



# Infrastructures and Aesthetics of Mutual Aid

CIRCUIT 3/5, *Take Care*

November 20–December 9, 2017

Blackwood Gallery

Reclaiming self-care and enacting new practices of mutual aid are not separate tasks but reciprocally constituting responses to the crisis of care. Rather than abandon self-care to upmarket consumerism or dismiss it as a supplement to hyper-productivity, *Take Care's* third circuit, **Infrastructures and Aesthetics of Mutual Aid**, retains a commitment to a resistant concept of self-care. It is a survival strategy of bodies, desires, and forms of community which forces of domination continually work to erase, deny, or marginalize.<sup>1</sup> In confronting systemic oppressions, exceeding the bounds of the individual, and centring marginalized collective ways of knowing, self-care blurs with mutual aid. “Mutual contest” (competition for limited and shared resources) coexists with a countervailing law of “mutual aid” (reciprocal exchange of resources and co-operative services for mutual benefit), which is vital to the “maintenance of life.”<sup>2</sup> Redressing needs that a prevailing order fails to meet, mutual aid is anchored in affective bonds, manifest in practices of co-operation, formalized in institutions, sustained by beliefs and customs, and rooted in the recognition that mutual support is necessary to adapt to and survive adverse material conditions. If the crisis of care atomizes and strains caring capacities, the persistence of mutual aid not only fills care gaps but also affirms an excess of caring capacity and infrastructure-making, tangible and intangible, for an aesthetics of living, carefully, in common.<sup>3</sup> **Infrastructures and Aesthetics of Mutual Aid** opens space for autonomous determinations of care, defiantly performs the precarization of labour and life, rehearses temporary communities of support, and hosts rituals of communication between artist and audience through which the gallery is refigured as a site of mutual aid. – *Letters & Handshakes*

## *The Sustenance Rite*

Curated by Lauren Fournier

Anthea Black, Thirza Cuthand, Erika DeFreitas, Petrina Ng, Zoë Schneider, Kara Stone, Evan Tyler, Justice Walz, Jessica Lynn Whitbread

## Radiodress

*MKV: Credit River Immersion*

## Circo Zero

*Turbulence*

*(a dance about the economy)*

### Notes

- 1 Sara Ahmed, “Selfcare as Warfare,” *feministkilljoys* (August 25, 2014): <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/08/25/selfcare-as-warfare>.
- 2 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1902), xiii.
- 3 “This way of thinking infrastructure-making as the convergence scene of various value abstractions, material protocols for metabolizing resources, and socially distributed experience taps into David Harvey’s view that the disturbance capital makes in creating dominant class interest infrastructures can also foster countermovements in new infrastructures for life and sociality, despite and in response to the neglect and destructiveness of the state and capital toward the very contexts of life and lives that they’re exploiting.” Lauren Berlant, “The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times,” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 34, no. 3 (2016): 403.

### Front cover:

Circo Zero, *Turbulence* (performance still), 2010-2012.  
PHOTO: DAVID VISNJC. COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

# The Sustenance Rite: Rituals of Catharsis, Healing, and Care in Contemporary Feminist Practice

Lauren Fournier

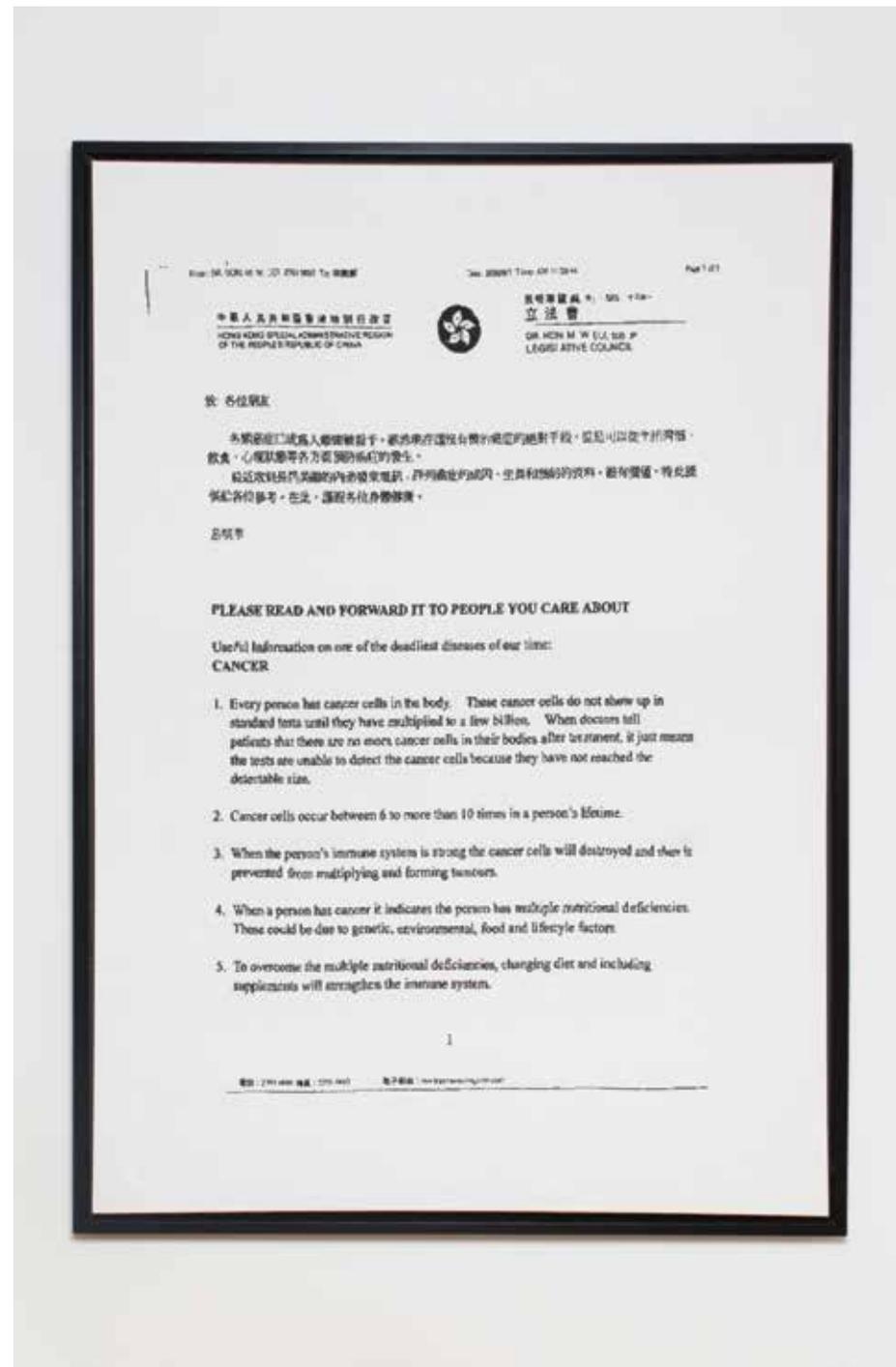
In a time of generalized anxiety, precarity, and upheaval, how do artists sustain themselves? What do we make of self-care imperatives in light of our late-capitalist, neoliberal, neocolonial context? How do we care for others while also caring for ourselves? *The Sustenance Rite* is a group exhibition featuring work by emerging and mid-career Canadian artists that engages issues of health, wellness, healing, care, and survival from queer, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour), and intersectional feminist perspectives. The works in this exhibition proffer alternatives to dominant discourses of health that are

