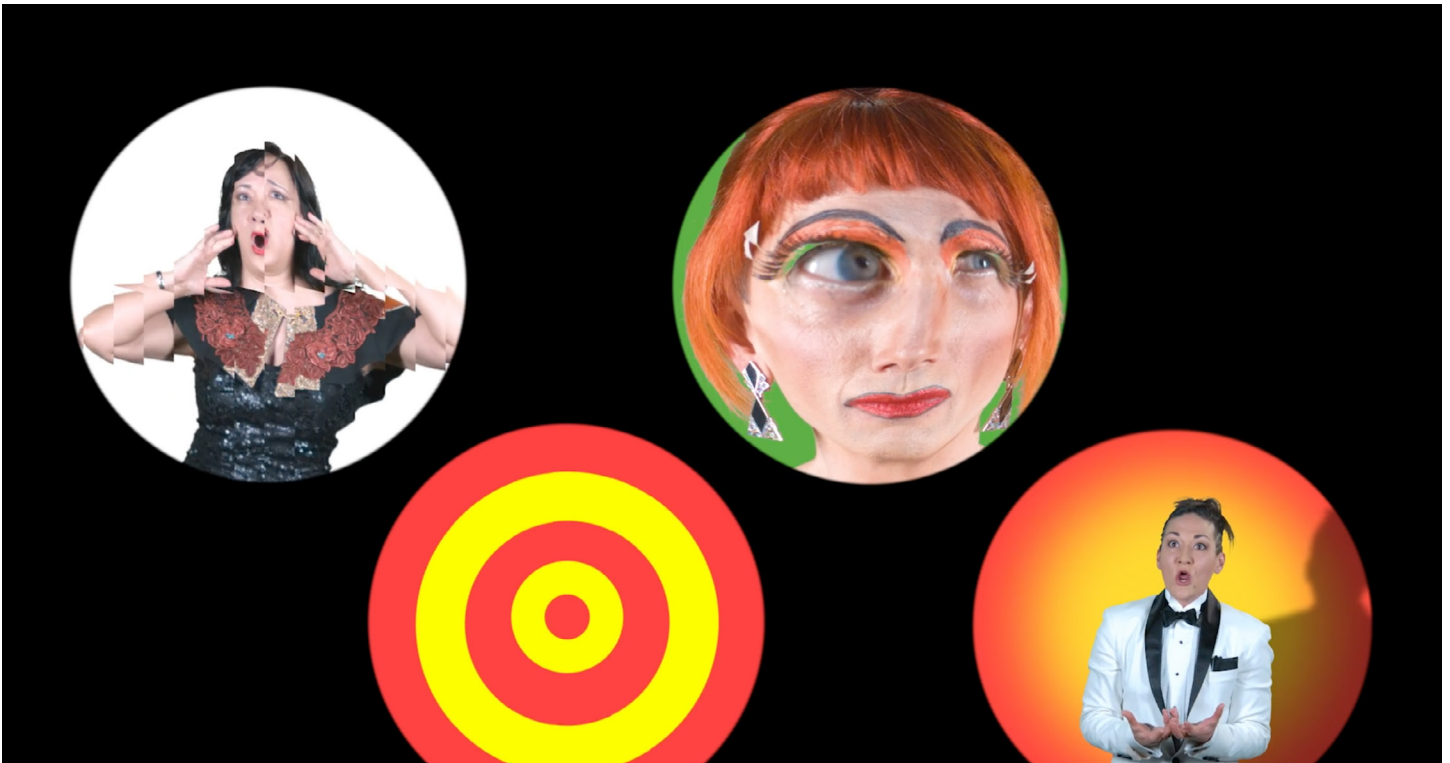
Related Press:

<https://www.cbc.ca/arts/seems-cozy-right-take-a-closer-look-these-gifs-actually-depict-a-complicated-queer-anxiety-1.5056954>



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PAUL WONG

Five Octave Range, 2017

Single channel version

Five Octave Range Mix

Edition of 10

Also available as a Four channel video installation, non-synced loops, colour, sound, as presented in the Vancouver Opera Festival

Edition of 5

About the work:

Five Octave Range (2017) was created as a site-specific outdoor work at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza for the inaugural Vancouver Opera Festival. It was presented as an immersive multi-screen video installation on four round screens. Created as a series of non-synchronized video and sound loops that permitted an uncanny relationship to coalesce between sound and picture, these portals provided viewers access to an up-close and personal experience with opera. Much like jazz, it is free form and abstract. In a sense, Wong has used operatic tropes the same way that minimalist composer Steve Reich used found sound in his early work: superimposing sound upon sound as a way of building textural depth and emotional resonance.

