

Ibid.

Hilarey Cowan
Simon Fuh
Kenneth Jeffery Kwan Kit Lau
Jera MacPherson
Claire Paquet
Benjamin Spalding
Nic Wilson
Zoë Wonfor

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Ibid comes from the latin ibidem which means ‘in the same place’. With this exhibition the four members of Ibid. Curatorial Collective, Hilarey Cowan, Simon Fuh, Jera MacPherson, and Nic Wilson, explore how artist networks orient emerging practices toward shared sensibilities and compulsions. Artistic practice often grows and is recognized through a singular voice, but it is short-sighted to assume that work emerges fully formed, from nothing and from nowhere. Work comes from social circumstances; school, gender, friendship, race, argument, class, love, sexuality, jealousy, or compersion¹. The work presented in this show has grown out of the networks we inhabit, both in Regina and beyond, and offers an opportunity to imagine the ways that many voices exist, at rest or in silence, behind the work of an individual artist.

Various Histories of Death

In their practices, both Claire Paquet and Nic Wilson contemplate the layers of death and the sediments that it has deposited throughout history. *Sleeping Bags* and *Long Term Pillow II (After Tony Feher)* reference different gendered histories of death and mourning which start with the metaphor of the ‘death bed’ or the ‘eternal sleep’.

Death is often assumed to be the secession of life, the state that seeps in after some life force has evaporated or been expelled (death as the lack of life) but we know that life hangs between two deaths: the little one (*la petite mort*²) and the big one. Paquet and Wilson also look at death as a substance, a state, and a sensation that mingles with life. This is death as an ongoing practice rather than the murky bookends between which blood pumps and neurons fire. It is a strange and bitter coupling, a smearing which is neither two sovereign states or one complete mass.

Paquet uses the creepy comfort of a coffin-shaped sleeping bag to animate past experiences of sleep and mourning. Before horsehair mattresses became a contemporary luxury product, for centuries animal fibres were used in the mattresses of European nobility. The history of hair is also enmeshed with the Victorian practice of making jewelry from a deceased loved one’s hair. The strands that poke out of Paquet’s sleeping bags are the unruly reminders of the parts of people that decay and the abject bits that linger to give a complicated warmth.

Tony Feher was a gay post-minimalist who lived with HIV

¹ Feeling joy when witnessing other's joy. Often used to contrast jealousy.

² An expression borrowed from French to describe a transcendent, post-orgasm state.



Hyperstation, Kenneth Jeffrey Kwan Kit Lau, digital photograph, 2018.

throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. The presence of death in funeral arrangements was expressed through his piece *Long Term Pillow*. Feher said that with this piece³, he was making an object for his own funeral⁴, casting cheap fake flowers in a block of concrete. For Wilson, making *Long Term Pillow II (After Tony Feher)* is a way of touching a past life and a meditation on the way that queer kinship is passed on through a different type of inheritance. Re-making Feher's piece offers an opportunity to articulate an echo from the anxiety of the AIDS crisis while touching the life and work of another maker through making.

Weight Distribution

In one corner, a collection of colourful mesh sportswear, hung as if in a locker room, embellished and weighed down with an accumulation of nails, forming a visually deceptive fringe. In the other, dozens of latex gloves, filled with plaster, squished and hardened together in to their final block-like forms.

Entering into overlapping explorations of garments and equipment donned for optimum performances, both artists prod at buffers and membranes between our bodies and the world, whether for business or pleasure. While Spalding's shorts are porous by nature, easily, even invitingly penetrable by hundreds of nails, Cowan employs latex and nitrile, materials typically used in the protection from outside fluids, turning what is normally a single-use, disposable barrier in to a multitude of impenetrable solid objects. A liquid route, capturing and freezing the possibilites of what, or who could fill these gloves, while the masses of nails, drawn down by gravity, distort the empty, hanging garments, originally intended to clothe a dynamic, active body.

