Glen Lowry

Creative Practice Dossier

Selected Texts and Images from Creative Projects and Collaborations

fab pac with Diyan Achjadi, 2015-ongoing

Speaking My Truth, Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2010-2014

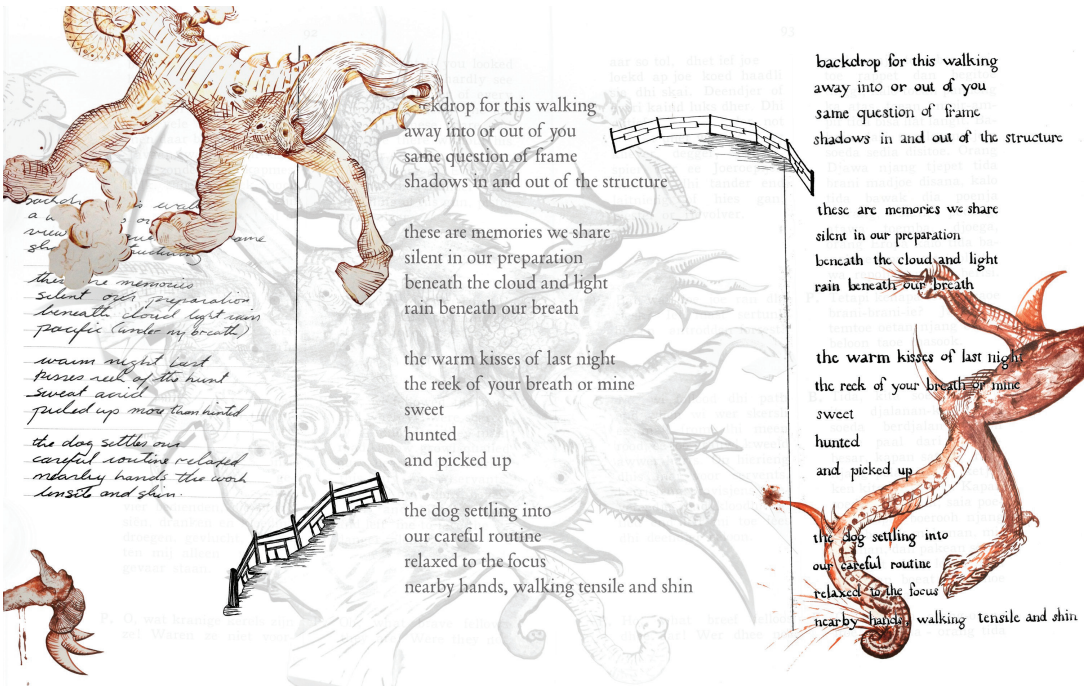
Maraya with Henry Tsang and M. Simon Levin, 2007-2015. Installation stills and online images.
Alice Ming Wai Jim (2014) The Maraya Project, Third Text, 28:1, 15-31,

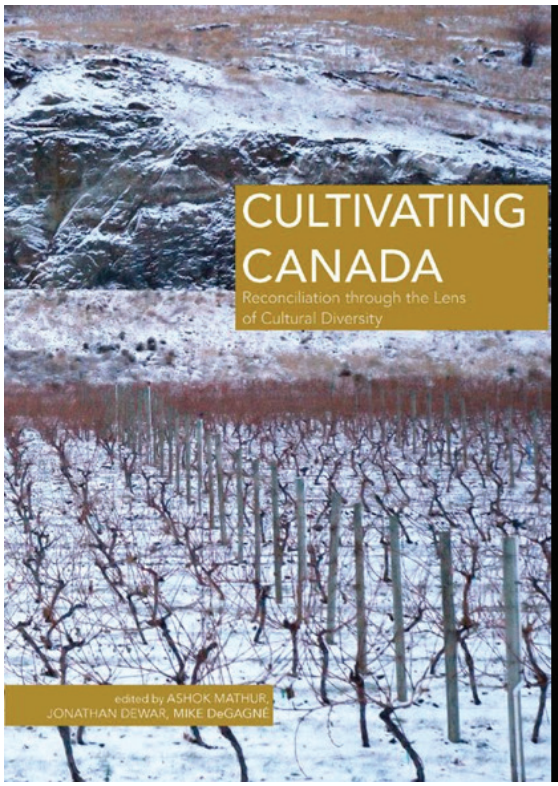
Land Art Generator, Santa Monica 2016. Catalogue Essay.

Landon Mackenzie, Nervous Centres, Esker Foundation Exhibition, Calgary AB, 2013. Catalogue essay.

fab **pac**
2015-ongoing

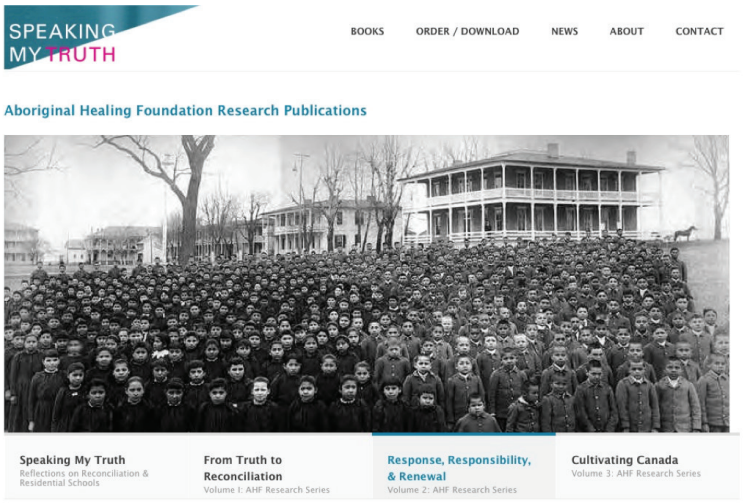
Collaboration—visual-poetic translations—with Diyan Achjadi, print maker and media artist. Samples published in *The Capilano Review*, 3.26 (2015).





Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2010-2014

Publication Design, Production, Web-development, Editing, and Public Speaking: Under the auspices of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), I oversaw the design, editing and production of a number of books and ebooks. *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential* toured across Canada, with co-editors Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné, and I meeting book clubs and speaking to groups about reconciliation. These publications were presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as Offerings of Reconciliation in 2013.



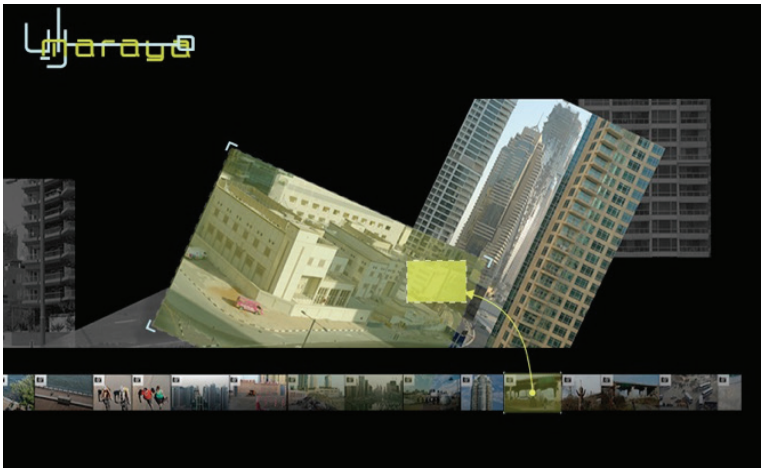


The Maraya Project
2007-2015

Lead Artists: M. Simon Levin, Henry Tsang, & Glen Lowry

Maraya is a large-scale collaborative art / research project that investigates 21st century urbanism. Focusing on historical connections between Vancouver and Dubai, Maraya charts the migration of urban planners, architects and developers from Vancouver (Concord Pacific) to Dubai (EMAAR). This multifaceted project documents the influence this mobile cadre has had on reshaping the way we think about the city.