In early March 2017, Paul Wong invited four opera singers to his studio to perform for the camera. They were given a few basic instructions beforehand: it would be an a capella performance, and no rehearsals were needed. Further, they would be recording in front of a green screen, and should costume themselves as they would for a mainstage role.



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Wong selected these four singers (two men and two women) to ensure a diverse and dynamic range of voices and languages: baritone, tenor, coloratura soprano and mezzo-soprano; English, French, German, Italian and Kwagiulth (Kwakwaka'wakw).

Paul Wong is a pioneering video artist based in Vancouver. He has been awarded the prestigious Audain Prize and the Governor-General Award for Visual Arts.

About the artist:

Paul Wong, (born November 20, 1954 in Prince Rupert, British Columbia) is a Canadian multimedia artist. An award-winning artist, curator, and organizer of public interventions since the mid-1970s, Wong is known for his engagement with issues of race, sex, and death. His work varies from conceptual performances to narratives, meshing video, photography, installation, and performance with Chinese-Canadian cultural perspectives.

Wong is a founding member of several artists groups including the Video In / VIVO Media Arts Centre (Satellite Video Exchange Society 1973), and is a co-founding member of On The Cutting Edge Productions Society, which produced projects nationally and internationally from 1985 to 2007.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *Five Octave Range*, Vancouver Opera Festival, Vancouver, BC, Canada



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STEVEN COTTINGHAM

Dodge charger fire sim, 2020

Digital rendering and animation, 720p video, audio, 1 minute, 30 seconds, looped

Edition of 3 + 1AP

About the work:

Steven Cottingham is interested in the difference between reality and realism. In an era of deep fakes and fake news, images lose their assumption of verisimilitude. But just because they are not 'true' does not mean they aren't also 'real'. These images, produced by the artist via photo-real software, are used to construct rather than capture reality. Cottingham suggests that our shared reality is populated by these constructed images: advertisements and algorithms used for commercial and political ends alike.

By using open source rendering software, Cottingham has produced tableaux of implausible but nonetheless realistic (that is, believable) events. A car burns on a soundstage, mixing highly-staged commercial production techniques with spontaneous protest tactics. Heat radiates out from the electronics, reinstating the physicality of otherwise virtual representations. In this way, we can start to grasp the slippage between signs and their signifiers in this disorienting media landscape where nothing seems to add up.

The work was recently exhibited in a Sept 2020 exhibition at Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art.



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About the artist:

Steven Cottingham is an artist based in Vancouver. His practice concerns the dialectic of profit (the production of more than is consumed) and friction (the consumption of more than is produced). Cottingham exhibits in both professional and guerrilla spaces, with recent exhibitions at Noda Estudio (Havana), Wil Aballe Art Projects (Vancouver), the Wellcome Collection (London), the Museum of Capitalism (Oakland), The Luminary (St Louis), and the Art Gallery of Alberta (Edmonton). Past residencies include the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Skowhegan), Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Berlin), and Fogo Island Arts (Fogo Island). He received an MFA from the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, 2017). Currently he runs QO-QQOON, an art theory webzine.

