

Proof 24

**Amber Williams-King
Ash Moniz
Catherine Canac-Marquis
Emily Geen
Lodoe Laura**



JUNE 9 - JULY 8, 2017

G44

Centre for
Contemporary
Photography



TOP Emily Geen, *Island Tour (Detail)*, folded found snapshot, semi-reflective glass, cinder blocks, 2016
BOTTOM Catherine Canac-Marquis, & *les <<fourragères>>*, from the series "The Keepers", 30"x40", inkjet print, 2016

TOP LEFT Amber Williams-King, *the letting*, 24"x36", photo transfer on fabric, 2016
TOP RIGHT Lodee Laura, *Neykyab (146)*, charcoal silkscreen on paper, 9"x12", 2016
BOTTOM Ash Moniz, *Disappearing Pedestrians*, 2017

Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography is a non-profit artist-run centre committed to photography as a multi-faceted and ever-changing art form. Founded in 1979 to establish a supportive environment for the development of photography, Gallery 44's mandate is to provide a context for reflection and dialogue on contemporary photography and its related practices. Gallery 44 offers exhibition and publication opportunities to national and international artists, award-winning education programs, and affordable production facilities for artists. Through its programs Gallery 44 is engaged in changing conceptions of the photographic image and its modes of production.

Amber Williams-King is a multi-disciplinary Antiguan artist who lives and practices in Toronto. Working in a variety of mediums, she uses diverse media as a way of acknowledging the multiplicity and fluidity of being. Her self-taught practice challenges notions of a monolithic Black experience, exploring sexuality, gender, race, representation and the intersections of identity. Using found text and images to interrogate socio-political landscapes, much of her work starts from a deeply intimate place, drawing from her experience as a Black queer femme living with chronic illness. In a world that says she should not exist, she exists through her artistic envisioning. Amber has exhibited in spaces across Toronto including the Art Gallery of Ontario and has upcoming exhibitions in Montreal and Brazil.

Ash Moniz is a multi-disciplinary artist based between Cairo and Beijing. Moniz has shown with galleries and museums internationally, such as Kunsthal Aarhus, Sishang Museum, Minsheng Museum, Birch Contemporary, Le Cube, and Pari Nadimi Gallery. Moniz holds a BFA from OCAD University and participated in the Mass Alexandria Independent Studio Program in 2016. He was the Assistant Curator at the AMNUA Museum in Nanjing in 2013-14, the Director of the Boxes! Zones Quarters mobile residency/exhibition in Casablanca in 2014, and co-organized "No Gate Gallery", an artist-run centre in Beijing, 2015-16. Moniz is currently a member of the artist collective ADL, and contributing editor of Mada Masr, an Egyptian online magazine. He has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo.

Catherine Canac-Marquis is an emerging photographer and visual artist from Quebec City. Her work addresses the notion of isolation, focusing on the concept of insularity and themes that relate to isolated communities and territories. She has background in graphic design from UQÀM and she is currently completing a BFA in Photography at Concordia University. Her work has been in several exhibitions in Quebec and Ontario, and has been published both nationally and abroad. In 2016, she was a recipient of the AIMIA | AGO Photography Prize Scholarship Program in Canada, and was in residence at SÍM Residency in Reykjavík, Iceland in 2017.

Emily Geen is a Victoria-based visual artist working with video and photographic sculpture and installation. Originally from Lake Country, BC, Emily completed her BFA at UBC Okanagan (2012), followed by her MFA at UVic (2015). She has

recently been included in several group shows in Vancouver, including INDEX 2016 at Gallery 295 and the inaugural Lind Prize Exhibition curated by Presentation House Gallery as a part of Capture Photography Festival. In 2016 Emily attended the Banff Centre for a residency exploring notions of new materiality. In 2017 she will participate in a residency at MOMENTUM Worldwide in Berlin, Germany, supported by a BC Arts Council Early Career Development Grant. She currently teaches photography at the University of Victoria.

Lodoe Laura is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Toronto, Canada. Through photography, installation, performance, and video, she examines themes of cultural crossover, collective memory, and the intersection of cultural and political practice. Lodoe Laura was a recipient of a Magnum Photo scholarship in 2015, and holds a BFA in Photography from Ryerson University's School of Image Arts. She is a recipient of the AIMIA | AGO Scholarship Prize, and most recently was a winner of The Magenta Foundation's 2016 Flash Forward Award.

Ginger Carlson is executive director of TRUCK Contemporary Art in Calgary, and is an active member of Calgary's arts and non-profit communities. She is also an emerging curator and art writer. She holds a BA Honours in art history from the University of Alberta and an MA in art gallery and museum studies from the University of Manchester. In 2015 and 2016, Carlson served as the visual-arts curator for the Sled Island Music and Arts Festival in Calgary. She has written essays and reviews for art exhibitions and has been published in Luma Film and Media Art Quarterly, SNAPline, and BlackFlash Magazine. In 2016, she received the Canadian Art Foundation Writing Prize.