critical and reparative. Reflecting on the rites and rights of mental, emotional, and physical healthcare in the contemporary moment, these artists make space for the rituals that sustain us.

In Erika DeFreitas' *and every tear is from the other* (2014–present), the artist stitches around her tears on white tissues, marking the trace of her affect. DeFreitas often works using the form of a series, repeating a conceit, a material pattern, or a method in a body of work, here exploring themes around breathing, crying, survival, and loss. Crying can be a cathartic, nourishing, and necessary



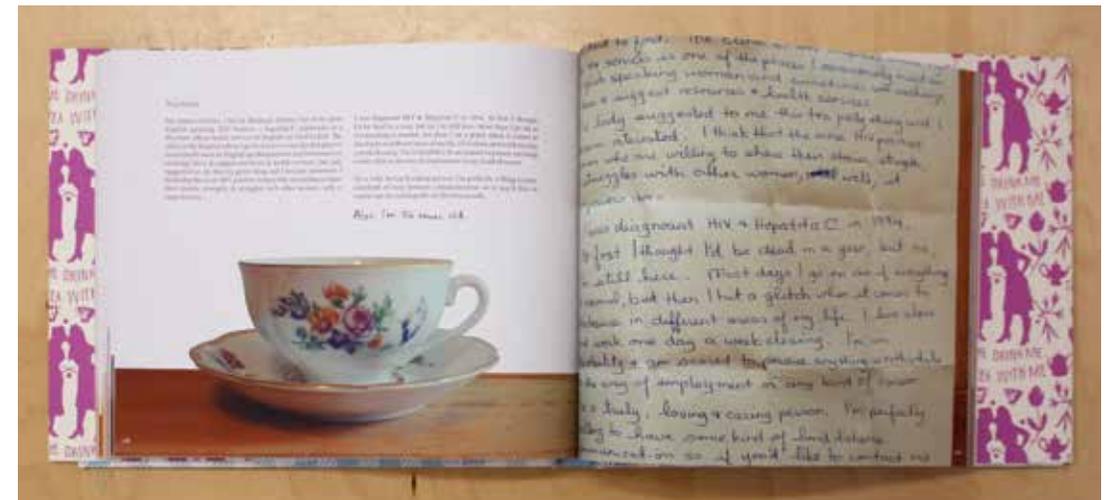
Erika DeFreitas, *and every tear is from the other* (detail), 2014–present. Tissue, embroidery thread, embroidery needle, five tissues, each 8in x 8in. PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Petrina Ng, *Heirloom Facsimile* (detail), 2013. Cross-stitch on aida cotton, three panels, each 48in x 35in. PHOTO: JAY SHUSTER. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Anthea Black, *Eat Me Drink Me Take Tea With Me (After Alice Austen)* (detail), 2014. Silkscreen on Somerset book paper, limited edition of 10 book covers. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Jessica Lynn Whitbread, *Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV*, 2014. Book, limited edition of 100. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

ritual: some days it might begin as that feeling of a lump at the back of your throat that you try to hold back all day at work, only to let it all out into a box of tissues when you get home, or upon encountering a friend that you feel safe crying in front of. With *and every tear is from the other*, DeFreitas, who often works in textiles, uses the material process of stitching to commemorate the space where the tear hits the tissue. The tissue becomes evidence of a scene, the site of an event that maybe no one else witnessed, and an act that might seem ephemeral and elusive after the fact. Here and in other work—for example, the video *Her body is full of light (often, very often, and in floods)* (2016), where the artist drinks her mother's tears—DeFreitas draws attention to the physicality of crying and the through-lines that connect the tears of one day, or one person, to another.

In *Heirloom Facsimile* (2013), Petrina Ng intricately cross-stitches enlargements of a notice, originally published by the Hong Kong government, which provided information on how to cure cancer from the perspective of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Ng received the document as a low-resolution scan from her father, who had himself received it as a fax from his mother-in-law,

Ng's grandmother. Throughout this process of sharing information the text degraded, and accumulated the digital noise that Ng represents in her rendering of each pixel as a cross-stitch. The work is as much a grieving process as it is a meditation on the ways that both dominant and alternative medical information is communicated cross-culturally and inter-generationally. There is a looming sense of ambivalence around the status of the information: Is this medical knowledge that we should take seriously? Or, better, how seriously should we take any medical knowledge? What determines the seriousness of medical information? Do we trust our General Practitioner? Our Naturopath? Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner? Osteopath? Psychic? Family friend? Websites like *Web MD*? *Heirloom Facsimile* resides in a liminal place that complicates the usual recourse to binaries such as Western medicine versus Eastern/alternative medicine.

