

I:ke - I have motion

**Rebecca Belmore, Scott Benesiinaabandan,
Faye HeavyShield, Qavavau Manumie,
Meryl McMaster, Nadia Myre, Jeffrey Thomas**
Curated by Lee-Ann Martin



Welcome to Tkaronto, Ontario

Jeffrey Thomas, *Welcome to Tkaronto*, Toronto, ON, Peace Chief, N43 38.412 W79 24.063, 2014, pigment print on archival paper. Collection of the artist.

Reception: Friday, October 24, 2014 at 5pm – 8pm
Artist and Curator Talk at 5:30-6:30pm

Presented by A Space Gallery and imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival
Co-presented by Aboriginal Curatorial Collective

Lee-Ann Martin is an independent curator, living in Ottawa. She is the former Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec and the former Head Curator of the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. She has curated, written and lectured extensively on contemporary Aboriginal art both nationally and internationally over the past 25 years. Her writing has been published by Oxford University Press, University of Washington Press, Banff Centre Press, and National Museum of the American Indian. Martin's recent curatorial projects include *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* for Plug In ICA in Winnipeg and the nationally touring exhibition, *Bob Boyer: His Life's Work*, for the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Rebecca Belmore is an Anishinabe multi-disciplinary artist who is internationally recognized for her performance and installation art, photography, video and sculpture. She has received numerous awards including the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts (2013) and the Hnatyshyn Visual Arts Award (2009). Belmore was Canada's official representative at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005). Most recently, her work was featured in the exhibition, *Kwe: Rebecca Belmore* at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, and is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Canadian Museum of History. Belmore's large-scale installation, *Trace*, will be unveiled at the opening of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in September 2014.

Scott Benesiinaabandan is an Anishinabe intermedia artist who works primarily in photography, video, audio and printmaking. He has completed two residencies in Australia, the University of Lethbridge/Royal Institute of Technology iAIR residency (2013) and the Parramatta Artist Studios (2012) as well as at the Context Gallery in Derry, North Ireland (2010). He has participated in numerous international collaborative projects in both the U.K and Ireland. His work was included in several group exhibitions, including *GHOSTDANCE* at Ryerson Image Centre (2013) and *Subconscious City*, Winnipeg Art Gallery (2008). His solo exhibitions include *Blood Memories*, Melbourne (2013), *Mii Omaa Ayaad/Oshiki Inendemowin*, Sydney (2012), and *unSacred*, Gallery 1C03 (2011).

Faye HeavyShield was born and raised on the Blood Reserve in Alberta and studied at the Alberta College of Art and Design and the University of Calgary. Her work has been exhibited throughout Canada, including *90x90: Celebrating Art in Alberta*, Art Gallery of Alberta (2014), *now and then*, Public Art Project, Edmonton (2012-2015), *Witnesses. Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools*, Belkin Gallery, University of British Columbia (2013) and *Land, Spirit, Power*, National Gallery of Canada (1992). HeavyShield is represented in public and private collections throughout North America, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Kelowna Art Gallery, the MacKenzie Art Gallery and the Heard Museum.

Qavavau Manumie was born in Brandon, Manitoba. In the early 1980s, he began working as a printmaker for the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative in Cape Dorset and started making his own drawings while he was still in his teens. Part of a new generation of contemporary Cape Dorset artists who are reshaping the community's expressive traditions, Manumie continues to work both as a printmaker and on his drawing. His work was included in *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years*, Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art (2011) and *The Drawing Room*, Pendulum Gallery Vancouver (2010). He is represented in the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Gallery of Canada.

Meryl McMaster is a BFA graduate from the Ontario College of Art and Design University (2010). She is the recipient of various awards and scholarships including the Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellowship, the OCAD Medal, and the Doris McCarthy Scholarship. McMaster was named Art Bank of Canada's artist of the year 2012 and has exhibited in various galleries including the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Eiteljorg Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ottawa Art Gallery, McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the Harbourfront Centre. Her work is in various private and public collections, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada Council Art Bank, the Eiteljorg Museum and the Donovan Collection.