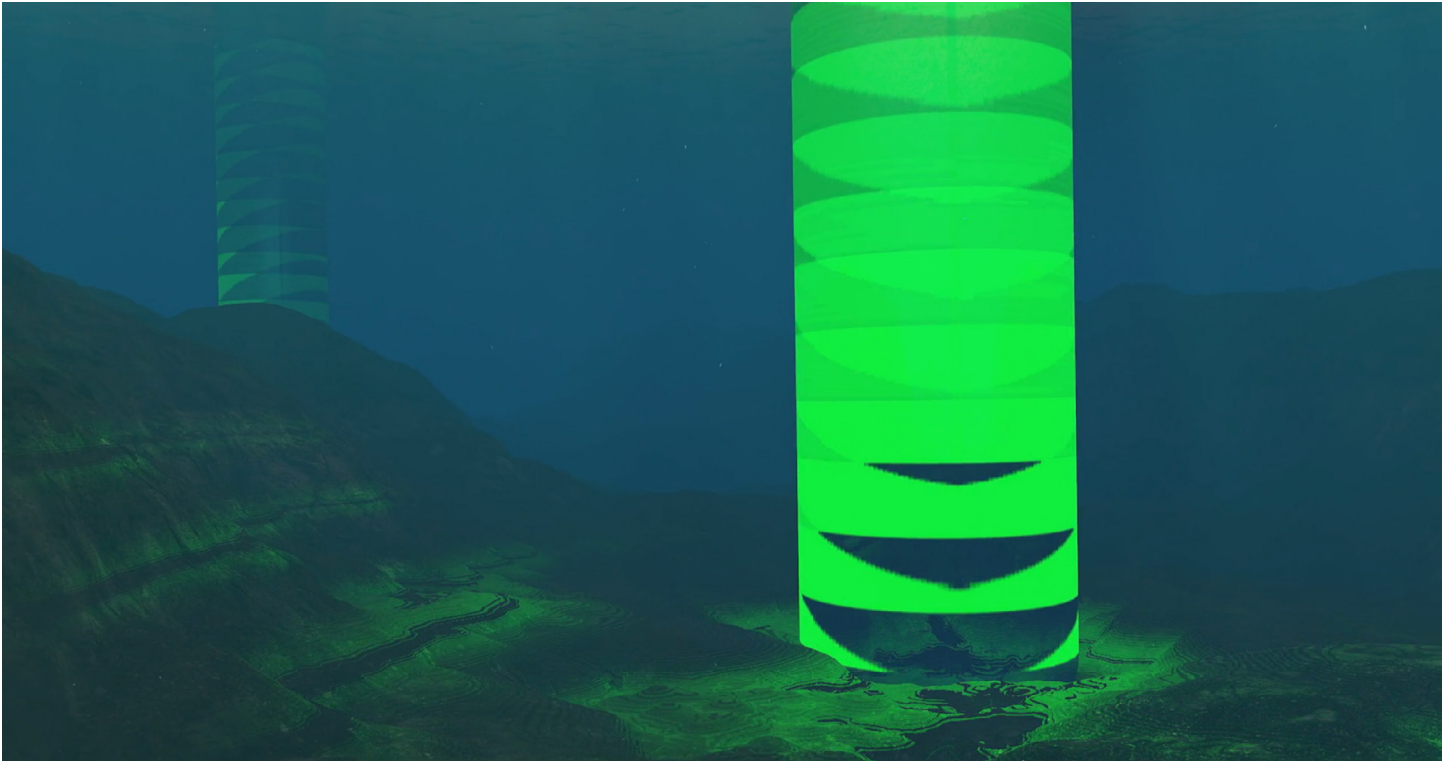
Exhibitions and screenings:

- *Signal Chains*, Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, Kelowna, BC, Canada



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NICOLAS SASSOON & RICK SILVA
SIGNALS 5, 2018
HD video, 4 minutes

About the work:

SIGNALS is a collaborative project by artists Nicolas Sassoon (Vancouver, BC) and Rick Silva (Eugene, OR) that focuses on immersive audio-visual renderings of altered seascapes. Sassoon and Silva share an ongoing theme in their individual practices; the depiction of wilderness and natural forms through computer imaging. Created by merging their respective fields of visual research, SIGNALS features oceanic panoramas inhabited by unnatural substances and enigmatic structures. The project draws from sources such as oceanographic surveys, climate studies and science-fiction to create 3D generated video works and installations that reflect on contamination, mutation and future ecologies.

SIGNALS is a series that has resulted in 6 collaborative video works. These works have been exhibited in major museums around the world, including the House of Electronic Art in Basel, Switzerland. SIGNALS has also resulted in two Lumen Prize nominations for the artists. Their latest collaboration, CORES, is currently on view in an online release by the gallery on our website, www.waapart.com. Sassoon is also currently exhibiting in a solo exhibition at Galerie Charlot, Paris, and will be exhibiting in a Centre Pompidou presentation called “Hors Piste” in January 2021.