Ng's work bears resemblance to the artist multiple *The Ten Cognitive Distortions* (2015) by Anthea Black and LIDS (Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society), which was included in my zine project, *Self Care for Skeptics* (2015), a curatorial precursor to *The Sustenance Rite*. Both Ng and Black use material practices to draw attention to the ways in

which medical information, like all information, is mediated and constructed. In *The Ten Cognitive Distortions*, Black takes a handout given to her by her psychotherapist and uses it as a material to create a conceptual work that resembles concrete and visual poetry. The original document given to Black by her therapist was, in fact, a copy of a copy. Like the notice in Ng's *Heirloom Facsimile*, it appeared to have been photocopied and faxed a number of times before she received it. As an artist who often works across screen-printing, bookworks, and other practices, Black then scanned, printed, copied, and sent the document to fellow members of the LIDS collective. The collective continued to copy the handout until the text became virtually illegible. By mirroring the distortion that the document seeks to describe and remedy, and by perpetuating that distortion through the material processes of analog and digital copying, the artists play with, and subvert, psychotherapeutic notions of distortion.

Black's work returns in *The Sustenance Rite* in her ongoing collaborative relationship

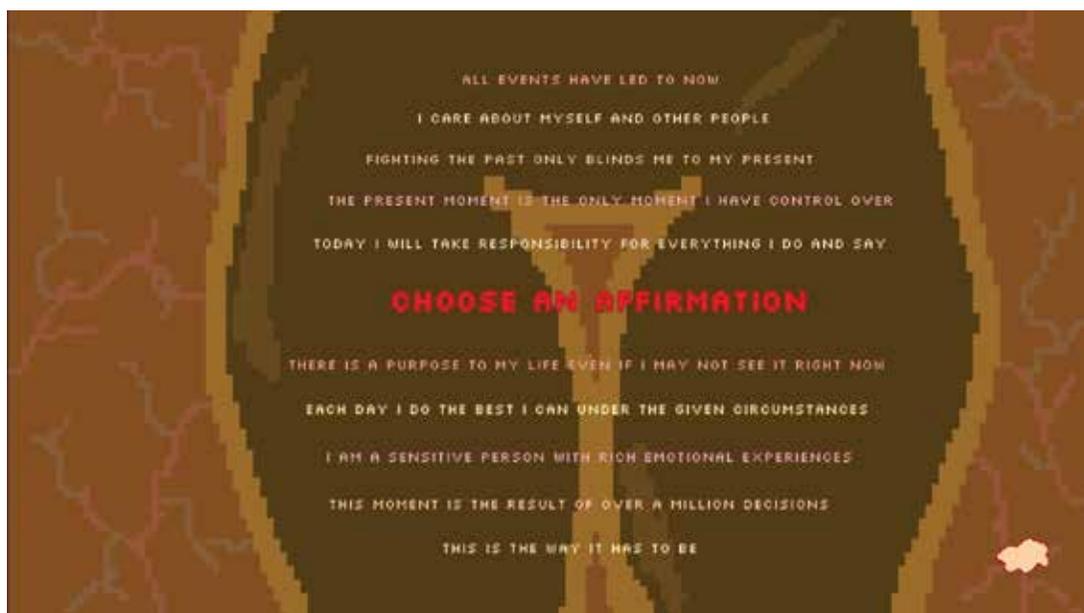
with artist and community organizer Jessica Lynn Whitbread. Whitbread's *Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV* (2011-present) is a transnational, community-building, cross-media project that functions as an interpersonal space for women with HIV to network, self-advocate, and share their experiences. During the tea parties that compose the project, each woman brings a teacup and a letter that they have written, which they exchange for a teacup and a letter brought by someone else. On December 1, World AIDS Day, Whitbread will host a tea party at the Blackwood Gallery. Though it takes place in the institutional space of UTM, the tea party makes space for privacy, confidentiality, intimacy, and communion between women living with HIV. By having the gallery function as a space to host women from surrounding communities, the installation becomes less a static sculpture and more an active trace of both past and present tea parties. The installation that Black and Whitbread have created, which includes prints by artists Jess MacCormack and Johnny Nawrajac, is a living space, surrounded by the queer

warmth and gender play of Black's wallpaper *Eat Me Drink Me Take Tea With Me (After Alice Austin)* (2017), the *Tea Time Bookworks* (which evolved out of both Whitbread's research and her ongoing community-driven art project), and letters and teacups from past tea parties.

Kara Stone's *Medication Meditation* (2014) is an interactive digital game that transmutes mindfulness meditation, psychotherapy, and other methods of mental and physical health care into the form of a self-care app. Created during the artist's residency with Dames Making Games, *Medication Meditation* makes care accessible to a greater number of people while it simultaneously, and subtly, critiques the ways in which neoliberal capitalism commodifies self-care. Prompted by the screen to take deep breaths, those interacting with the app can engage with therapeutic rituals, like mindfulness, in the form of a game. Instead of playing *Candy Crush* or scrolling through their social media newsfeeds during their morning commutes, students and other Blackwood publics can use an offer code, available in the gallery,

to download Stone's app to play on their phones. *Medication Meditation* bleeds out of the gallery and into the virtual spaces of students' digital devices and UTM's video screens, where the work is transmitted as still images across campus. Stone's piece rhythmically intervenes in the advertisements and student notices with image and text pairings that provide prompts like: "Touch to Inhale; Release to Exhale; Take 20 Breaths."

"New to the Two-Spirit lifestyle? ... We have just the introductory special for you!", Thirza Cuthand announces to the camera with a sprightly smile on her face. The playful exploration of the commodification of health and care takes the form of satire in Cuthand's single-channel video *2 Spirit Introductory Special \$19.99* (2015). In her performance for the camera, Cuthand makes space for a sex-positive and Two-Spirit-centered First Nations space that is life-affirming and self-determining. Appropriating the form of a television call-in advertisement to promote things of particular interest to queer and Indigenous people, Cuthand endorses speculative objects and community



Kara Stone, *Medication Meditation* (video still), 2014. Interactive video game, dimensions variable. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Kara Stone, *Medication Meditation* (video still), 2014. Interactive video game, dimensions variable. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Thirza Cuthand, *2 Spirit Introductory Special \$19.99* (video still), 2015. Single-channel video, 4:57 min. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND VTAPE.

support structures that could contribute to the well-being of Two-Spirit folks today: these include a beaded whisk, a non-slip lube mat, and a telephone line staffed by counsellors responsive to problems specific to Two-Spirit people living in Canada. Both cheeky and sincere, Cuthand's performance uses humour and play to flesh out the intersections of Indigeneity, queerness, and mad-pride central to her work.<sup>1</sup> Even as the conceit of commodification is used performatively, Cuthand's concluding note is the importance of relationships, community, and kinship to the health of queer First Nations people.