Nadia Myre is a visual artist and a member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg. Her practice is often inspired by participant involvement and themes of identity, language, longing and loss. Myre earned an MFA from Concordia University (2002) and is a recipient of numerous grants and awards, notably: Pratt & Whitney Canada's 'Les Elles de l'art' for the Conseil des arts de Montréal (2011) and Quebec Arts Council's Prix à la création artistique pour la région des Laurentides (2009). Her work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including *Sakahan: International Indigenous Art* at the National Gallery of Canada (2013). Her work was selected for the 2011 and 2014 Montréal Biennale, the 2012 Sydney Biennial, and will be presented at the 2014 Shanghai Biennale.

Jeffrey Thomas is a self-taught photo-based artist and curator whose work confronts both photo-based stereotypes and absences of Indigenous people. His most recent solo exhibition, *Mapping Iroquoia: Cold City Frieze*, was shown at the McMaster Museum of Art (2013). His work was featured in a survey exhibition, *Drive By: A Road Trip* with Jeff Thomas, at the University of Toronto Art Centre (2008) and in a nationally touring solo exhibition, *Jeff Thomas: A Study of Indian-ness*, circulated by Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography (2004). Thomas' work is included in many national and international collections including the Canadian Museum of History, National Museum of the American Indian, and The British Museum. In 1998, he was awarded the Canada Council's prestigious *Duke and Duchess of York Award in Photography* and in 2008 he received the *Karsh Award* in photography.

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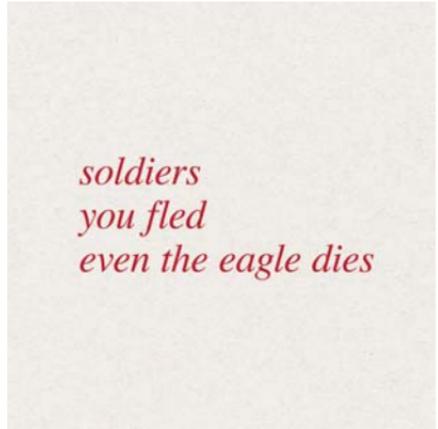
Rivers flow, winds blow, people move across the land. Flights of fantasy carry our imaginations beyond this world. Individuals become catalysts for change through collective movements such as Idle No More. *I:ke – I have motion* explores physical and metaphorical constructs of motion that reveal imagineNATIVE notions of change, mobility, flow and transformation. In Indigenous languages, verbs encode concepts of motion that include people, tense, location, and direction.

The works of the seven artists in this exhibition portray individual ideas of motion and movement; together, they are testimony to the dynamism and persistence of Indigenous cultures today and into the future. Motion is inherent in the nature of the artists' experiences as participants in contemporary culture.

Jeffrey Thomas' ongoing research into photographic history reveals two significant absences: images of Aboriginal people living in cities and images produced by Aboriginal people. Frustrated by these absences and the silences they engendered, he continues to challenge these historical omissions by creating new contemporary conversations. In his recent *Postcard Series*, Thomas inserts First Nations "action" figures into various cityscapes which he photographed in his travels across the country. Adopting the mid-20th century souvenir photograph style of the postcard, he shifts the perspective to magnify and provide prominence to the figures. These still photographs make the previously invisible visible and transform the images into realities.



Meryl McMaster, *Telltales*, 2013, digital chromogenic print.
Courtesy of Katzman Contemporary.



Rebecca Belmore, *song*, 2002, eagle feather, monofilament, vinyl text, fans (detail). Collection of Canadian Museum of History.

Meryl McMaster takes her performative-based self-portraits in a slightly different direction. She clothes herself in "sculptural garments" to stage her wilderness experiences seemingly away from populated centres (although actually photographed on the shores of Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River). Her meticulous choreography and staging reveal the fluidity of identity and experience. In *Consanguinity*, a sheet of light plastic shrouds and billows behind McMaster's body. Echoing the angle of the billowing plastic sheet, arrows appear shot into her back as she calmly holds the bow.

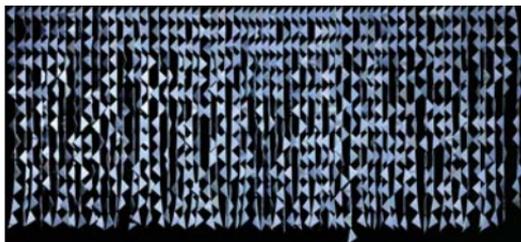
For *Wind Play*, McMaster sewed 5000 long balloons to the garment and helmet, creating a feather-like fringe reminiscent of traditional regalia to give a sense of lightness in her celebratory dance.