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About the artist:

Nicolas Sassoon's work has long been concerned with the tensions between the pixel and the screen, reflecting on their entanglement and materiality by integrating pixelated figures, moiré patterns and early computer graphics into experiential displays. This focus on early computer graphics is driven by the sculptural, material and pictorial qualities of this imagery, as well as its limitations and its poetics. Sassoon's work often explores the projective dimensions of screen-based space, and the many relationships between computer technology and the natural world. His research leads him to engage frequently in cross-disciplinary projects in the fields of architecture, electronic music, textiles, and art. Nicolas Sassoon was born in Marseille, France in 1981, he lives and works in Vancouver BC Canada, on the unceded lands of the x̱məθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwx-wú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. His work has been exhibited at The Whitney Museum of American Art (US) Eyebeam (US), Current Museum (US), Vancouver Art Gallery (CA), Plugin ICA (CA), Contemporary Art Gallery (CA), Charles H.Scott Gallery (CA), Western Front (CA), PRE-TEEN Gallery (MX), Victoria & Albert Museum (UK), the Centre d'Art Bastille (FR), House of Electronic Basel (SW), Arti et Amicitiae (NL), MU Eindhoven (NL) , Today Art Museum (CN), Chronus Art Center (CN), the Berlin Fashion Week (DE) and the New-York Fashion Week (US).

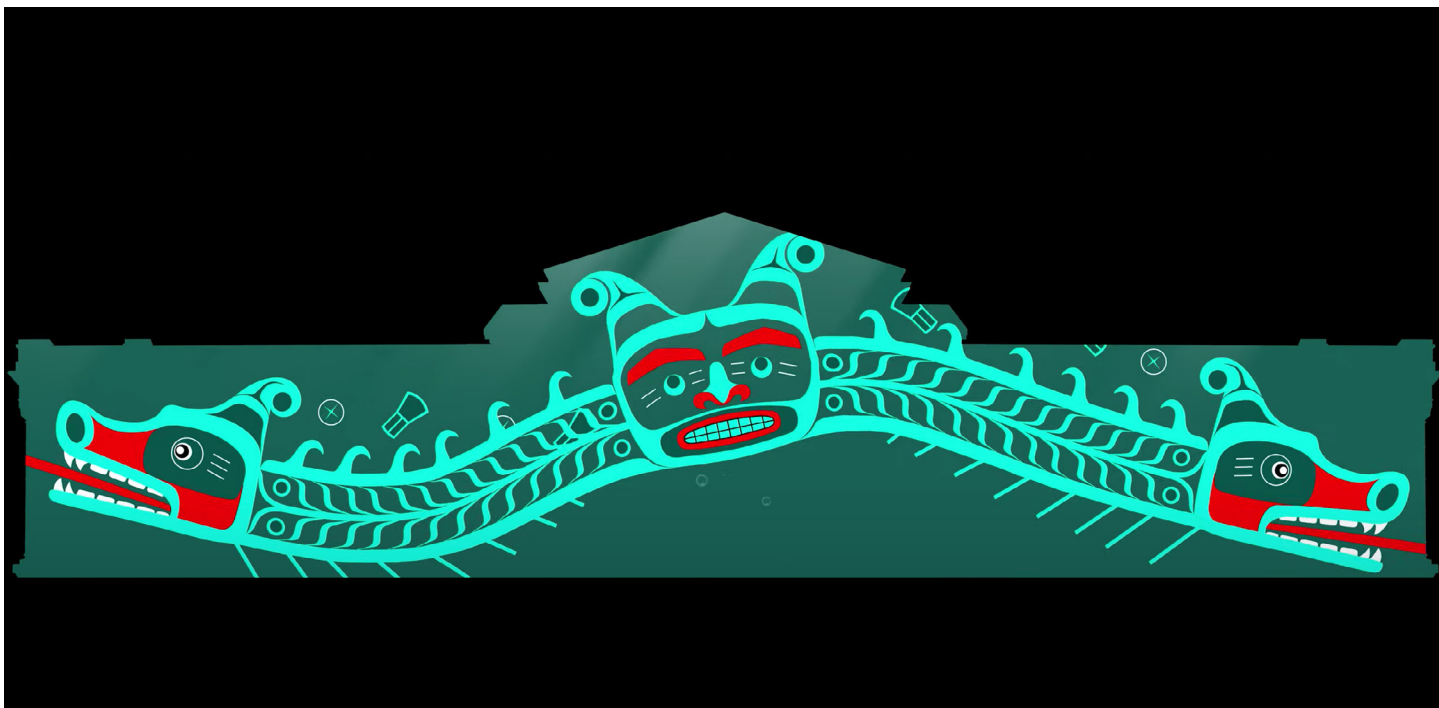
Exhibitions and screenings:

- 150 Media Stream, Chicago, USA curated by Yuge Zhou
- Pier 86, Seattle, USA curated by Mollie Bryan
- GLAS Festival, Berkeley, USA curated by Jeanette Bonds
- Interstitial Gallery, Seattle, USA curated by Julia Greenway
- Resonate Festival, Belgrade, Serbia curated by Nora o Murchu
- Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, Canada curated by Wil Aballe
- Neverland Space, online exhibition curated by Yves Sinka
- Rua Red, Ireland curated by Nora o Murchu
- Luznava Manor, Latvia curated by Nora o Murchu



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BRACKEN HANUSE CORLETT

We SEE Monsters, 2019

Digital animation, 2 minutes 10 seconds

Originally projected on the face of the Vancouver Art Gallery for Façade Festival 2019

About the work:

We SEE Monsters is an animation that begins with a skipper and a fisherman out at sea. One is focused on the moon, and the other remains intent on the water. Then, the viewer abruptly leaves this world and dives deep into the realms below, where monsters are the conductors of ceremony. Hanuse Corlett has been exploring the stories from his territories that feature monsters. Throughout these stories, the monsters are not static characters that reflect only good or evil; they project dynamic qualities and balance. Their narratives often meander and sometimes end abruptly or spill over into another story. Movement is also an important aspect of these stories, as the characters are often travelling, journeying and dancing. As Hanuse Corlett explains, "Movement is expressed in our formline designs. Our shapes depict bodies in motion. In our dances, we embody and enact the spirit of these beings."

We SEE Monsters features illustrations by Bracken Hanuse Corlett and Dean Hunt. The sound was created by Hunt in part by using field recordings from his home territory. Hunt comes from the Heiltsuk Nation and Hanuse Corlett comes from the Wukinuxv and Klahoose Nations.

We SEE Monsters was initially presented as part of the Vancouver Art Gallery's Façade Festival 2019. Façade Festival is a week-long, monumental public art project and cultural event that takes place from sunset to midnight every evening. Site-specific works of art are projection mapped onto the Vancouver Art Gallery's iconic architecture, covering the building and its various surface details with moving, dynamic artwork. This single-channel version has been modified from the original as part of this Art Toronto presentation.



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About the artist:

Bracken Hanuse Corlett is a multimedia artist hailing from the Wuikinuxv and Klahoose Nations. He got his start in theatre and performance and has since transitioned into a focus on digital-media, live-visual installation/performance and visual arts. He is the co-founder of the Vancouver Indigenous Media Arts Festival and over the last four years he has performed across the country as a member of the audio-visual collective, Skookum Sound System. He is a graduate of the En'owkin Centre of Indigenous Art and the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, and has studied Northwest Coast art, carving and design.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *Façade Festival 2019*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada



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ZACHARY LONGBOY

Water into Fire, 1994 (Password to view video: tree)

Single channel video, 10 minutes 20 seconds

About the work:

Password to view video: tree

The final piece of the trilogy “stained glass windows”, Zachary Longboy is a pioneering, two-spirited Indigenous artist in video art on the West Coast and in Canada. In this 1990's video work, Longboy outs himself as a first Nations homosexual who is living with HIV, and abruptly severs attached preconceptions of two-spirited peoples, forcing the First Nation's community to address him rather than the disease.

In a contemplative and meditative search, Longboy recollects how HIV/AIDS has affected himself and the community around him, revealing a strength through loss. In a March 2020 article in Canadian Art about Longboy, they described his work as participating in an important queer dialogue thread: “Longboy's almost anarchist approach to the medium of film is in conversation with other queer Indigenous video artists like Thirza Cuthand or the late Clint Alberta.”

In this same Canadian Art article, the artist describes his experience filming this work as one of joy, as it incorporated not just video, but also performance, his writing and sculpture: “Water Into Fire started off as a documentary about three of my friends who were HIV-positive: one had died before we began making it and the other two were on their way. I was in art school at the time and we had been given a project about a ladder, and that bridged the whole project for me. We talk about the ladder being used for going either up or down, but we can also walk across it if we lay it flat. So I was really searching for different directions to experience what we were going through as far as being HIV-positive and Native.” He further described it as a love ballad for people like him who were Native and living with HIV.