Zoë Schneider's sculptural practice is lushly material. Schneider works with materials like rocks, denim, sand, dough, rhinestones, gemstones, spandex, and foam to create imaginative sculptures that could be described as delicate maximalism. In Schneider's *Adipose series* (2016), the materiality of foam exceeding the bounds of denim fabric becomes a metaphor for fat-positive feminisms. The adipose tissue—symbolized here as polyurethane foam—expands out through

abstracted denim fabric, a subtle movement that preemptively provokes Western culture's obsession with "self-control." Responding to the oft-repeated corporate advertising of Calvin Klein jeans from eras past, Schneider, a self-identified fat woman, states, "for us, something crushingly tangible comes between us and our Calvins: the shape and size of our bodies."<sup>2</sup> Varying in shape and size and playfully populating the gallery, Schneider's *Adipose* sculptures, seated on red, pink, and white satin plinths, straddle the seductive—and the defiant. They resist being relegated to any straightforward notion of objectification: while appearing as static, sculptural objects, on closer look, the foam appears to move ever so slowly, affirming agency and exceeding those definitions that have been projected onto them. There is a self-satisfied joy in Schneider's sculptures, which revel in their own materiality.

If you have experienced anxiety disorders or panic attacks, you might be familiar with the overwhelming desire to escape, whether



Zoë Schneider, *Adipose: Big Girl*, 2016. Polyurethane foam, denim, satin. 20in x 16in x 11in. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

it's the desire to run screaming from a jam-packed art opening, slip away unseen from a classroom, or somehow get out of the limits of one's own skin. Justice Walz's *Anxiety Escape Kit* (2017) imagines what an escape kit for people with anxiety disorders might contain. An emerging POC, queer, and mad-identifying artist, Walz integrates humour with somber subject matter and politicized impulses to create interdisciplinary work like *Anxiety Escape Kit*. A work of practical conceptualism, each kit comprises a suitcase and its contents, which include an escape plan, a disguise (hats, sunglasses, scarves, jewelry), and a set of distractions and coping mechanisms (games, teddy bears, candy, neck pillows, accessible books like children's literature), or what Walz refers to as an "activity set." The sculptures suggest each kit can easily be packed up in its suitcase for ease of travel and use. Organized in neat and tidy rows, the arrangement of the contents in *Anxiety Escape Kit* counters the often chaotic and disorganized feelings that can characterize the lived experiences of those with mental health issues.

There is a childlike quality to Walz's work that gestures to how the desire for escape might also be a desire to return to a time of less responsibility and insecurity: the disguises in the kits are not thorough disguises, but are more akin to what a kid playing dress up in their parents' clothes might put on. This desire to return to a previous era or time in one's life, and the complications of nostalgia and romanticizing the past, also features in queer artist Evan Tyler's performance and video work. In his recent video, *I'M FULL OF MYSELF* (2017), Tyler gives a highly performative, humorous self-help lecture at the Danforth Music Hall in the role of the Life Coach, a self-branded motivational speaker, performance artist, spiritual psychiatrist, and violently charismatic persuader from 1992. As part of Tyler's ongoing conceptual project *GRAND SYNERGY*, as well as his own personal work as an addict in recovery, a student, and a facilitator of recovery meetings, this work is an incisive critique of, and a strangely seductive appeal to, the human desire for self-actualization that pervades Western



Justice Walz, *Anxiety Escape Kit* (installation view and detail), 2017. Mixed media sculpture, four platforms, each 4ft x 4ft. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Evan Tyler, *I'M FULL OF MYSELF* (video still), 2017. Single-channel video shot to VHS, 26:00 min. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

culture. Shot to VHS, *I'M FULL OF MYSELF* enacts a playfully anachronistic impulse, appropriating the energy and potentiality of the early 1990s as part of a drive to both theatricalize an era through performance and do the emotional work of psychotherapeutic processing: as the Life Coach, Tyler enacts the repetition of trauma, memory, release, and desire.

In *The Sustenance Rite*, we find artists' practices that flesh out the space of health and care—self and collective—from autobiographical stances grounded in experiences of oppression and stigmatization, colonial violence, mental health issues, physical illness, trauma, addiction, mourning, and grief. The artists unhinge dominant conceptions of health and illness, making space for more capacious conceptions of what it means to be well.

**Notes**

1 “Mad pride” is a self-determined act of reclaiming the words “mad” and “madness” by those who have experience with mental health issues, who have been labeled as mentally ill, and/or who have survived the psychiatric system. In *The Sustenance Rite*, the artists Thirza Cuthand and Justice Walz explicitly self-identify as “mad” in their work, as does the curator Lauren Fournier. As a widespread social movement, “mad pride” is not unlike other self-determining, reclamation movements, like “queer pride.”

2 Zoë Schneider, “Adipose series,” in *Fermenting Feminism*, ed. Lauren Fournier (Berlin: Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, 2017), 105-107.

**Following spread:**

Radiodress, *MKV* (ceremony documentation), 2016. Presented as part of the Centre for Incidental Activisms #3 at the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU). PHOTO: KATHERINE FLEITAS. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

options

saliva  
tears  
pee  
menstrual blood  
sweat  
ejaculate  
injectable hormones  
other medications  
salt  
Malakhi Shmuni  
rain water  
snow  
your choice

rage  
fear  
protection

# Radiodress

## *MKV: Credit River Immersion, 2017*

As part of Radiodress's ongoing research around the queer body as a material site of resonance and empathy, *MKV: Credit River Immersion* acknowledges the physical toll that social justice work, migration, and climate change takes on marginalized bodies. Basing *MKV* upon the Jewish ritual bath ceremony of mikvah, the artist queers the traditional process, leaning towards an embodied and multi-dimensional spirituality. Traditionally, the mikvah bather is naked and immersed in water that comes from a natural source. The Shomeret, or guide, sits beside them and offers prayers suited to the purpose of their immersion. *MKV: Credit River Immersion* incorporates a localized awareness of the colonial footprint on our local water sources, and, in line with the mikvah tradition, some of the water is gathered from melted snow or rain around the gallery site.