Maraya looks at how the brand Vancouver is translated and mapped onto Dubai, one of the world's fastest growing urban hubs. Taking its name from the Arabic word for mirror or reflection, Maraya examines opportunities for social engagement that arise when we try to see ourselves reflected two vastly different urban enterprises.



The Maraya project has taken a variety of forms (video, photographs, new media, sculptural, literary, and performative), and it has been presented in various iterations:

- gallery exhibition
- public talks
- artist walks
- public installations
- publications
- website


POST NO BILLS
POST NO BILLS
IMAGINE A CITY
Where Here is There
AND BEGINNING


ZERO


MARAYA:
SISYPHEAN CART
August 4–29, 2015
M. Simon Levin
Glen Lowry
Henry Tsang


公益藝術館
免費參觀

Third Text

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctte20

The Maraya Project

Alice Ming Wai Jim

Published online: 05 Feb 2014.

To cite this article: Alice Ming Wai Jim (2014) The Maraya Project, Third Text, 28:1, 15-31, DOI: 10.1080/09528822.2014.869984

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2014.869984

Third Text, 2014
Vol. 28, No. 1, 15–31, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2014.869984

The Maraya Project

Research-Creation, Inter-reference and the Worlding of Asian Cities

Alice Ming Wai Jim

INTRODUCTION

A full-scale replica of Vancouver's False Creek is today even being carved out of the desert sands outside Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Having walked the seawall on visits to British Columbia, the Sultan of Dubai and senior hereditary princes adopted Concord Pacific as a model for a massive development near their Burj Al-Arabe, the world's most expensive hotel – the famous high-tech tower in the shape of a Persian Gulf dhow [a traditional sailing vessel]. Today the first of a planned $2 billion worth of housing has been completed here, a series of thin towers on podium bases set beside an artificial body of water shaped to evoke Vancouver's inner harbour. The whole complex is a strange monument to globalism: 'Vancouver al-Arabe'.[1]

In just over a decade, the uncanny twinning of Vancouver and Dubai via the exported architectural typology of Vancouverism has become lore in the annals of sustainable urban planning in the twenty-first century. Reports in 2004 by Vancouver architectural critic Trevor Boddy about the importation of a distinctive Vancouver model of urbanism to the Middle East were germane to the beginnings of the Maraya Project, an experimental research-creation platform critiquing the parallel urban mega-developments in the two cities.[2] Undergoing a number of name changes (including 'True/False Creek'), the project has consistently focused on connecting, physically and metaphorically, the look-alike urban waterfront promenades of the Emaar Properties development Dubai Marina in the United Arab Emirates and the Concord Pacific Place between the Marinaside Crescent and Beach neighbourhoods of Vancouver's North False Creek, both designed by some of the same architects, engineers and planners.

Initiated by Vancouver artists M Simon Levin, Glen Lowry and Henry Tsang in 2006, Maraya was intended, broadly speaking, as 'a

1. Trevor Boddy, 'New Urbanism: "The Vancouver Model"', *Places*, vol 16, no 2, 2004, pp 18–19

2. The five-year funding for the Maraya Project (2007–2011) was provided by a Research/Creation in Fine Arts Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

provocation – to raise questions about who makes cities', and, more specifically, to:

> ... compare, contrast and complement the similarities and differences between sites separated by twelve time zones or by a 'false' body of water: in Vancouver's case, by name, and in Dubai, an artificial marina carved out of the desert.[3]

Over six years, the critical creative collaboration has produced several exhibitions of photographs and videos, walking tours, public talks, transit-shelter posters, an electronic billboard, a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter, a commissioned interactive website and dozens of ad hoc seawalk interventions. Bringing together an interdisciplinary team of artists, educators, scientists, theorists, urban planners, architects and academic researchers who draw on expertise in the visual arts, media, cultural theory, urban geography and history, the Maraya Project promotes dialogue through research-creation to a wider public about how this phenomenon came to be. In doing so, the implications of citation and postcolonial urbanism in the inter-Asian context are brought to bear within current scholarship on site-responsive artistic practices.

The city-to-city cultural exchange paradigm in contemporary art is a familiar phenomenon. It is a particular staple within the international biennial exhibition system by which urban landscapes are transformed for better or worse through site-specific artworks seeking to activate transnational connections of over-determined yet changing city cultures across the globe. Attesting to the increased attention being paid to these projects is the sheer number of urban- and city-to-city-themed exhibitions focusing on the implications of rampant urbanization. This is particularly the case in newly industrialized countries – a great number of them in Asia, where urban development is proceeding at an all-time unprecedented rate. The 2012 Shanghai Biennale on 'Reactivation', for example, showcased over thirty Inter-City Pavilions, of which the Canadian representative was Vancouver.

'City-making is an art, not a formula', according to urban theorist Charles Landry.[4] What if the terms were reversed? Only recently have cultural theorists turned to considerations of the cultural dimension of urban and regional development. What happens, for example, when contemporary artists engage with spatial planning and city-building processes? The City of Vancouver ties with Victoria for second place on the Canadian Creativity Index (Ottawa tops the list) devised by urban guru Richard Florida.[5] Maraya's last six years of activity coincided with the building up of Vancouver's designation as Cultural Capital of Canada in 2011, just in time for the city's 125th anniversary. The UAE is also Canada's biggest trade partner in the Middle East, with multi-billion-dollar developments linking it to Canada, including recent purchases by Dubai World (the multinational developer of Dubai Marina) of container terminals in the ports of Vancouver and Halifax. What is the role of various dimensions of culture for urban imaging and marketing, for local economic development and job creation, and for sustaining identity and quality of life for citizens in the twenty-first century? From Jane Jacobs to Landry, who coined the term 'creative city' in the 1980s, and Florida, who helped popularize the creative cities movement, these lines of enquiry continue to deeply motivate the Maraya Project, which fundamen-

3. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes are by the artists and from the Maraya website, http://marayaprojects.com/.

4. Charles Landry, *The Art of City Making*, Routledge, New York, 2006

5. Rankings for the Canadian Creativity Index are based on Florida's 3Ts of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance. Richard Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class – Revisited: 10th Anniversary Edition – Revised and Expanded*, Basic, New York, 2012.