Cover Image

Catherine Canac-Marquis, *It's always windy here*, from the series "The Keepers", inkjet print, 30"x40", 2016

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Ginger Carlson



TOP Lodoe Laura, *153 charcoal silkscreens on paper* installation view at Ryerson Artspace, charcoal silkscreens digital video, 9"x12", 2016.
BOTTOM Ash Moniz, *Disappearing Pedestrians*, 2017



Amber Williams-King, *the calling*, photo transfer on fabric, 24"x36", 2016



Catherine Canac-Marquis, *Hunting Trophies*, from the series "The Keepers", 30x40, inkjet print, 2016



Emily Geen, *Kameole Sands*, inkjet print, glass, found t-shirt, masking tape, MDF, 2016

Photographs connect, they form relationships, and they make visible. They reveal objects in relationship to others and they reveal those objects in relationship to us. They relate us to what Walt Whitman called, in his poem *On The Beach at Night Alone*, a "vast similitude" in which each of us is connected through similarities from which we cannot be extricated or excluded by force of will.² It is in reference to Whitman's evocation of similitude that Kaja Silverman's ongoing two-volume reconceptualization of photography, *The Miracle of Analogy*, offers analogy as a means by which photographic images perform. Rather than referential, evidentiary, or indexical, Silverman discusses photography as analogical, and points to objects of photography as both indicators of a time, a place, and a space, and in relation to all times, places, and spaces. "The world's primary way of revealing itself to us", photography, as analogy, becomes a vehicle by which the relationships that bind all parts of the universe together are made visible.¹

The five artists included in Gallery 44's 2017 *Proof* exhibition, although involved in a variety of disparate lens-based practices, each engage in the making visible of the world and its similitudes. Multi-disciplinary and multi-modal, they tie together the personal, historical, social, and political, and unravel how we might be or become implicated in relation to them. Whether in relation to self as it addresses traumas of the past and reaches forward through bright white entangled threads of cotton; to objects of circumstance that open up dialogue between spaces known and unknown, material and visual; to sites of closure and isolation, as they are revealed through metaphor and paradox; to ongoing opposition, made material through the very outcomes of their dissent; or to the interplay between global systems and the bodies that both propel and interrupt them, as they assert their visibility within them, objects of photography reveal the world, so that we might better position ourselves and our actions in relation to it.

In Amber Williams-King's series of self-portraits, the artist presents images of her body as a means to address personal and intergenerational traumas while also pointing to wider issues of historical and systemic oppression. In five large photographs printed on fabric, Williams-King reveals herself simultaneously

unravelling and being held together as seemingly endless lengths of string envelope her body, winding around her neck, chest, and face in one image and falling from her closed eyes in another. Printed on large swaths of fabric and using white cotton string as a prominent visual tool, the works speak to Williams-King's familial history of seamstressing and garment manufacturing in the Caribbean, while also metaphorically presenting the means by which narratives of oppression are manifested, made visible, and unravelled.

In the process, lines emerge on flesh, material traces left through pulling and wrapping they bridge what we can imagine but cannot see and speak to the efficacy of non-physical violence in leaving traces that are carried but not visible.

Coiled around her fingers and wrapped into her hair, she is both grasping and inextricable from their grasp. This is oppression made material, violence embodied, unseen personal and intergenerational traumas coming to light, and it inches across the artist's flesh like bright white snakes.

In Emily Geen's photographic sculptural scenarios, the body is also implicated; however, in this case it is bodies absent from the photographic frame. Using found photographs as her primary medium, Geen manipulates images through folding, layering, reflecting, and re-photographing, and with sculptural intervention, stretches the conceptual space between those bodies that initially captured the images presented and their current position as part of a relational tableau. Sourced from familial

shoebox archives from the 1980s to the early 2000s, the images are casual and amateur, tied to their analogue renderings both aesthetically and compositionally.

Like nearly forgotten childhood memories, they are both fragmentary and familiar: a field of crisp grass in dappled sunlight; an out-of-focus balcony ledge with unintentional hands entering the frame; an overexposed rocky landscape with an unknown figure by the water. Through sculptural installation, Geen introduces the images to objects and to shapes they might have known or, perhaps, might like to know. Offering new perceptual relationships, the images unfold into their present circumstances, finding referents and conceptual companions while deftly resisting total sublimation.

In Catherine Canac-Marquis' photographic series, the artist reveals the uncanny and intimate spaces of "The Keepers", guardians of Île au Ruau, a private island in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, 40 kilometres downstream from Quebec City. In five spartan photographs, Canac-Marquis offers glimpses of the insular lives of Gisèle Roy and M. Hervé Vézina, who called L'Isle-aux-Grues home for 38 years, acting as caretakers for the privately owned hunting grounds that stretch across the island.