Radiodress and *MKV* participants will connect with the waters of the nearby Credit River, outline their goals for the ceremony, and select the materials with which they wish to immerse themselves, possibly including saliva, tears, pee, menstrual blood, sweat, ejaculate, injectable hormones, medications, salt, rain water, snow, or other bodily fluids of their choice. Ultimately, each participant will take a private bath, in the gallery space, while Radiodress offers specific words to guide their attention towards healing and transition. Together, they decide how Radiodress's presence as a guide will be manifest—either in person, in the gallery, or remotely, through radio communication. During the ceremony, participants reflect upon a personal change they are going through, which could include working through gender transitions, dealing with questions of



Radiodress, *MKV* (ceremony documentation) 2016. PHOTO: KATHERINE FLEITAS. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Radiodress, *MKV* (ceremony documentation) 2016. PHOTO: KATHERINE FLEITAS. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

fertility, or coping with the struggles of aging, illness, and death.

*MKV: Credit River Immersion* is part of a larger project within the Jewish world to re-inscribe the often misunderstood and patriarchal practice of the mikvah ceremony. Here Radiodress is curious about the ways in which critical queer and trans Jews both change and evolve Jewish traditions and play a role in proposals for human interconnection, or “inter-being,” a term taken up in Buddhist and mindfulness practices. Radiodress is interested in how non-normative bodies can offer alternatives to homonationalist impulses—impulses that subject LGBTQ2S people to the usual violence of capitalism, colonialism, and militarism.

Through participatory artworks in public space, Radiodress asks how erased and invisible knowledge(s) might inform a new era of social governance, with queer and trans people at the forefront of this change. Working with what Sara Ahmed describes as

“queer orientations,”<sup>1</sup> Radiodress explores how private and public performance can shift the ways in which performers and audiences stand, sit, lie, and exist in space with others, including the spatial and temporal experience of being underwater. *MKV: Credit River Immersion* offers a comforting and transformative marker of shifting circumstances for queer- and trans-identified people, while suggesting that “queer orientations” have much to offer civic life.

### Notes

- 1 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

# Circo Zero

## *Turbulence (a dance about the economy), 2010–2017*

A collaborative creation, *Turbulence (a dance about the economy)* is an experimental hybrid of contemporary dance, improvised happening, and political theatre; it is a bodily response to economic crisis. Initiated before Occupy and engaging with questions of debt, value, and exchange, *Turbulence* is intended as both a provocation and an affirmation of global movements for economic justice. The work is instigated by San Francisco-based artist Keith Hennessy and produced by Circo Zero, an international performance company that Hennessy directs. Since its inception in 2010, *Turbulence* has received wide acclaim in the United States and Europe, and this is its premiere presentation in Canada, building upon Hennessy's performance-lecture as part of the Blackwood Gallery's 2016 exhibition, *I stood before the source*.

*Turbulence* plays with normative disruptions and calculated disregard for generally accepted rules of engagement. It is a fractured and embodied narrative of economic unrest. Reflecting on disaster capitalism, debt, precarity, propaganda, torture, union busting, magic, collaboration, and war, *Turbulence* works across a range of performance modes that contemplate economic crises, contradictions, and frustrations. *Turbulence* engages the performers' experiences and struggles by enacting varied responses to economic crises along race, gender, ability, and class lines. Throughout the performance, a sense of chaos, abjection, and failure is punctuated by moments of re-thinking, collaborative action, and resistance to power.

*Turbulence* is not only an experiment in per-



Circo Zero, *Turbulence* (performance still), 2010–2012. PHOTO: DAVID VISNJIC. COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

formance but also in alternative modes of producing performance, positioning improvisation as both a survival strategy and a political tactic. Integrating new cast members as generative collaborators for local iterations, the work resists predetermined outcomes. This process of involving local performers supplements *Turbulence's* conceptual underpinning: it provides the opportunity to build an international queer community in the face of precarity. For the Canadian presentation, performers have been selected with an eye to the diversity of lived experiences they bring to issues of immigration, settler colonialism, and accumulation by dispossession.

For Hennessy, *Turbulence* recognizes “the critique that contemporary dancers embody a neoliberal subject: dedicated to individual freedoms, we are always working and rarely paid; prioritizing career over community, we are internationally mobile, serving corporations that acknowledge us only as free content-providers... And still, we play, theorize, dream, and struggle in a queer utopia of our own collective imagining and embodiment. Without delivering a coherent critique or a totalizing vision of resistance and reconstruction, we hope to inspire public engagement, discussion, and action with regards to the economy, particularly its violence, corruption, and injustice.”<sup>1</sup>

**Performers:** Laura Larry Arrington, Ruairi Donovan, Empress Jupiter, keyon gaskin, Keith Hennessy, Jesse Hewit, Jassem Hindi, Jorge de Hoyos, Shaista Latif, Emily Leap, Allyson Mitchell, Julie Phelps, Brian Solomon, Gabriel Todd, Ravyn Wngz.

**Production Manager:** Alley Wilde

Friday, November 24, 8pm  
Saturday, November 25, 8pm, followed by a post-performance open discussion  
Collective Space  
221 Sterling Road, Unit 5, Toronto



Circo Zero, *Turbulence* (performance still), 2010–2012. PHOTO: DAVID VISNJIC. COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

### Acknowledgment

*Turbulence* is funded in part by the Jackman Humanities Institute Program for the Arts and USArtists International, a program of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

### Notes

- 1 Keith Hennessy, “Director’s Notes,” *Turbulence*: <http://circozero.org/turbulence/>.