These works speak to fragmented, absentee bodies along a blurry spectrum of work and play. While sports(wear) may have full range of the spectrum, ranging from paid professional athletes, amateur sports, and activities purely for leisure, this particular type of glove would most likely fall on the 'work' side, covering factory production, food preparation, and healthcare working hands. Though if latex as a material could be permitted to span further, beyond just gloves, it becomes encompassed in the sexual subculture of rubberists, a world exploring barriers and restrictiveness, lines between pain and pleasure.

A second skin, one more pelt-like in weight and appearance, the other thin, contoured and stretched, snugly hugging its innards. Each offers protection, married with potential cycles of donning and shedding, a mutation of identity and self. Both artists share a visually seductive and tactile treatment of materials, inviting the viewer in, contemplating a shared weight of simply being human.

Let a Memory Fester, For Now

In their titles, Zoë Wonfor and Jera MacPherson, hint that they have made work that positions themselves in relation to pre-existing title-holders of contemporary art: Artists that have changed the way we might look at billowing tyvek sheathing a passing edifice or other such moments when cultural debris is taken by grace. Maybe because of the wind tunnel that gulps the downtown, or the sentimental thud of a late 20's hangover, maybe because you've been counting all your heartbreaks since Tuesday like there's a quota to be met, or because you have a B.F.A. filed somewhere at the bottom of a drawer of spark-less possessions whose terms and conditions include toting them around for the rest of your life; but for some reason or another a bicycle wheel leaning against a dumpster is one stool and the right drill bit away from millions. Okay, not really millions but from the reference to millions, a reference to ready-made-defining post-war punk absurdism sure, but mostly a reference to intellectual cache.

The postmodern has trained gallery visitors to question basic tenets of display: "Is this garbage? Is this art? Is this valuable?" Whether artists skirt around it, revolt against it, or relish in it; canonical, press-making, conceptual art history is the history of salability. Jeanne-Claude and Christo, the artist duo paid ode to in Wonfor's video *Après Jeanne Claude*, understood the value accrued in their visual motif of wrapping landmarks and even landscape in monumental fabric coverings. They once sued a greeting card press for false designation of origins after the company sold a card featuring a drawing of wrapped pines that read "Merry Christo."⁵ Their work had successfully become a reference that could be sold but, as litigation would reinforce, only by them. The team financed their enormous projects themselves and repeatedly shunned sponsorship in lieu of hefty bank loans. Quite atypical to systems put in place, in which funding and the longevity of an emerging artist's career look like a graph of Sisyphus pushing the boulder up the hill, Jeanne-Claude and Christo deliberately operated outside of a government or corporate funding model.

Their work covers-up in practice, but the gesture of blanketing reveals the shape of the structures underneath. Be they physical, institutional, flawed, generous or otherwise. In MacPherson's work, the covering is all that remains, and so structure presents the phantom of containment. MacPherson's sculpture bastardizes the traditional dress form in favour of suturing together a soft-gothic meiosis. Even though she wasn't there, she remembers Marina Abramovic, wearing a multi-

storey blue dress, concluding a Guggenheim performance with a whisper: "Imagine I am here, and now you are here, and now, there is no time."⁶, And so, by putting up a curtain, sometimes the performance is revealed. Be that performance physical, institutional, flawed, generous or otherwise.

Is it Heaven or Las Vegas?

For all the recuperative potential behind [the construction of Asian Futurisms in Asia] as original vantage points rather than responses to Western fears—many... have situatedness as an inherent point of departure. As a result, there remains a disconnect between the reparative dialogue they may stimulate, on the one hand, and the sitelessness of Asian American communities, on the other.⁷

- Dawn Chan

But of course, as Asian settlers, we are not siteless. We are clearly situated in what is for many a very real apocalyptic present: the capitalist settler colonial state. As Kyle Whyte writes in "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene", "Had someone told our ancestors a story of what today's times are like for Indigenous peoples, our ancestors would surely have thought they were hearing dystopian tales."⁸ To acknowledge one's own sited-ness is to manifest a personhood, and political responsibility to the present. To acknowledge one's present-ness is to reflect upon the histories that led to one's being in this place, and potential impact on the future. Fuh and Lau's work deskills futurist aesthetics as a way of highlighting our being-here-now.