At times, the most delicate movements offer opportunities for contemplation and self-reflection. Gentle air currents make the solitary eagle feather dance and fly in **Rebecca Belmore's** *song*; light casts four moving shadows upon the wall. Below the shadows are the words from a Sioux song found in Scott Momaday's *The Man Made of Words*:

*soldiers
you fled
even the eagle dies*

While this song laments the death of this powerful symbol, the movement of Belmore's feather suggests the potency and persistence of this icon of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

In *slivers*, **Faye HeavyShield** celebrates the flow of rivers as agents of well-being and respect. She travelled throughout the country photographing surface waters of multiple



Faye HeavyShield, *slivers*, 2010, digital print on paper, wax, monofilament.
Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.



Qavavau Manumie, *Dark Fantasy*, 2008, etching and aquatint on paper.
Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts.

rivers - the Oldman River, the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, the Fraser River, the Ottawa River among others. The curtain of water for *slivers* is created from hundreds of digital images, folded like paper arrowheads. The soft reflection from the light and subtle movement from air flow creates a gentle rippling effect that evokes both the strength and fragility of rivers. Born and raised in southern Alberta among grasslands, coulees and wind, river imagery informs much of HeavyShield's most recent artistic practice.

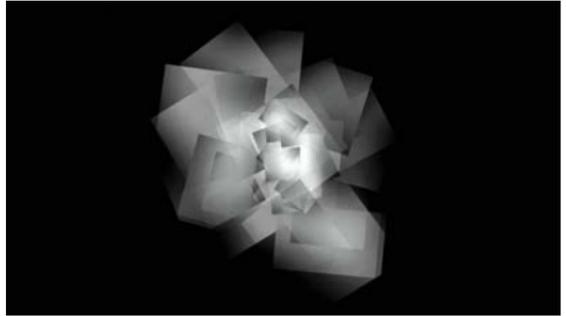
Among the second generation of Inuit artists to attract critical acclaim from a contemporary arts audience in the south, **Qavavau Manumie's** prints, *Airlift* and *Dark Fantasy*, are simultaneously playful and disorientating. Otherworldly in content, *Dark Fantasy* depicts the gruesome scene in which a giant squid has its tentacles tightly wrapped around a small kayak, its accessories and a man's lifeless body. This powerful image reinforces the relative powerlessness of humans in the face of the natural world. In contrast, *Airlift* suggests a fantastical flight in which hunter and giant bird cooperate as they depart for the hunt.

In her neon installation, *Year of the Indian*, **Nadia Myre** provides a metaphor for the recent collective movement within First Nations' communities - like the communities, the feathers flicker and glow, always in perpetual motion. Her design originates from artist Greg Hill's Welcome to Kanata performance project that featured the image as an official Canadian flag. Myre's neon feathers are actually an 'illustrator tracing' from a photographic still of a 2004 video performance in which she had the same design tattooed on her arm. Myre's work celebrates the momentum generated by the Idle No More movement, as well as the First Nations-oriented cultural programming this movement may have helped generate in Quebec and throughout Canada.

Scott Benesiinaabandan creates an experiential installation, *Psychic Histories*, where audio and visual merge within an unfolding "psychic ecology." Using exploratory audio captured from sounds collected over the past year, the pairing of low and high frequencies and the increasing volume creates tension as the crescendo builds. Slowly mesmerizing, almost hypnotic, rotations in the video projection suggest the use of hypnotism to "massively influence and re-educate mainstream consciousness around Indigenous issues." In Benesiinaabandan's work, the dual stimulation of our senses reveals a vision of Indigenous collective subconsciousness and offers multiple opportunities for self-reflection.



Nadia Myre, *Year of the Indian* (maquette), 2014, neon.
Courtesy Greg Hill for use of his original Kanata flag design.
Collection of the artist.



Scott Benesiinaabandan, *Psychic Histories*, 2014, video installation. Collection of the artist.

Art exists in time and space; time implies change and movement; movement implies the passage of time. The works in this exhibition encircle the language, concepts, and the aesthetics of motion toward their own evocative ends.

– **Lee-Ann Martin**

*My sincere appreciation to David Kanatawakhon-Maracle for his advice and assistance with the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) language.



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