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The “Stained glass windows” series is comprised of: “From Another Time Comes One...”, “Eating Lunch”, & “Water Into Fire”. Longboy’s works are included in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

About the artist:

Zachery Cameron Longboy is a Sayasi Dene, video/performance and visual artist from Churchill, Manitoba. His video art, visual and performance work continues an exploration within a fractured cultural experience. Longboy’s video work is part of the collections of The National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Glenbow Museum (Calgary), The Canada Council Art Bank (Ottawa). Numerous screenings include The Edmonton Art Gallery, Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), Images Independent Film and Video Festival (Toronto) 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- Video Out Distribution, VIVO Media Arts Centre in Vancouver, BC, Canada
- Grunt Archives, grunt gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada



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MARINA ROY

Mineral Intelligence, 2011

Single channel video, 9 minutes 49 seconds

About the work:

Marina Roy's *Mineral Intelligence* video is divided into three parts. Pigment flowing through water dominates the first few minutes of the video, corresponding to a narrative (voice-over) description of the origins of life. In the second part, footage of jellyfish swimming through the water corresponds to a description of the human symbolic realm, and how humans come to interact with the materials around them to create new entities within the world as extensions of themselves, including art. The final section of video footage is of a cathedral exterior peppered with sparrows. This corresponds to a narrative of the life of Saint Denis, patron saint of France.

The relationship between the detached description of material life, human endeavours, and the life of Saint Denis is not entirely obvious. Rather than just speaking to the life of Christian saints and miracles, Roy contextualizes the image of a decapitated saint reciting a sermon in terms of "becoming" (Deleuze), as well as the gothic and grotesque as artistic genres. Saint Denis' story is the creation of a nationalist symbol: the birth of France in opposition to Roman colonial dominance, but also a foreshadowing of revolutionary Terror (decapitation). The importance of decapitation in French history comes full circle at the site of Saint Denis basilica, with Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, two of the very last of the royals, buried there before France became a republic and empire.

This video was first exhibited at Or Gallery, Berlin. Voiceover and sound has been done by Graham Meisner.



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About the artist:

In the pile-up of language, spectacle, and garbage, which constitutes our amnesiac present, one role for art is to create a clearing within this petrified landscape, and, through a reordering all this new and obsolete stuff, through bricolage and play, construct new meanings, new conceptions of reality, shot through with historical memory.

Cross-disciplinary in scope, my artwork investigates the intersection between materials, history, language, and ideology. Many would characterize my overall material sensibilities and aesthetic as grotesque. The work addresses the need for a posthuman/nonhuman perspective, counter to the reigning tendencies toward human-centric hubris. Humour is explored through a corporeal register: humans' underlying animality and mortality, as well as the absurdity of humanist moral positions vis-à-vis life on this planet.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *What's pushed out the door comes back through the window*, Window (Artspace Building), Winnipeg, MB, Canada
- *What's pushed out the door comes back through the window*, Or Gallery Satellite, Berlin, Germany



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SYRUS MARCUS WARE

Ancestors, 2019

Single channel video, 3 minutes 15 seconds

Also available as 8 channel video as presented in the Toronto Biennial of Art 2020

About the work:

Toronto-based artist Syrus Marcus Ware imagines a world where racialized people have survived the “Black death spectacle” writ large on the nightly news; survived the catastrophic impact of the Anthropocene; and survived the crushing effects of white supremacy. Commissioned by the Toronto Biennial of Art and the RIC, the artist draws on the shared language of speculative fiction and political activism to transform the Salah J. Bachir New Media Wall into a portal through which the next generation of racialized activists communicate with us, their ancestors, and offer us insights into the future.

This single-channel version of *Ancestors* has been developed for Art Toronto 2020. Please contact the gallery if interested in the original 8-channel version of the work that was exhibited at the Toronto Biennale, 2019.

We included this work by Syrus Marcus Ware to dialogue with the work of Jamaican-Canadian artist, Charles Campbell, whose solo exhibition “as it was, as it should have been” and works around the Maroon landscape of Cockpit Country is currently on display at WAAP in Vancouver, and in the gallery’s physical pop-up exhibition at Stephen Bulger Gallery, Oct 28 - Nov 7. Please contact the gallery for information about either exhibition. On Wed, Nov 5 at 4:30 PM EST, Charles Campbell will be in conversation with AGGV chief curator, Michelle Jacques, in a talk hosted by Art Toronto online.