Portal (Dubai Marina), 2010, c-print, photo: Maraya

Portal (False Creek), 2010, c-print, photo: Maraya

tally asks: What does it mean to have another version of a place elsewhere?[6]

In the anthology *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, editors Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong present two contrasting perspectives on the relationship between the concept of 'worlding' and the place of postcolonial theory in current urbanism theory. They 'identify three styles of being global that, while not exclusive to Asia, seem to be distinctive practices associated with urban development in the region': modelling (replicable model cities), inter-referencing (the comparison and referencing of cities as in, for example, the 'Vancouverization' of Dubai) and new urban solidarities (new 'combinations of entrepreneurial and civic elements straddling class, city and national divisions').[7] The authors take 'worlding' to be a kind of critical postcolonial practice that goes against the grain of the reified, institutional modes of these same categories. Postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, in her own canonized 1985 worlding-wary essay, advised vigilance with regard to these categories, seeing them as reinvented signifiers of neoliberal globalization.[8] However, whereas Ong argues the limitations of postcolonial theory to engage with current transnational urban developments, Roy maintains the possibility of 'another route through postcolonial urbanism' to study cities as a pressing challenge.[9] Undeniably, the project of such a postcolonial analysis would need to remain critical of the limitations posed by postcolonial theory's emphasis on subaltern agency to describe and explain urban experiments and formations of development that are seemingly dissociated from previous colonial conditions.

This article explores the main configurations of the Maraya Project to discern its possibilities and limitations as a kind of worlding 'research-creation' practice within the conjuncture of the transnational turn in contemporary art and perspectives on postcolonial urbanism. The analysis seeks to take up Roy's challenge by also examining discursive formations that would inflect and prompt in the cultural imaginary the construct of a 'Vancouver al-Arabe' in the current political climate of Canada–Middle East relations. I am particularly interested in the convergences of various kinds of modelling and inter-referencing that would dichotomize discussions of Vancouverization (via the exportation of the 'Hongcouver' urban model) and Asianization (via the 'Arab world' and how Dubai is the 'Hong Kong of the Middle East') and ways in which a project such as Maraya might, as Roy asks, quoting Jane Jacobs, deconstruct 'the "worlding" of knowledge' by shifting urban analysis from 'its historical position of colonial complicity to productively postcolonial spatial narratives'.[10] More broadly speaking, I wish to explore the positioning of research-creation as potentially embodying 'the postcolonial as a critical, deconstructive methodology', as Roy suggests, but not without questioning what is postcolonial within the 'geographies of authoritative knowledge' and how this concerns articulations of subject-power expressed by platforms such as the Maraya Project.[11] This would entail keeping in mind the very diverse modalities of empire that have historically shaped Vancouver, Hong Kong and Dubai, which seemingly are in the distant past but nevertheless underpin the contemporary transnational links between these perfunctory 'Asian' cities, hence the foray into a provisional inter-Asian discussion. Ultimately, the essay sees research-creation as a way to critically engage with changing urban contexts and to

6. See, for example, Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, Comedia, London, 2000; and Gert-Jan Hospers and Roy van Dalm, 'How to Create a Creative City? The Viewpoints of Richard Florida and Jane Jacobs', *Foresight*, vol 7, no 4, pp 8–12.

7. Aihwa Ong, 'Introduction: Worlding Cities, or The Art of Being Global', in Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, eds, *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Beijing Global*, Blackwell, Chichester, West Sussex, 2011, p 14, p 17, p 21

8. Gayatri Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', *Critical Inquiry* 12, 1985, pp 43–61. See also Rob Wilson, 'Afterword: Worlding as Future Tactic', in Rob Wilson and Christopher Leigh Connery, eds, *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization*, North Atlantic, Berkeley, California, 2007, pp 209–223.

9. Ananya Roy, 'Postcolonial Urbanism: Speed, Hysteria, Mass Dreams', in Roy and Ong, eds, op cit, pp 307–308

10. Ibid, 308. I discuss the term 'Hongcouver' as part of negative reactions to the Asianization of Vancouver during the era of the High Tower Boom in my essay: 'Thoughts on the Meaning of Return: HKG >< YVR', *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol 6, no 3, December 2007, pp 333–341.

11. Ibid

Untitled (Diptych), 2011, c-prints, diptych, 24 x 18 in, Centre A Gallery, Vancouver, photo: Maraya

understand cultural and place identities as well as the cities that are mutually implicated and entangled.

THE MARAYA PROJECT: 'IT'S ... VERY FALSE CREEK!'

The ancients built Valdrada on the shores of a lake, with houses all verandas one above the other, and high streets whose railed parapets look out over the water. Thus the traveler, arriving, sees two cities: one erect above the lake, and the other reflected, upside down.[12]

Imagine how a resident Vancouverite might react looking at 'almost a perfect clone of downtown Vancouver, right down to the handrails on the seawall, the skinny condo towers on townhouse bases, all around a 100-per-cent artificial, full-scale version of False Creek filled with seawater from the Persian Gulf'.[13] Maraya artist Henry Tsang has described the experience as a state of centripetal vertigo:

> This kind of imagery would effectively feel as if there's another world just beneath your feet, as if you are standing on top of another world and you have access to it, and you can peer down and hopefully it will suck you into this other experience. There would be this visceral effect, vertiginous at times, using movement and hopefully cinematic trickery.

The Maraya Project, whose name is the Arabic word *m'raya* "ايارم", 'for "mirror", reflection' or 'mirage', takes precisely this experience as its conceptual premise. Numerous research photographs taken between 2007 and 2011 in Vancouver and Dubai, all in/along/near False Creek and

12. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1972), William Weaver, trans, Harcourt, New York, 1974, p 53

13. Trevor Boddy, 'False Creek, Dubai', *BC Business*, September 2006, pp 70–81

the Dubai Marina, are displayed as diptychs juxtaposing both sites, acting 'as a mirror for publics in both cities to see themselves and their built environments reflected through the lens of contemporary art'. Given the scenario, the mirror metaphor seems unavoidable. References abound, from the ancient lakefront city of Valdrada in Italo Calvino's 1972 classic *Invisible Cities* to Hubert Damisch's 1996 *Skyline: The Narcissistic City* on European visions of new world cities, and Julia Kristeva's 1991 *Strangers to Ourselves* essay on the foreigners within ourselves.[14]

In 2011, Maraya's largest exhibition, comprising nearly all the different project configurations to date, was fittingly held at the Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (Centre A), located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Even before the 2010 Winter Olympics, real-estate developers were moving into the area to build upscale condos, mixed-use residential, retail and educational projects (for example, SFU Woodwards) and shake up the 'social mix', devastatingly transforming, even replacing, what was known as the poorest urban neighbourhood in Canada to one that ironically reinforces Vancouver's reputation as one of the most unaffordable cities in the world.[15] Most obviously and spectacularly meriting the title, however, are the high-density glass and steel residential towers in nearby False Creek, stretching from Chinatown to the West End: the built form and aesthetic of the new Vancouverism, Canada's own twenty-first-century answer to the outdated Manhattanism.