# Public Programs

## FREE Contemporary Art Bus Tour

Exhibition tour to Blackwood Gallery, Oakville Galleries, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery  
Sunday, November 19, 12–5pm

## MKV: Credit River Immersion

Nine private ceremonies will be offered by Radiodress between November 20 and December 3  
e|gallery

## Reader-in-Residence Session with Art Metropole

Public reading by Lisa Myers  
Wednesday, November 22, 12–1pm  
Blackwood Gallery

## Dames Making Games

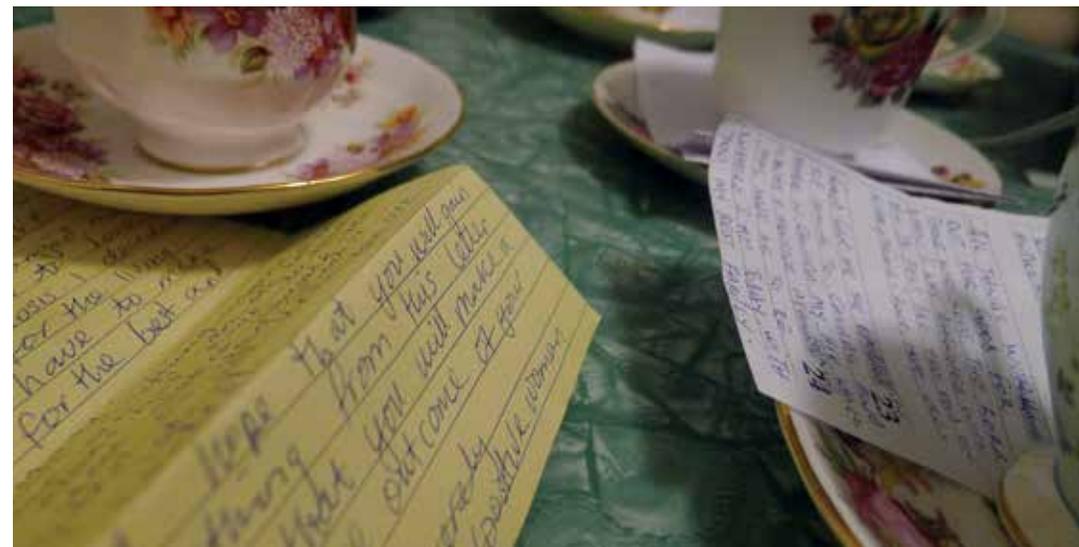
Workshop with Kaitlin Tremblay  
Thursday, November 23, 9–11am  
Communication, Culture, Technology Building, University of Toronto  
Mississauga

**Kaitlin Tremblay** from Dames Making Games will facilitate a workshop on the intersections between mental health, body theory, feminist advocacy, and game creation. The workshop is presented in collaboration with CCT405: Ethics and Code, taught by Professor Tero Karppi in the Institute of Communication, Culture, Information & Technology.

## Turbulence (a dance about the economy)

Circo Zero  
Friday, November 24, 8pm  
Saturday, November 25, 8pm, followed by a post-performance open discussion  
Collective Space  
221 Sterling Road, Unit 5, Toronto

Circo Zero, *Turbulence* (performance still), 2010-2012. PHOTO: DAVID VISNJIC. COURTESY THE ARTISTS.



Jessica Lynn Whitbread, *Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV* (documentation), 2011–present. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

## Feminist Lunchtime Talks Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV

Jessica Lynn Whitbread and Mercy Lillian Gichuki  
Wednesday, November 29, 12–2pm  
Blackwood Gallery  
Presented in partnership with Women and Gender Studies (UTM)

This event is the second in a series of **Feminist Lunchtime Talks** featuring artists, writers, activists, and academics working across issues of labour, gender, race, and identity in the context of the crisis of care. The talks put artists participating in *Take Care* and other guest speakers into conversation with UTM faculty and local respondents.

*Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV* (2011–present) is a transnational, community-building, cross-media project organized by **Jessica Lynn Whitbread** that functions as an interpersonal space for women with HIV to network, self-advocate, and share their experiences. **Mercy Lillian Gichuki** will respond to Whitbread's project

in relation to her experience in the public health sector, working with women living with HIV, survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, newcomers, refugees, and non-status women. Gichuki works from an anti-oppressive, integrated feminist lens with a deep understanding of the many intersections that women face.

## Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV

Facilitated by Jessica Lynn Whitbread  
Blackwood Gallery  
Private event only open to women with HIV

On December 1, World AIDS Day, Jessica Lynn Whitbread will host a private tea party in the Blackwood Gallery. Each woman is invited to bring a teacup and a letter that they have written, which they exchange for a teacup and a letter brought by someone else. Though it takes place in the institutional space of UTM, the tea party makes space for privacy, confidentiality, intimacy, and communion between women living with HIV.

# Participant Biographies

**Laura Larry Arrington** is a dance-artist working in hybrids of idea and practice. Her work in dance (time/space/body/whole) pivots around a desire to orient towards the capacities in us all that can glimpse unseen and unutterable horizons. Her body is her life and her life is her work.

**Anthea Black** is a Canadian artist, writer, and cultural worker based in San Francisco and Toronto. Her work addresses feminist and queer history, collaboration, materiality, and labour. She has exhibited and published in Canada, the United States, the Netherlands, France, and Norway. She is the co-editor of *HANDBOOK: Supporting Queer and Trans Students in Art and Design Education* with Shamina Chherawala, and *Craft on Demand: The New Politics of the Handmade* with Nicole Burisch. Black is an Assistant Professor of Printmedia at the California College of the Arts.

**Thirza Cuthand** was born in Regina, Saskatchewan and grew up in Saskatoon. Since 1995 she has been making short experimental narrative videos and films about sexuality, madness, youth, love, and race, which have screened in festivals and galleries across the United States, Canada, Germany, and Brazil. She completed her BFA in Film and Video at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, and her MA in Media Production at Ryerson University. She is of Plains Cree and Scots descent, a member of Little Pine First Nation, and currently resides in Toronto.

**Erika DeFreitas** is a Scarborough-based multidisciplinary conceptual artist. Placing an emphasis on process, gesture, and documentation, her work explores the influence of language, loss, and culture on the formation of identity, with the use of textile-based works and performative actions. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and the United States. Longlisted for the

2017 Sobey Art Award, a recipient of the Toronto Friends of Visual Arts' 2016 Finalist Artist Prize and the 2016 John Hartman Award, DeFreitas holds a Master of Visual Studies from the University of Toronto.

**Jorge De Hoyos** is an American dancer and choreographer from Southern California based in Berlin since 2012. He studied Cultural Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz and was active for five years in the dance/queer/etc. performance community in San Francisco. He has presented his work and performed in collaborative projects in both Berlin and San Francisco.

