Parastoo Anoushahpour
Faraz Anoushahpour
Ryan Ferko
Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill
Nicole Kelly Westman
like an old friend

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According to legend, the town began to bear the name Wayne as a way to keep packages from getting misdirected. Westman's project, each of these works circumvent this logic through intimate and sustained relationship to place. These projects are not about representation, but continued acts of care, investigations into deep history and the creation of speculatve futures, these works attempt to answer a question of what could be, re-infusing these absences with the persistence of human presence, unsettled inherited narratives and allowing a polyphonic understanding of our relation to place.

The work gives no linear narrative or ease of access to the place, as if each new layer of text and image further conceals what is there. Yet, the traces presented evoke a greater truth that exists just beyond the frame.

The work of artist Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill similarly makes visible forgotten histories and furtive presents, composing a relationship to territory defined by intimacy and proximity over proprietorship. Situated within urban and industrial spaces, Hill's companion pieces, How Long I Have Known you and Braided Grass, offers traces of the parallel and hidden economies that operate in the space, repurposed as a gift and message to the people who might discover it. The words come from a speech Tseila-Wasuth leader Chief Dan George gave in 1967 at a centennial celebration for Canada, in which he questioned the ownership of the unceded land the city of Vancouver is built upon. The text piece speaks through time, blending Chief Dan George's speech with Hill's own, signifying not only the changing landscape but a durational gesture of care for the space and, by extension, the people who use it.

Looking more closely at the mechanisms of state control and the unstable logic of borders as a tool for establishing sovereignty, Toronto-based collective Ryan Ferko, Parastoo Anoushaghpor and Faraz Anoushaghpor's project The gross must have been mown, blends archival material, oral histories and official state documents, complicating and investigating how histories and power operate through a landscape. Part of an ongoing series of work that delves into the social and political context of the area surrounding Cornwall, Ontario, the work begins with an image of the site of the former customs house on Cornwall Island, a small island in the St. Lawrence River and the westernmost part of Akwesasne, the cross-border territory of the Mohawk Nation. Taken from a car window by the artists visiting the area last summer, the blurry snapshot unknowingly captured the last recognizable moment of the building site—a pile of soil on freshly leveled ground—before the area was sodded over. The image, presented as a short video loop oscillating between two points of view never fully contained by the frame, emulates this state of transition and proposes a multivalent method of viewing.

Further exploring the complicated and contradictory layers of Crown and Indigenous sovereignty, the work continues to interrogate the former customs house as its subject, tracing the history of the building and conflict surrounding it. Employing archival material that bookend this history, including a 1969 Challenge for Change NFB documentary You Are on Indian Land, which captures the moments surrounding the building's opening and a series of banal interior images from the 286-page report on the state-sanctioned demolition of the building, the work presents a refracted view of the mechanisms of control. Turning this system on its head, the artists have fed the archival images and footage through a series of surveillance technologies used to monitor large swaths of data to identify potential threats. Generate a script of possible hazards within the images, the program attempts to identify objects or persons through a series of algorithms and systems analysis. The resulting image and text breakdown and fail apart—words become unhinged from their meaning and objects shift in the room misidentified—exposing the failed and faulty logic inherent in the systems designed to restrict and control human access to space.

The absence at the centre of each of these works is not a human absence, such as in canonical Canadian landscape painting, but is instead a disruptive marker of persistent human presence. Together, the performative gestures in each of the works reconstitute an abeyant vision of landscape, creating a counter narrative to the histories of spatial dispossession. Rather than mapping a constellation of disparate events, the works coalesce to unsettle the ways in which power is articulated, and present myriad possibilities for convening within and inhabiting space.
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.

Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko have worked in collaboration since 2013. Currently based in Toronto, their recent film and installation work has been shown at Projections (New York Film Festival), Wavelengths (Toronto International Film Festival), International Film Festival Rotterdam, Portland International Film Festival, Media City Festival (Windsor/Detroit), Experimenta 2015 (Bangalore), Crossroads Festival (San Francisco), and ZK/U Centre for Art & Urbanistics (Berlin).

Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill is a Cree-Metis artist and writer from Vancouver, B.C., unceded Coast Salish territory. Gabrielle’s sculptures and installations examine modes of land use, occupation, and ownership, as well as underground and black market economies. Her work has been exhibited at the TRU Gallery in Kamloops, BC; Gallery Gachet, Grunt Gallery, and Sunset Terrace in Vancouver; and also at Get This! Gallery in Atlanta, GA. Gabrielle’s work will be featured in the upcoming exhibition To Refuse/To Wait/To Sleep, at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver.

Nicole Kelly Westman is a visual artist of Métis and Icelandic descent. She grew up in a supportive home with strong-willed parents—her mother, a considerate woman with inventive creativity, and her father, an anonymous feminist. Her work culls from these formative years for insight and inspiration. Existing beyond the binary definitive of a specific medium, Nicole Kelly Westman, has had the pleasure and privilege to be curated into exhibitions by remarkable females including; Peta Rake, Kristy Trinier, Kimberly Phillips, Ginger Carlson, Leila Timmins and cheyanne turions. Westman holds a BFA from Emily Carr University and is the current Director of Stride Gallery.
It smells of rage out here, like an old friend.