Maximizing long-view corridors, this downtown tower-podium model first appeared in the late 1980s along the entire north shore of Vancouver's False Creek, the site of the former Expo 86. The inlet of tidal flats was originally the site of Sun'ahk or Snauq, an Aboriginal village established around 1839 and occupied by the Musqueam, the Tsleil Waututh and the Squamish. False Creek Flats, as it was called, was designated reserve lands (1870–1913) when it was expropriated under the 1876 Indian Act and other legislation for public works (logging, timber harvesting, wood-burning sawmilling and armoury). In the early 1880s, Vancouver became an 'instant city' invented as part of a lucrative land development scheme by the Canadian Pacific Railway.[16] By the 1980s, False Creek was 'the polluted heart of the city's manufacturing and wood processing industries', with side products being abysmally dense fog and smog.[17] All that changed quite drastically following Expo 86 and Hong Kong industrialist Li Ka-shing's subsequent purchase of the 240 acres for redevelopment according to the 1991 Downtown Plan, which called for massive re-zoning to transform the area into a residential zone. At present, real-estate development of the Southeast False Creek, home to the 2010 Olympics Athletes' Village, is already under way, doubling previous highest downtown prices for 'condos in a resort town'.[18] As Glen Lowry and Eugene McCann write: 'the built form and the changing identity of Vancouver were conditioned by flows of capital, people, architecture, and urban design knowledge from Asia'.[19] Today, this sustainable, compact city architecture, itself an import from Hong Kong, which in turn is borrowed from Waikiki resort architecture, dominates what was once territory used by Coast Salish peoples, and is now a highly visible and lucrative node of Hong Kong investment.

As the urban legend goes, this mega urban planning model so impressed Emirati developer Mohamed Alabbar – Chairman of Emaar

14. Italo Calvino, Le città invisibili, Einaudi, Turin, 1972, translated into English by William Feaver: see *Invisible Cities*, Harcourt, New York, 1974, Hubert Damisch, *Skyline: The Narcissistic City*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California; Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Leon S Roudiez, trans, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991

15. Harsha Walia and Dave Diewert, 'Moving On Up: Gentrification in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside', *rabble.ca*, 24 February 2012, http://rabble.ca/news/2012/02/moving-gentrification-vancouvers-downtown-eastside, accessed 17 June 2013

16. Boddy, 'New Urbanism', op cit, p 15

17. Glen Lowry and Eugene McCann, 'Asia in the Mix: Urban Form and Global Mobilities – Hong Kong, Vancouver, Dubai', in Roy and Ong, eds, op cit, p 182

18. Trevor Boddy, 'Downtown's Last Resort', *Canadian Architect*, 1 August 2006, http://www.canadianarchitect.com/news/downtown-s-last-resort/1000205806/, accessed 17 June 2013

19. Lowry and McCann, op cit, p 183

Properties (one of the largest development corporations in the world) and also Director General of Economic Development for the government of Dubai – that a decision was made to invest in its replication. Under construction since 2003, the 650-acre (fifty-three-million-square-foot) Dubai Marina quickly became an exemplar of sustainable luxury city planning that would be adopted throughout the Persian Gulf, India, Pakistan and North America. Upon completion, the two-mile (three-kilometre) 'very False Creek' canal city claims to be the world's largest artificial marina in the world and is amongst the world's largest master-planned waterfront developments.

Given the limited supply of its offshore oil, Dubai escaped poverty by a Singaporean strategy of becoming the key commercial, financial and recreational hub of the Gulf that survived the 2008 economic downturn. Foreign investments take place in free-trade zones, in English, in US dollars and with Western-based commercial systems, while elite transnational real-estate developers literally 'plug in ... cities within cities', making Dubai, as urban theorist Mike Davis puts it, 'the new global icon of imagineered urbanism' with, according to Heiko Schmid, 'countless entertainment, shopping, and artificial worlds'.[20] Like Concord Pacific Place in Vancouver, which was 'developed and marketed as a high-tech communications hub, where apartments would be linked into a global "networked society" though fiber-optics communications',[21] the Dubai Marina is located adjacent to Dubai Media City (the tax-free regional hub for the media industry and organizations, including news agencies, publishing, online media, advertising, production and broadcast facilities) and Dubai Internet City (a designated free economic zone and global information technology park, with firms such as Microsoft, IBM, HP, Nokia and Siemens, which offers one hundred per cent foreign ownership, one hundred per cent exemption from taxes, one hundred per cent repatriation of assets and profits, and effortless visa issuance procedures). Non-oil activities such as finance and tourism (based mainly on shopping: the Mall of Arabia, due to open in the theme park Dubailand in 2013, will be the largest in the world), along with real-estate development, now make up most of the desert emirate's gross national product in the form of Brand Dubai. If 'Vancouver is to the Overseas Chinese exactly as Miami is to Latin Americans',[22] Brand Dubai makes Dubai the 'Miami of the Persian Gulf',[23] or, in Boddy's terms, a leading 'Portal City' in the Middle East.

THE CITY AS PORTAL

Vancouver and Dubai are among an elite group of what Boddy calls 'Portal Cities', a new global phenomenon that began with Hong Kong and continued with Miami and Panama City. These cities are nothing like each other in terms of local experiences of colonialism, threats to empire, and ongoing conflictual relationships between indigenous peoples, settler societies and land. Yet, contrary to Heideggerian de-distancing, there is an oblivious disconnect between the historical imperial worlding of these 'New Worlds' and the equally optimistic digital and economical connectedness that is touted today.[24] Stacked with 'world condos' primarily owned by investment speculators, according to

20. Mike Davis, 'Fear and Money in Dubai', *New Left Review*, vol 41, September–October 2006, pp 50–51; and Heiko Schmid, *Economy of Fascination: Dubai and Las Vegas as Themed Urban Landscapes*, Schweizerbart Science Publishers, Stuttgart, 2009

21. Lowry and McCann, op cit, p 183

22. Boddy, 'New Urbanism', op cit, p 18

23. Davis, op cit, p 55. As language is the mirror of discourse, this essay has also dabbled in some rather contentious discursive frames used to describe the place identity of Vancouver and Dubai: there are no fewer than twenty rubrics and sound bites for Dubai in Davis's essay alone, some of which I have been unable to resist sprinkling for effect here and there.

24. Rob Wilson, 'Afterworld: Worlding as Future Tactic', in Wilson and Christopher Lee Connery, eds, *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization*, North Atlantic, Berkeley, California, 2007, p 212

Boddy, Portal Cities are 'service sector cities that verge on resorts, enclaves of connection and distraction, breaking all the rules of conventional city-building'; 'more than ports, airports or even data-ports', Portal Cities are 'a new type of metropolitan condition'.[25] In information and communications technology (ICT) parlance, portals refer to user-driven access to information resources and services. Data are provided based on authentication of the user's identity keyed in at login, enabling customized self-selection and content portalling.

An initial configuration of the Maraya Project combined both these meanings by proposing to embed interactive portals or, more precisely, portholes, along the pavement of the twinned promenades to engage pedestrians from the respective cities. Using wireless networking and video-streaming technology to create real-time links between the two seawall walkways, residents and tourists alike might 'communicate' with each other.