Through the visual language of documentary photography, the images offer traces of the day-to-day lives of the island's keepers: sites, sounds, and semblances that hint at the psychological and physiological nature of living in near isolation. These are facets of reality that are neither visible nor accessible to most. Revealed piece by piece, the images wax and wane between geographical and intimate, exterior and interior; paralleling the metaphorical and paradoxical nature of islands, which serve as sites of mediation and difference, between real and imaginary, utopia and dystopia, centre and periphery. Binaries of one and the other are reinforced by Canac-Marquis' treatment of the titles of the photographs, which oscillate between declarative statements, first-person commentary, and poetic metaphor, extending the space between subject and object, here and elsewhere.

Alongside the images, excerpts from the artist's first interview with Gisèle and Hervé are reproduced

in vinyl. Referencing the keepers' simultaneous intention to leave the island in November 2015 and reservations about leaving a place to which they feel a deep sense of belonging, the text performs linguistically the barriers implicit in the photographs, isolating the reader through translation, indecision, and discordant phrase.

Lodoe Laura's one hundred and fifty six small charcoal silkscreens on paper document one hundred and fifty six self-immolations, undertaken by Tibetans in protest of the conditions inside the Tibetan Autonomous Region and surrounding disputed areas in China over the last ten years. Portraits of the self-immolated, the images draw from moments of stillness, directly referencing and in contrast to more widely circulated horrific images of self-immolation that dominate Western media coverage of the Tibetan freedom movement.

Drawn from research within the archives of Tibetan activists and advocacy groups, the images function as testimonial and effigial acts of resistance, in direct opposition to utopic narratives presented by Chinese governmental authorities in Tibet.

Recorded via low-resolution cell phone images, the resultant prints are realized in points and pixels, building blocks that manifest the simultaneous immediacy and fragility of their message. In contrast to this immediacy, the prints themselves are actually the product of a slow, labour-intensive process that took several months to complete.

A subtle acknowledgment towards the nature of self-immolation, each portrait was individually hand printed using charcoal ink, collected by the artist from incense burned during Tibetan Buddhist purifying rituals in Kathmandu. Once collected, the charcoal ash was ground using a heavy stone mortar and pestle, sifted, dried, and mixed by hand with traditional ink mediums, and finally printed on paper.

Paired with Laura's one hundred and fifty five portraits is a video. In rapid succession, the individual dates of every self-immolation from the last ten years flash brightly in high contrast black and white. In the face of the incomprehensible, the flickering light of the video transmits an accumulation of execrable data, which, much like bearing witness to images of disaster and horror, remains visible long after one chooses to look away.

In Ash Moniz's video and sculptural installation, the mechanics, geographies, and abstractions of global systems of trade are brought into question by means of a specific instance of their interruption, a 2013 dockworker's strike at Sokhna Port in Egypt. In a 17 by 11 foot space, roughly echoing the spatial dimensions of a small dry freight container, three videos are projected. On the left, a series of printed photographs of the port's product scanning system is passed from hand to hand; in the centre, a handheld video tour of the container depot narrates the current state of the worker's strike; and on the right, three figures walk slowly from one end of the frame to the other, passing in front of a series of large containers. A string of unending synchronized loops, the videos throw the room into constant motion and counter the stillness of the stalled products at Sokhna Port, which are static and without forward propulsion.

In the centre of the room, an LED light box scrolls an English translation of the disembodied voice emanating from the central video. Describing the geographical, spatial, and circumstantial environments of the strike, the video foregrounds the physical containers as the primary means by which the workers implicated in the strike are made visible. Within the context of systems of trade circulation, which rely on transnational negotiation, efficiency, and synchronization, Moniz offers vulnerability, destabilization, and interruption in order to highlight

the tensions in play between the (mostly invisible) human labour that propels global systems of trade and the mechanical and technological frameworks that encompass it.

This tension is further established through the physical placement of the projectors. Installed in the middle of the gallery, their paths of light are nearly impossible to avoid when entering the space.

Paralleling the beams of bright light that regularly interrupt the central video, the gallery space itself becomes a site of negotiation, implicating the viewer by providing physical barriers to entering, suspending the experience of viewing, and provisioning access according to interruption.

As demonstrated by the five artists included in Gallery 44's twenty-fourth iteration of *Proof*, objects of photography and lens-based practices are not fixed, but rather fluidly and performatively engaged in a continuous state of becoming. Both reciprocal and reflexive, they align with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's evocation of *chiasmus*, as they become in relation to another, an "ontological thread stitching the seer to what is seen, the toucher to what is touched, and sight and visibility to touch and tactility".³ Developing in relation to their contexts and contents, to their physical placement, to each other and to us, and to all their future iterations, photographic objects reveal disparate visions of the world so that we might better know our relationship to it and its relationship to us.

In the face of uncertain global futures, the capacity for photography to make visible the vast similitudes that bind us can be interpreted as an invitation: to root more ethical visions of hope, to restructure social realities, to unravel the implications of the associations, similarities, and interconnections that link photographs to the world and, conversely, to our shared experiences of existence.

¹ Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, Or The History of Photography, Part 1*, Stanford University Press: Stanford California, 2015: 11.

² Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Richard Maurice Bucke, Thomas R. Harned, and Horace L. Traubel (New York: Doubleday, 1902) 2:22

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty as discussed by Silverman, *Ibid*, 88.