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About the artist:

Syrus Marcus Ware is a Vanier Scholar, a visual artist, community activist, researcher, youth-advocate and educator. For 12 years, he was the Coordinator of the Art Gallery of Ontario Youth Program. Syrus is currently a facilitator/designer for the Cultural Leaders Lab (Toronto Arts Council & The Banff Centre). He is the inaugural artist-in-residence for Daniels Spectrum (2016/2017). Syrus is also a core-team member of Black Lives Matter Toronto.

As a visual artist, Syrus works within the mediums of painting, installation and performance to challenge systemic oppression. Syrus' work explores the spaces between and around identities; acting as provocations to our understandings of gender, sexuality and race. His work has been exhibited at the Toronto Biennial of Art (2019), the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Windsor, the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, Art Gallery of York University (AGYU), Gladstone Hotel, ASpace Gallery, Harbourfront Centre, SPIN Gallery and other galleries across Canada. His work has been reproduced in FUSE Magazine, The Globe and Mail, THIS Magazine, and Blackness and Sexualities, amongst others. His work has also been included in several academic journals including Small Axe and Women and Environment International.

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *Toronto Biennial of Art 2020*, Toronto, ON, Canada



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SCOTT BILLINGS

*Stanley Theatre Box Shot (Sorry We're *L*S*D)*, 2015

Single channel video, 8 minutes

About the work:

Emerging from a trapdoor, *Stanley Theatre Box Shot (Sorry, We're *L*S*D)* leads to the discovery of aspects of the world of theatre that we do not usually get to see. Much like Steven Cottingham's photo-real manipulated video work also included in this Art Toronto presentation, viewers are encouraged to think about the possible connection between the world of reality and the world of illusions, and when and where art succeeds in blurring the two.

At two different moments, the camera emerges through a trapdoor, from the dressing room located under the stage and enters the performance space of the theatre. Just before it enters the public space, one can see a sign turned sideways, which reads, "Sorry, we're closed". However, the letters c, o, and e in "closed" have been erased, to make LSD, hence the subtitle of the work. After leaving the dressing room, the camera first travels vertically across the main stage before zooming in through the empty seating area and towards the control booth. While zooming in, the artist used an iris shot (in the shape of a rectangle) in order to call the attention of the viewers to the control booth. Later, the camera zooms out (combined with a reverse iris shot) and suddenly the supposedly closed theatre is filled with an audience. This unexpected apparition of people makes the viewer ponder if they are hallucinating, especially since the crowd is composed of a limited number of sitters that are repeated in each row. While this seems to mark the end of a loop, it is in fact not. In the subsequent shot, the camera proceeds to follow the same trajectory, tracing the line of an imaginary box in space, but when the lens zooms away from the control booth, the theatre is deserted. By choosing to alternate these two shots, Billings skilfully plays with our awareness; he makes us travel back and forth between a state of what we think is accurate perception and a state of illusion.



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Billings is a leading new media sculptor in Canada specializing in unique kinetic sculptures, incorporating innovative technologies in his work. He first graduated with a Bachelors degree in engineering at the University of Waterloo before completing Bachelors and Masters Fine Arts degrees at Emily Carr University and UBC. His new work is set to open in a solo exhibition at Richmond Art Gallery in November 2020.

About the artist:

Scott Billings is a visual artist, industrial designer, and engineer based in Vancouver. His sculptures and video installations have been described as existing somewhere between cinema and automata. Centering on issues of animality, mobility, and spectatorship, Billings' work examines the mimetic relationship between the physical apparatus and the virtual motion it delivers. In what ways does the apparatus itself reveal both the mechanisms of causality and its own dormant animal quality? Billings addresses this question under the pursuit of the technological conundrum and a preoccupation with precise geometry and logic. Billings holds an MFA from the University of British Columbia, a BFA from Emily Carr University, and a BASc in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Waterloo. He teaches at UBC and Emily Carr as a sessional instructor. Scott Billings is represented by Wil Aballe Art Projects

Exhibitions and screenings:

- *A Risky Jump*, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC, Canada
- *A Risky Jump*, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, BC, Canada



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