**Ruairí Donovan** has been making dances since 2008. He splits his time between Oileán Chléire, a remote Gaeltacht Island off the south coast of Ireland, and Amsterdam. His work has been presented internationally to critical acclaim at venues including SummerWorks Toronto, CounterPulse San Francisco, New York Live Arts, Project Arts Centre Dublin, Chapter Cardiff, HAU Berlin, TanzHaus Zurich, and Zodiak Helsinki. A language activist and a choreographer, he is making ritual objects for a tribe which doesn't exist.

**Empress Jupiter** is a two-spirit shamanatrix storyteller, performance artist, wordsmith, stylist, and fashion influence. Born in Houston, Jupiter now lives in Miss West Oakland. Jupiter has performed in a wide range of venues, with the mission to support queer and trans people in their self-esteem through fashion, ritual, and performance. Jupiter is the originator of Cunt Calisthenics, a communal improvised workout, and is the curator of the Miss Androgyny Pageant.

**Lauren Fournier** is a writer, artist, curator, and researcher. She is a doctoral candidate at York University, where she is com-

pleting a SSHRC-funded cross-disciplinary study of auto-theory as a contemporary mode of feminist practice. Her prior work as a front-line mental health and harm-reduction worker informs her research. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and in Berlin, Athens, and Houston, and her writing has appeared in numerous arts and academic publications.

**keyon gaskin** prefers not to contextualize their bio with their credentials.

**Mercy Lilian Gichuki** received her MPH from the University of Waterloo and a BA in Women and Gender Studies from UTM. Mercy works as a Public Education and Community Collaborator at Interim Place. For the past 10 years, Mercy has worked in public health, working with women living with HIV, survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, newcomers, refugees, and non-status women. Mercy works from an anti-oppressive, integrated feminist lens with a deep understanding of the many intersections that women face.

**Keith Hennessy** is a performer, choreographer, teacher, writer, and activist. Born in Sudbury, he lives in San Francisco and tours internationally. Ideas and practices inspired by anarchism, critical whiteness, punk, and queer-feminism motivate and mobilize Hennessy's creative and activist projects. Hennessy directs Circo Zero, and was a member of the collaborative performance companies Contraband with Sara Shelton Mann, CORE, and Cahin-caha, cirque bâtard.

**Jesse Hewit** is a three-way cross between a diabolical valedictorian fratboy at a therapy intake session, a fussy-but-useful little baby bear who can make a fierce sandwich, and a really old and mostly unremarkable leather shoe. His work, curations, collaborations, and teachings have happened in various parts of the US and Europe, and he currently serves his local community as curator of Aggregate Space Gallery's

*Friction/Function* series (Oakland), and as Program Manager for the ODC Theater (San Francisco).

**Jassem Hindi** was born in Saudi Arabia and studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, Paris. As a performer and sound-maker, his work extends internationally, involving mostly politically engaged work and the study of strange objects. As a musician, he is using mainly broken machines and lo-fi field recordings, in the spirit of experimental music. He collaborates widely in writing, performing, and sound-making, and teaches various workshops about sound, performance, and theory.

**Shaista Latif** is a Queer Afghan-Canadian artist, writer, and facilitator. Her works have been actively presented in Canada by festivals and platforms like Ontario Scene, SummerWorks, Halifax Queer Acts, and Why Not Theatre's RISER Project. Latif's work centers on exploring the politics of inclusion and advocating for spaces and processes that support agency and care. She is currently artist-in-residence at STO Union and was named a 2016 Siminovitch Protégé. Her play *Graceful Rebellions* will be published in 2017.

**Emily Leap** was inspired by her work with *Turbulence* to enter into her own personal economics experiment. With one year left before graduation, she's accumulated \$150,000 in student loans. And counting. But soon she will be a doctor. Or merely an acupuncturist. Or a doctor of Chinese medicine. Or just in debt. Or fall back into work as an aging trapeze artist.

**Letters & Handshakes** is a collaboration of Greig de Peuter (Department of Communication Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University) and Christine Shaw (Blackwood Gallery and Department of Visual Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga).

**Allyson Mitchell** is a maximalist artist working in sculpture, performance, installation,

and film. Her practice melds feminism and pop culture to investigate contemporary ideas about sexuality, autobiography, and the body. Her works have been exhibited in galleries and festivals across Canada, the US, and Europe. She is based in Toronto, where she is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. She runs FAG Feminist Art Gallery with Deirdre Logue.

**Lisa Myers** is an independent curator and artist with a keen interest in interdisciplinary collaboration. Her curatorial practice considers values placed on time, sound, and knowledge. Myers has an MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University. Her writing has been published in many exhibition publications including *Senses and Society*, *Public*, *C Magazine*, and *FUSE Magazine*. Myers is a member of Beausoleil First Nation based in Toronto and Port Severn, Ontario, and an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University.

**Petrina Ng** is a visual artist and cultural worker based in Toronto. Her multi-form feminist practice connects intimacy, discomfort, and absurdity. Previous projects have been shown in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Ng received a BA from the University of Toronto and an MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art (London). She is the Exhibition Coordinator at the Blackwood Gallery.

**Julie Phelps** engages the hybrid strategies of producer, artist, and community activist to generate new knowledge for a world that is more complicated and less capitalistic. Phelps is the Artistic Director of CounterPulse in San Francisco, a performing arts venue and community hub. When not at work, Phelps is (literally) a mover and shaker in the field of contemporary dance, touring nationally and internationally as a speaker and dance artist.

**Radiodress** is an artist, Priestess, and Prison Chaplain. In her creative practice, s/he uses live and recorded ritual, singing, yelling, talking, and listening to consider bodies as sites of knowledge, and communication as a political practice. Exploring the relationship between collective voice and the empathic act of listening, her work engages with consensual ceremony as a site of vulnerability, and an entry point to sensation and emotion-based transformation. Radiodress's projects have been performed widely in North America, Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East.

**Zoë Schneider** is a sculptor, curator, and arts administrator who transforms found and fabricated materials into artworks that investigate corporeality within social systems. Schneider's works explore various phenomenon and experience, invoking responses ranging from quiet contemplation to interactive engagement. Schneider is currently completing an MFA at the University of Saskatchewan.

