



SUMMER 2016

# Kingdom

# KINGDOM

MICHEL BOUTIN, NICHOLAS GALANIN, JUDY MCNAUGHTON, AND TIM MOORE  
JUNE 11 TO AUGUST 24, 2016  
CURATED BY WENDY PEART, CURATOR OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## And animal we are

BY WENDY PEART, CURATOR OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

“All space is public,” asserts Métis artist and scholar Dylan Miner. Contrary to this view, the word “kingdom” has been used historically to denote human ownership of, and dominance over, land, place or religious realm; it is a territorial, political, and spiritual concept. It is also a biological one. The Kingdom is one of the higher orders of taxonomic ranking, a classification system outlining the biological and evolutionary relationships between all living things. This 17<sup>th</sup> century binomial nomenclature system still holds rank in mainstream classrooms, laboratories, and political boardrooms, in part because it places humans at its top. Humans are considered animals within the Kingdom *Animalia*, but it is a classification we interestingly share with such diverse species as cardinals, muskox, tuna, and corals, amongst thousands of other living things.

The artworks in *Kingdom* highlight alternate world views, some of which are based in Indigenous knowledge and practice, where the relationships and distinctions between human, animal, and land entities are questioned. Michel Boutin is a Canadian and Métis artist residing in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. His paintings challenge the territorialism inherent in Western landscape paintings. Boutin uses “landscape as an armature for abstraction,” much like a concrete wall in an urban centre, onto which he asserts his ideas with the impulse of a graffiti artist.<sup>2</sup> The images of the frog, grasshopper, and the owl that he has painted upon the surface of the landscapes are derived from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century anatomy, flora, and fauna illustrations, but Boutin imbues them with a graphic authority, painting them in an alerting shade of red, like signs. They call our attention to these animals’ distinct and complex connections to the prairie environment, an ecosystem that



Nicholas Galanin, *Re-Skinning a Dead Wolf*, 2014, video. Image courtesy of the artist.



Tim Moore, *Race Day: Native Changer*, 2015, collage and epoxy on fibreboard. Photo: Don Hall.



Tim Moore, *Race Day: Freckled Warrior*, 2015, collage and epoxy on fibreboard. Photo: Don Hall.

we share with them. As such, we are also implicated in the relationships between the animals and the land.

Multidisciplinary artist Nicholas Galanin lives and works in Sitka, Alaska. He is of mixed Tlingit, Unangax̂, Cherokee and non-Native heritage, and his work brings together traditional and contemporary practices, in search of cultural connections and renewal. Galanin's video, *Re-skinning a Dead Wolf* depicts the artist in a modern living room, flaying a taxidermy wolf, cutting its sutured fur and peeling it off of a plastic armature. In an act of defiance towards the Victorian era's golden age of taxidermy, when trophy hunting fortified human dominance over all other animals, Galanin reclaims the skin of the wolf. Ironically, he refabricates it into a rug, suggesting the futility of his gesture.

*Race Day* is a series of small plaques by Tim Moore, who lives at Round Lake, SK. As a Métis artist, Moore is interested in the complex commingling of mixed-race identities. As in much of his work, *Race Day* features an imbroglio between human and animal. In this case, the pieces are titled after famous racehorses, with names like *Carmel Sensation*, *Freckled Warrior*, and *Izzy Fine*, and are assemblages of print media and objects denoting cultural identity, including coat of arms pins and medallions. Shaped to fit the silhouette of a racehorse, these collaged elements speak to the way we are profiled to fit certain cultural ideals as well as how we mold and use animals for sport and entertainment, or as emblems of power,

eventually discarding them when they no longer serve our needs.

Raised on a sheep farm in Saskatchewan, Prince Albert artist Judy McNaughton is a settler artist who has maintained a strong interest in the deep physical connections we have with other living things. *Mothlung*, a video and drawing work, is comprised of a screen of layered biological structures – bones, tissues, and pulsing organs. Seemingly neither human nor moth, it depicts a creature that unites all living things by exemplifying our corporeal connections and our unification on a grand biological level. This work encourages us to gently honour the world around us, developing a mutual and symbiotic companionship with others that defies the authority of human interests.

<sup>1</sup> This statement is part of Dylan Miner's assertion that "All space is public. All land is Indigenous. All ownership is violence." Artist's website, accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.wiisaakodewinini.com/upcoming-events/2015/11/2/all-space-is-public-all-land-is-indigenous-all-ownership-is-violence>. Accessed May 7, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Boutin, Artist Statement, 2016.



Judy McNaughton, *Mothlung*, 2013, automated image projected onto drafting paper. Photo: Don Hall.



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### COVER IMAGE

Michel Boutin, *Frog*, 2015, enamel on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist.



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