> When people gather at two or more locations simultaneously, the portal senses their presence and comes to life, streaming live video feeds that allow those in Dubai to see and interact with their counterparts in Vancouver, and vice versa.[26]

The 'live chat' aspect soon gave way to staggered and delayed playback interspersed by pre-recorded sequences, and the grounded portholes were swapped in favour of Zero Halliburton suitcases with customized interiors. This enabled a more reflective experience as well as mobile practice, the artists being interested in investigating a politics of co-location, to be distinguished from a situation of co-presence, and the process of

Maraya Halliburton Case, 2011, Zero Halliburton case, 21 x 17 x 7.5 in, with LCD superbright monitor, Mac Mini, aluminum, Lexan, router, sensors, Art Dubai, Centre A Gallery, photo: Maraya

25. Trevor Boddy, 'Very False Creek: From Rainforest to Arabian Desert, Vancouver Exports its Urban Expertise', *Vancouver Sun*, 7 February 2004; and Trevor Boddy, 'Portal Cities: The Architecture and Urbanism of Emerging Global Gateways – Miami, Hong Kong, Vancouver, Dubai and Panama', lecture, The Natural City Conference, University of Toronto, Ontario, 23– 24 June 2004

26. Glen Lowry and Henry Tsang, Interactive Futures 2009 conference website, http://if2009.ecuad.ca/tsang.htm, accessed 17 June 2013

what they call 'neighbourliness', through both built and virtual spaces. To a certain point, notions of *meetingness* and the cult of 'intimate relationships at-a-distance', of mobile lives, explored by Anthony Elliott and John Urry come into play.[27] Retrofitted with a special high-lumen monitor, computer, sensor and router, the Maraya Halliburton prototype cases (two to date) are taken for walks along the two promenades and placed in locations where the artists have placed their own surveillance cameras overhead. Switching between pre-recorded footage and a live video stream of passers-by who stop to peer into the cases, they 'function as portable portals into another part of the city or another part of the world' – from studio to the Vancouver Museum to as far as Art Dubai 2012 and other stopovers.

Halliburton cases have been familiar since 1938 as the durable aluminum carry-all case, rugged enough to withstand travel in pick-up trucks through oil fields from Oklahoma to Texas and later on in Hollywood, as the ideal container for transporting anything from weapons of mass destruction or top-secret documents to cash or, arguably, more appreciated items. Although no longer manufacturing suitcases, having sold its consumer division in 2006 to ACE Co Ltd in Osaka and Tokyo, Halliburton is also one of the world's largest oilfield services companies, with dual headquarters in Houston and Dubai and sometimes-controversial major projects in the Middle East. This corporate alignment in which the Maraya Halliburton suitcases are invested intensifies the project's interrogation into ways in which the global network of portal cities constitutes 'a milieu through which Asian economic and cultural capital flows and proliferates during the 1980s and 1990s on into the present'.[28] The repurposed suitcases in a sense, then, provide a counterpoint to an emergent transnational urban geography, in the case of Maraya's ground-transported portals, literally from below. Yet what is mirrored in the diegesis of the worlds evoked?

MIRRORED CITIES: COMPLICATED SAMENESS

Perhaps conveying the most immediate sense of the visually striking similarities between the two waterfront sites are Maraya's different wall and floor projections. Shown at Centre A, the looped video footage, shot from a boat that followed the False Creek seawall and the Marina Walk in Dubai three years apart (2008 and 2011), is simultaneously presented using a split-screen format and computer program that switches between the two periods and locations that make up the twelve possible combinations.

> The rhythm of the switching is based on a musical structure that evokes the melancholy of these controlled and restrictive environments: 12 bar blues in 12/8 time at 160 bpms, repeating after 8 verses.

The quick sequencing of the surface images, sometimes twinning the same city, reinforces the likeness of the two sites, speaking at once to the interchangeability of generic cities as well as its ultimate impossibility.

Certainly, other similarities between the two cities make for easy comparison. Both cities are tourist-oriented port cities as much as portal

27. Anthony Elliott and John Urry, *Mobile Lives: Self, Excess and Nature*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010, pp 46, 85

28. Glen Lowry, Eugene McCann and Henry Tsang, 'Asia in the Mix: Urban Mobilities from Hong Kong to Dubai, via Vancouver', in *Inter-Asian Connections Conference Proceedings*, Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, 2008, p 55

Untitled (Single), 2011, c-prints, diptych, 24 x 36 in, Centre A Gallery, Vancouver, photo: Maraya

cities: Vancouver is Canada's gateway city to Asia; Dubai is UAE's global gateway city. Adjacent to the Dubai Marina, west of the Persian Gulf shore, the Jebel Ali port, near the Palm Islands, was the world's largest man-made harbour and container port when it was completed in 1976. The Port of Vancouver is Canada's largest port by tonnage and the fourth largest in North America. Both are postcolonial cities of the British Empire, as is the urban form's progenitor, Hong Kong. Vancouver's history of indigenous/settler relations has unfolded in the former British colony of British Columbia which became, in 1870, a province of Canada, itself formed as a country and dominion within the British Empire in 1867 and gaining political independence with the Constitution Act as recently as 1982. Under the protection of the UK (against the Ottoman Empire) by the 'Exclusive Agreement' of 1892, Dubai gained independence from the UK in 1971. Up to the present day, all local land in the small emirate is controlled by the Sheikhs.

Dubai now has bachelor societies of men, the vast majority from Pakistan and India, who come to work in the 'City of Gold', joining thousands of indentured foreign workers who provide vital services in capacities ranging from labourers (a quarter of the labour force is employed by the building boom), maintenance staff, secretaries, sales clerks and bus drivers to junior and mid-level managers, lawyers, doctors and

accountants. Roughly seventy-one per cent of the population, this indentured invisible labour force, runs the hotels, the civil services and the utilities and commercial businesses to support the binge mobile lifestyles of the elite; but as immigrant workers, they cannot become citizens, have no trade unions or few rights to speak of, and ninety-nine per cent of them are immediately deportable.[29] They live alone in corporate housing or shared apartments in poorer neighbourhoods such as Satwa or Deira. In comparison, many of their more affluent British and American colleagues live in upscale, gated communities, such as Dubai Marina, with their families. Vancouver's Chinatown bachelor societies, made up mostly of Chinese men, some fifteen thousand of whom came to 'Gold Mountain' (*gum san*) in the early 1900s, undertook the dangerous work of building the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 2006, the Canadian government offered an apology for the head tax levied on Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1923 and the subsequent restriction on Chinese immigration until 1947, acknowledging the contribution made by Chinese labourers to that most important of nation-building enterprises, the railway.

More recently, Vancouver is seen to be Asianized (via 'monster houses' and the 'Hongcouver' high-rise boom) while Dubai (more specifically, the Dubai Marina neighbourhood) is being Vancouverized. In its heyday (just several years ago really), Dubai was the world's largest building site, and largely recovered from the 2008 global financial crisis, with the current speculative condo boom sustained by foreign investors made possible primarily because of legal changes in 2001 that allowed non-Emiratis to buy property on long-term leased land and to issue condo buyers 'right of residence'. Just as 'Pacific Place and its surrounding environs became a base for a growing class of wealthy, footloose, cosmopolitan, "flexible citizens" and "pied-à-terre" subjects', speculative investors and Canadian non-residents representing 'Vancouver's only new source of rental housing in a decade', sales at Dubai Marina are not primarily aimed at UAE citizens, but semi-permanent, well-heeled international business residents.[30] The real-estate market, already fuelled by tourism, was further bolstered when the Emirate of Dubai granted foreigners permission to purchase property in 2001. The following year, Dubai announced a 'freehold revolution', unique in the region, that allows foreigners to buy luxury property outright and not just as a ninety-nine-year lease. Two of Dubai's sister cities, as it were, are Hong Kong and Vancouver.