By mocking technofuturism, Fuh and Lau place themselves firmly in the present-tense. They reveal the disappointment that runs beneath electronics that might've once held the scintillating promise of an objectively "better" future. A plastic wrapped Chinese cabbage sits on a scale that is actually a sound amplifier, and asks you to consider its weight through an impossible-to-translate conversion. The fridge becomes a theatre in which the cabbage must perform an absurd standardized test. An eternally spinning slot machine never wins or loses - it only asks you to unplug it, and end its impossibly long search. The ceaselessness of its project reflects our existential placement in a present whose political reality will not be saved by technological advancement.

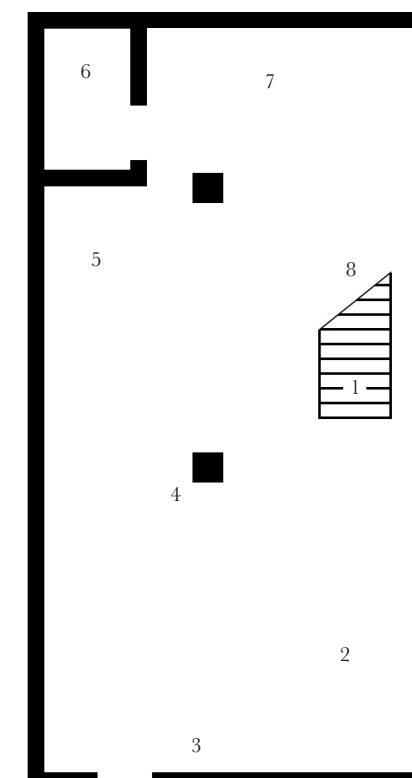
There are no clocks in a casino, because if you knew how long you'd been there, you'd stop spending money. Anyone can go to Heaven, as long as they submit to another authority. The difference between the futurist modes mentioned by Chan and Whyte - one, rooted in Asia through rapid technological advancement, and another, rooted in Indigenous epochal senses of time ("progress for the next 10,000 years")⁹ has made us think about reframing futurism through present-ness, or presence. For if defining a futurism is about representing the fears, hopes, and political desires, of a given culture, then presence is about checking the time, and changing the rules of the place that we're at now.

5 Shinya Watanabe, "Marina Abramovic 'Seven Easy Pieces' at the Guggenheim Museum Looking for Others Whom You've Never Seen," last modified 2011, <http://www.shinyawatanabe.net/en/writings/content57.html>.

6 Dawn Chan, "Asia-Futurism," *Artforum*, Summer 2016, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201606/asia-futurism-60088>.

7 Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *English Language Notes* 55, (2017): 160.

8 Ibid., 159.



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| 1. Jera MacPherson
<i>"I am here and now you are here and now there is no time"</i> like the present to let a memory fester | 5. Benjamin Spalding
<i>Songs of Sweat and Loss</i> |
| 2. Simon Fuh
<i>Eternal Supine</i> | 6. Zoë Wonfor
<i>Après Jeanne-Claude</i> |
| 3. Kenneth Jefferey Kwan Kit Lau
<i>Hyperstation</i> | 7. Hilarey Cowan
<i>Blocks</i> |
| 4. Claire Paquet
<i>Sleeping Bag</i> | 8. Nic Wilson
<i>Long Term Pillow II (After Tony Feher)</i> |

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3 *WGBH News*, "Tony Feher Retrospective at the deCordova Museum," YouTube video, 6:23, June 18, 2013, https://youtu.be/EXGTCjC8_U0.

4 Nancy Blodgett, "Art Parody a Bad Wrap: Yule be Sorry, Christo Imitators," *ABA Journal* 73, no. 5 (April 1987): 21.