Multiple Dora and Gemini Award-nominated **Brian Solomon** is of Anishnaabe and Irish descent, from the Northern Ontario community Shebahonaning-Killarney. Solomon is a graduate of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, and has an MA in Performance from the Laban Center (UK). He has presented his multidisciplinary works and performed for a multitude of companies and creators in Canada, the US, and Europe. He has taught for many arts institutions and companies, including H.F.S. Ernst Busch, Berlin.

**Kara Stone** is an artist and scholar interested in the affective and gendered experiences of mental illness, wellness, and healing as it relates to art production, video games, and traditional crafting. Her artwork has been featured in *The Atlantic*, *Wired*, and *Vice*. She is a member of the Different Games Collective. She holds an MA from York University in Communication and Culture and is pursuing a PhD in

Film and Digital Media with a designated emphasis in Feminist Studies at University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Gabriel Todd** is a dance- and music-based performing artist, choreographer, and sound designer living in Denver, Colorado. He received a BFA in Performance from Naropa University and an MFA in Dance from the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has performed and collaborated musically across the US and abroad with various artists. He is currently working on a collection of songs, texts, and dances called *organ donor*.

**Kaitlin Tremblay** is a writer and narrative designer, living in Toronto. She is the author of the book *Ain't No Place for a Hero* (ECW Press, 2017), about subversive storytelling, and the lead writer of the narrative-driven and death-positive video game *A Mortician's Tale* (Laundry Bear, 2017). Kaitlin's work explores mental illness, queerness, feminism, and community in video games.

**Evan Tyler** is an artist, musician, occasional curator, and a writer of fiction living and working in Canada. Tyler has exhibited and curated both nationally and internationally. From 2010-2014 he ran *gallery-west* on Toronto's Queen Street West. His artwork focuses on voice and performance, blending the fictional and autobiographical. Tyler is a graduate of Masters of Visual Studies (MVS) in the studio program at the University of Toronto, with a collaborative graduate specialization from the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies.

**Justice Walz** is an interdisciplinary, Toronto-based artist. She is currently completing her BFA in Ryerson University's RTA New Media program. Her work spans a variety of media including installation, illustration, clay, and digital art. At age 11 she was diagnosed with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis—a condition that causes her chronic pain and fatigue. Today, Walz uses art to con-

front past traumas and has embraced her voice as a queer, mad-identifying, intersectional feminist—these themes resonate loudly in her work.

**Jessica Lynn Whitbread** is an activist and artist who has worked in the HIV movement since her diagnosis in 2002. She works in social practice and community art, engaging a diversity of audiences in critical dialogue. Her primary interests are bodies, sexuality, and desire, and her work explores how gender, sero-status, and criminalization impact the navigation of sexual relationships. In 2014 Jessica published her first book, *Tea Time: Mapping Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV*, a photo collection of her Tea Time community arts practice.

**Alley Wilde** is an arts and culture worker based in San Francisco. They create dance-based solo shows, perform drag as Hella Degenerate, and co-founded the queer performance collective Yum Yum Club. As an administrator, they work with Keith Hennessy/Circo Zero and Jess Curtis/Gravity doing grant writing, production management, marketing, and bookkeeping.

**Ravyn Wngz** is an African, Bermudian, Mohawk, 2Spirit, queer, and transcendent individual. Ravyn aims to challenge mainstream arts and dance spaces, sharing her stories while continuing to create opportunities for marginalized LGBTTIQQ2S people with a focus on African/Black communities. Ravyn is a co-founder of ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company and the artistic director of Outrageous Victorious Africans Collective. Ravyn is part of the Black Lives Matter Toronto steering committee, a group committed to eradicating anti-Black racism, supporting Black healing, and liberating Black communities.

# Acknowledgments

## **Take Care**

September 11, 2017–March 10, 2018  
Curated by Letters & Handshakes

Encompassing a five-part exhibition series, performances, and workshops, *Take Care* mobilizes more than 100 artists, activists, curators, and researchers confronting the crisis of care. *Take Care* unfolds as a series of five exhibition themes, or circuits of care.

## **Staff**

Christine Shaw, Director/Curator  
Jayne Wilkinson, Assistant Curator  
Petrina Ng, Exhibition Coordinator  
Alison Cooley, Curatorial Assistant and Collections Archivist  
Fraser McCallum, Outreach and Publications Assistant\*  
Joy Xiang, Curatorial Research Assistant\*

## **Installation Technicians**

Carmen Schroeder, Matthew Tegel

## **Micropublication Design**

Matthew Hoffman

## **Micropublication Printing**

Thistle Printing Ltd.



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The Blackwood Gallery is grateful for additional support for Circuit 3: *Infrastructures and Aesthetics of Mutual Aid* from the Institute of Communication, Culture, Information & Technology (UTM); Jackman Humanities Institute Program for the Arts; University of Toronto Affinity Partners Manulife, TD Insurance, and MBNA; USArtists International, a program of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Women and Gender Studies (UTM).



Jackman Humanities Institute  
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# Canada



## **Blackwood Gallery**

University of Toronto Mississauga  
3359 Mississauga Road  
Mississauga, ON L5L 1C6  
905-828-3789  
blackwoodgallery.ca

## **Gallery Hours**

Monday–Friday: 12–5pm  
Wednesday: 12–9pm  
Saturday: 12–3pm

The Blackwood Gallery promotes LGBTQ2 positive spaces and experiences and is barrier-free. The gallery is FREE and open to the public.

## **CIRCUIT 1**

*Labour of Curation*

September 11–30, 2017

## **CIRCUIT 2**

*Care Work*

October 16–November 4, 2017

## **CIRCUIT 3**

*Infrastructures and Aesthetics of Mutual Aid*

November 20–December 9, 2017

## **CIRCUIT 4**

*Stewardship*

January 8–27, 2018

## **CIRCUIT 5**

*Collective Welfare*

February 12–March 10, 2018

The Blackwood Gallery and Letters & Handshakes are indebted to mutual aid and knowledge-sharing. Brandy Leary, Supriya Nayak, Danny Russell, Danielle St-Amour, Joan Simalchik, and Alley Wilde helped make Circuit 3 happen.