In sum, a comparative description of similarities can seem endless. However, differential mobilities (systematic differences in the terrain creating uneven forms of access and exclusionary striations of power) are acutely shored up in the antagonistic perspectives generated by the Maraya Project, crucially raising questions concerning different publics, social and gendered strata, and specificities of former colonial settler histories vis-à-vis ex-protectorate autonomy.

VERTICAL GATED COMMUNITIES

At times the mirror increases a thing's value, at times denies it. Not everything that seems valuable above the mirror maintains its force when mirrored. The twin cities are not equal, because nothing that exists or happens in Valdrada is symmetrical.[31]

29. 'There is no system of permanent residency or naturalized citizenship. All migrants remain migrants, even if born in Dubai.' Chad Haines, 'Landscapes of Hope and Desire in Dubai', in Ong and Roy, eds, op cit, p 175. Slavery was abolished in the Emirates in 1963.

30. Lowry and McCann, op cit, p 183

31. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, op cit, p 54

In Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, readers come to realize that all the accounts of different places as told to Kublai Khan by Marco Polo are actually simply different perspectives on his own city of Venice. While Maraya subtly insists Vancouver and Dubai may appear to be alike but are far from similar or without discrepancy on many levels, the research-creation is not immune to projection. The diegetic worlds (for they are constructed, to all intents and purposes) invoked through Maraya's photographs and videos, then, are neither in Vancouver nor in Dubai but partially in both, establishing not one or two but a *series* of city images that are constantly in contestation and fundamental for reworlding. As the artists put it, 'Maraya invites multiple publics into the many visual and textual discourses that shapes our sense of here in all its uncanny similarities and its disarmingly blatant differences to a there'. Images from Vancouver, for example, reiterate the Asian miracle on the one hand, and, on the other, a multicultural array of cultural differences bifurcated by 'Super, Natural BC' as a 'white man's province' and instances of indigeneity and 'Asiancy' (Roy Miki's term).[32] In this, Lowry and McCann make a case in point through Henry Tsang's 1997 public art installation on the False Creek walkway, which spells its title *Welcome to the Land of Light* in English and Chinook Jargon (*Chinuk Wawa*), the latter the pidgin, trader, hybrid language of English, French and Nootkan, the lingua franca of the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century.[33]

Critics like Boddy have been lamenting False Creek's 'fate as a dormitory suburb' ('dedowntownification' – condos replacing downtown jobs) with its 'downtown future as a "resort", not a true metropolis', and its 'vertical gated communities' as 'shaping a Penticton [referring to retirement homes in the Okanagan Valley] with point towers'.[34] Vancouver's condo-building craze, which has forced out its middle class, in fact awaits collapse as its property market overheats ('Canada now has the highest stock of unsold condos since the early 1990s').[35] Like Narcissus, the city risks becoming victim of a vanity fuelled by its own reflected image. Maraya would insist that by holding a mirror to Dubai, Vancouver might just gain an altered perspective and a greater understanding of itself before matters get worse.

A serious consequence of the luxury real-estate development industry has been the questionable stewardship of Vancouver's most important public space, False Creek. Public spaces in cities operate on many different registers but in the main they are urban entertainment spaces in the wider sense, appreciated by tourists and local residents alike. However, entertainment consumption patterns logically vary depending on who actually constitutes these socio-cultural groups. Vancouver's seawall, which runs all around the peninsula, with easy park, beach and waterfront access, has long been renowned for being one hundred per cent accessible to the public. Yet, already the section between Marinaside Crescent and Beach neighbourhoods 'has become a parking lot for 1,280 seldom-used yachts', transforming North False Creek, at least, 'into one big marina' and possibly locking its 'future as a resort for the wealthy and the aged', one much less welcoming of different echelons of society.[36]

By contrast, the seven-kilometre-long pedestrian Dubai Marina Walk, with cafés and restaurants along the waterfront and dozens of luxury yachts and fancy speedboats moored up alongside, save for one publicly accessible path with views to Palm Jumeirah archipelago, is undeniably

32. Roy Miki, 'Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing', in Miki, *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing*, Mercury, Toronto, 1998

33. Lowry and McCann, op cit, pp 185–189

34. Boddy, 'Downtown's Last Resort', op cit

35. Bertrand Marotte, Jacqueline Nelson and Richard Blackwell, '"Canadian Condo Craze" gets Crazier', *Globe and Mail*, 18 June 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/housing/canadian-condo-craze-gets-crazier/article4105605/, accessed 17 June 2013. The upshot of this cautionary tale for a province that 'has become a passive state run by and for real-estate developers' (Boddy calls this 'developocracy' in his article 'Vision Deficit' cited below) is the salvaging of Vancouverism's more positive attributes, 'never-before seen combinations of building functions, laminates of social classes, fusions of Asian and European notions of city-building, and so on' in the current attention to the Hybrid City. Trevor Boddy, 'Mega and Micro: Canada, Inventions at the Extremes', in Luis Fernández-Galiano, ed, *Atlas: Architectures of the 21st Century – America*, Fundación BBVA, Bilbao, Spain, 2010, pp 14–23; and Trevor Boddy, 'Vision Deficit', *Vancouver Review*, no 20, Winter 2009–2010, p 12–13.

36. Boddy, 'Downtown's Last Resort', op cit

one vast gated community reserved for upper-class migrants from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, India, Pakistan, Iran and China, as well as providing Westerners with second homes. With hotel landscapes and private development taking up more and more space, in many other areas the categorically 'invisible majority' labour class are excluded from access to the beaches and the sea.

POSTCOLONIAL URBANISM: STRUCTURES OF INVISIBILITY

Luxury vertical cities that combine commercial, residential and transportation infrastructure within one mega complex create the impossibility of escaping from surveillance. In Dubai, state control and surveillance 'in the workplace and in places of leisure is extensive and varied', overlapping with 'corporate interests and power'; in the malls and workplaces, 'extensive regimes of surveillance are implemented' and the mechanisms of self-policing and self-censorship extend spaces of control 'even where there is no overt mechanism of direct surveillance'.[37] For migrants on work visas, fear over deportation is reason enough.

Oscillating between breathtaking views that tower over the streets below and banal shots of quotidian acts on the ground (enacting Michel de Certeau's tactic of walking in the city to counter the Panoramic City that persuades from the top down[38]), the images of seawall activity

37. Haines, op cit, p 175

38. Ibid, p 171; Elliott and Urry, op cit, p 123. See also Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1984, p 93.

Untitled (Single), 2011, c-prints, diptych, 24 x 36 in, Centre A Gallery, Vancouver, photo: Maraya

captured by Maraya simultaneously signal privilege and restrictive access and the absence of the majority of the population upon whose labour the luxury lifestyles of the privileged depend. In contrast to ground-up views, images shot from numerous rooftops and balconies overlooking the two promenades, some from penthouse suites, afford an aerial view of the city from the perspective of possibly an urban planner, master-planning architect, developer or even domestic worker. According to the Maraya artists: 'These are views that few who inhabit the city can experience, and given how many of these condominiums are seldom occupied, magnify both the fullness and emptiness of these towers.'

Suffice to say, there are very limited signs of social mobility in terms of the range of classes who frequent the area depicted by the images captured by the Maraya Project in Dubai. In this place of transit, 'geographic mobility is directly linked to social mobility'. Although people employed in 'servicing ... are also often on the move from other places, in a mobile and mobilizing capitalism', little is seen of the women, the majority of whom are from South and Southeast Asia. Maraya captures few images of the female domestic servants, who are most visible on the streets and Marina Walk of Dubai: their bodies 'commodified in and through moving about and being moved about' in what Elliott and Urry call 'binge mobility' (sixty to sixty-five per cent of Dubai's population are men, making the streets predominantly a place of men).[39] Notably, what is cleared, or cleaned, from view are brown-skinned men who, hired within their home countries through employment contractors, have their passports held by the companies they work for, unable to travel outside the UAE without permission. At most, then, Maraya's images of traffic along Dubai's promenade shore up the misleading reports of the multiethnic cosmopolitanism touted by the tourism industry, exposing instead the highly segregated circumstances of the site in question. What are seen are representatives of the native population of UAE nationals, constituting the fifteen per cent leisure class, and pampered mercenaries, including more than one hundred thousand British expatriates. Brief glimpses are picked up of white cotton *dishdashas* (long-sleeved, ankle-length robes), headscarves and shopping bags.

SEEING WHAT IS NOT THERE: MUSLIMNESS

The only way to make sense of Dubai is to never forget that it isn't real. It's a fable, a fairy tale, like The Arabian Nights. More correctly, it's a cautionary tale.[40]

The moniker 'Vancouver al-Arabe' may conjure up images of Dubai as a Middle East enclave already charged with identity politics of difference and Islamophobia in a post-9/11 and Arab Spring world, with Iran and Afghanistan just across the Persian Gulf. However, Dubai is clearly unabashed at having made great efforts to downplay Islam, even in the structuring of 'the physical landscape', its skyline of superlative high-rises containing not 'a single reference to Arab or Muslim architectural design'.[41] According to Chad Haines, one of Brand Dubai's 'major components is a veiling of its Muslimness'; moreover, the UAE regime of 'modular liberties' is based on the rigorous spatial segregation of econ-

39. Ibid, p 123

40. AA Gill, 'Dubai on Empty', *Vanity Fair*, April 2011, http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2011/04/dubai-201104, accessed 17 June 2013

41. Haines, op cit, pp 170–171

omic functions and ethnically circumscribed social classes, religious orientations and nationality class: 'Brand Dubai ... is not just about selling Dubai, but constructing segregated landscapes and asserting power through the control over labor/migration.'[42]

This 'veiling' of Muslimness and careful segregation that help to brand Dubai's image as modern rather than Muslim further underscore the structures of invisibility that Maraya's visual archive cannot capture. As Roy reminds us: 'To read Dubai as Development, as Reason, is to confront the aspirations and limits of postcolonial worldiness'; Brand Dubai's ambiguity is 'one where the city occupies an unstable position in different worlding frames: Asia, Arab, success, speculation, excess and crisis'.[43] One of Maraya's most daunting challenges was to represent the city from below while looking at it from above. How, for example, is the representation of a transnationally imported model of relevance to the Pakistani and Indian subaltern communities in Vancouver and Dubai? Could Vancouver and Dubai be Asian cities, as Roy puts it, that were once hysterically 'depicted as unreasonable megacities, concentrations of poverty and misery, now being reframed as unreasonably hyper-development, concentrations of urban megalomania'?[44] That the slick exhibitions by Maraya seem to back the characterization of a world space entirely at the mercy of reactionary market norms, accompanied by a rhetoric of excess with which the project struggles to contend, may not be a fundamental aspect of the project in the context of this discussion. For this would be to ignore the Maraya organizers' numerous attempts beyond the visual to test and provide openings for new publics and creative praxis as both exchange and counterpoint to the uncritical worlding of Asian cities such as their own. Thus, Maraya's displays, with their 'cheerily promotional character ... [where] [e]ndless sunshine glints off glass towers and green water, white yachts gleam in spotless marinas, individuals stroll at their leisure', as one art critic put it, undeniably 'could be mistaken for a real-estate devel-

42. Ibid

43. Roy, op cit, p 323

44. Ibid, p 321

Maraya online platform (screenshot), 2012, flash-based application, www.marayaprojects.com, photo: Maraya

oper's display at a condo pre-sale centre'.[45] It equally must be argued that to fully grasp the project's scope and the issue of the lack of minority representation, the extensive public programmes organized around the theoretical project and integral to it – such as the plethora of critical reflections in the form of transactions, exchanges, instances, interventions and actions of the nearly hundred students (eighty per cent from Vancouver, twenty per cent from Dubai) that in all cases manifested as contributions to the 'path making' visualization applet within Maraya's online platform – must be taken into account. Only in this way can one of Maraya's key objectives, to 'make visible the efforts that go into making a transnational city', be carried through. Vermont-based artist Matthew Whitney, for example, performed a walk in May 2012 entirely using his Reflection Carrier, a scraggly log with mirrors attached to each end, to guide his movements. The device forces strain, focus, a filtering of periphery and multiple perspectives. Similarly, the urban environment's composition of glass and steel buildings and sidewalks, waterfront walkways, painted streets and crosswalks, also forces upon the body a mediated, subjective environment through which it must navigate. M Simon Levin led an informative talk along the False Creek waterfront as part of the Artists Walking Home public art programme, engaging participants with this site using a slew of inventive tactics. Jean Routhier led a Soundwalk workshop, capturing the ambient sound environment from different levels of built forms in False Creek and its environs.

In its doppelgänger context, Dubai is seeing the landfill construction of numerous artificial islands in the Gulf modelled after a world map, with twenty-seven or so different local identities, ranging from Italy to Thailand. As 'the world puts the map on Dubai', where does Vancouver fit in?[46] The Maraya Project fundamentally questions the ability of global remix culture to allow for a re-examination of worlding as a concept and even makes room for its influence as a transformative and radical force in contemporary art practice.

CONCLUSION

Our online platform allows every viewer and contributor the ability to personalize (remix) each glance, each step, each paver, creating paired images that together delineate a metaphorical seawall that spans the globe. Within these user-generated articulations, images and their parts are repurposed, connections made, commonalities revealed. These are the true moments and spots of exchange. These spots glow and flicker, suggesting the simultaneous coming together of people, places and points of public-ness.

This article has attempted to trace 'models-in-circulation', the material and discursive practices of inter-referencing within the Vancouver–Hong Kong–Dubai nexus, to discuss the Maraya Project as a worlding practice that would enable an alternative perspective on transnational urbanism in the inter-Asia context. Drawing from art historian Whitney Davis, it has attempted to track 'series, the projected rules that govern them, and their unavoidable devolutions and unintended consequences in differently governed series, in ungoverned series, and in new series', in the hope of

45. Robin Laurence, 'Dubai Mirrors Vancouver in Maraya', *The Georgia Straight*, 6 December 2011, http://www.straight.com/arts/dubai-mirrors-vancouver-maraya, accessed 17 June 2013. Collaborations with UAE-based universities further catalyzed dialogue and international exchange about culture, education and contemporary art.

46. Davis, op cit, p 358

learning something about 'what the worlds are'; for Davis, 'reworlding can occur whenever and wherever series devolve, just as a world is consolidated whenever a series smoothly replicates'.[47] I have argued that the Maraya Project has the potential to shift the purview 'from the personal experience of being formed under racialized regimes of difference, to an interrogation of how one's place in the world and the properties of that world itself are formed' but without losing sight of the making within these spaces that render difference altogether indeterminable.[48]

Until 2017, the Maraya Project's experimental online platform, which contains thousands of images chronicling the construction of both waterfront communities from 2007–2011, invites publics to engage with the large scope of Maraya artworks, research documents and discussions and 'to build digital paths and connections between publics both here (wherever you are) and there (presumably Dubai)' through online participation. Time will tell if this experimental collective art-making online can actually bring about 'true moments and spots of exchange'.

47. Whitney Davis, 'World Series: The Unruly Orders of World Art History', *Third Text*, vol 25, no 5, September 2011, pp 500–501

48. Mark Crinson, '"Fragments of Collapsing Space": Postcolonial Theory and Contemporary Art', in Amelia Jones, ed, *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Massachusetts, 2006, pp 459–460

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Fonds de recherché sur la societé et la culture du Québec. I want to thank the artists and the anonymous reader for their generous contributions and insightful comments towards this text.

ESSAY

Power Redesigned Is Power Redistributed—Spatial Justice and LAGI's Human-scale Energy Productions

Glen Lowry

> Cultural subjects "play themselves" for multiple audiences: the police, state agencies, generations, ancestors, the tribe, animals, and a personal God. Subjectivity is plural and not simply a matter of turning toward power, as in Althusser's famous fable (1972). It can also involve turning away, falling silent, keeping secrets, using more than one name, being different in changing situations. — James Clifford[1]

RE:BUILDING—A NEW PASTORAL / GOATS ON THE ROOF

This may be apocryphal, but I'd like to share a story told to me by an architect friend. The narrative recalls a senior colleague's plan for persuading clients to accept new, contentious design elements. Faced with convincing clients to sign off on a budget overrun or other sticky issue, the architect advised the team to put "goats on the roof"—i.e., to add a few goats to the drawings or model. Apparently, the out-of-the-box goats had the power to captivate the client, and in so doing, they would allow other, more controversial elements of the proposed building to go unnoticed. I like this example because it is an architectural nod to the pastoral that provides more than a cynical bait and switch. Instead, the goats help to create a context for innovative design solutions by recalling other forms of social interaction or economic production. Imagining the goats enables the client to think about different forms of the built environment and to redraw, even momentarily, the line between the building and green spaces.

Borrowing from Welsh cultural historian Raymond Williams's study, *The Country and the City* (1973), we might say that the architect's ability to blur the line between rural and urban points to a deeper engagement with interconnected spheres of interest, or what Marxists refer to as modes of production. As Williams argues, the landscapes popularized in nineteenth-century literature and poetry provided a functional, ideological difference that effectively situated rural Britain outside of an emergent industrialization. Setting the country apart from the expanding, centralized powers of *the city*, these idealized representations of nature elided shifting industrial relations by glossing over growing social and economic disparities separating urban and rural development. Read against this longer history of labor relations, industrialization, and hegemonic representations of *the country*, the figurative goats gesture toward recognition of the interdependence of urban and rural spaces in a dominant mode of production. A poetic reminder of a disappearing commons and the vital link between cities and vast tracts of rural land, the goats provide a symbolic representation of the dependence of industrial centers on the rural territories that are systemically subsumed by industrial development and our avaricious appetite for water, electricity, and fossil fuels.

I'm reminded of these goats when I look at the exquisite renderings that now support the LAGI design briefs for Dubai, Copenhagen, New York, and Santa Monica. The idyllic renderings that play on beautiful sweeps of light and breeze transport viewers to vital spaces of possibility that are both a turning toward and away from the dominant power. In this other world, the blazing sun of the Arabian desert, the desolate winds of a capped New York landfill, the ambiguous haze over a decommissioned shipyard

along the Copenhagen waterfront, or crashing waves on the beaches of Santa Monica are returned to beneficence. In these images, the sun, wind, and water are transformed into friendly elements. In many ways, this imaginary drive is a crucial function of the artists, architects, and designers brought together by LAGI. Their collective strength rests with an ability to see these formative elements as positive agents in a new ordering of urban life. Returning to the basic features of the Santa Monica shoreline, these creative designs take viewers beyond futuristic visions of micropower plants. As the best public art plans do, these proposals resonate with new and different approaches to a range of immediate and contemporary social concerns.

Leafing through these proposals, we begin to desire not only the artworks but perhaps more importantly, the world they envision. This is the true power of art. Vibrant engines, the capacity of these proposed works outstrips their ability to deliver essential amenities (power and water). They engender bold changes to everyday life—to the way we live and how we want to live. Goats on the roof. A chicken in every backyard. Community-owned power plants. These are the objects and practices needed to help redefine the spaces we live in. Positive responses to global challenges, they also provide the means with which to reestablish local control over our cities and countries. They provide a visual means for rethinking power, and offer a rich databank of solutions that require us to regrid power relations, redesigning the production, consumption, and—implicitly—the distribution of electricity on a scale and in a manner that effectively replaces the massive and now floundering infrastructures of twentieth-century development.

RESCALING: CULTURAL SUBJECTS, SUBJECTS OF CULTURE

The monumental, seemingly monolithic enterprises of post-war modernity crumble and disintegrate all around us; once stirring images of industry and power fade before our eyes. The architectural wonders—the freeways and power plants, the universities and courthouses, stock exchanges and factories—that made possible twentieth-century growth and prosperity, across North America and throughout the so-called developed world, falter under the strain of twenty-first-century imperatives. Nevertheless, as the proposals gathered here in LAGI 2016 suggest, all is not lost.

New times require new cultural imaginaries—new power, new power plants, new dreams of progress, but also new technologies and new social relations. Compare these evocative proposals to the monuments of hydroelectric power. Think, for example, of the Sir Adam Beck and Robert Moses Power Stations on the banks of the Niagara River, the Hoover Dam across the Colorado, James Bay Hydroelectric, and the Robert Bourassa Power Station; think of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in Japan or the Bruce Nuclear Generating Station on Lake Huron; or think of the structures of late oil—the tar sands of the Athabasca outside Fort McMurray, oil fields of the Persian Gulf, rigs offshore in the Gulf of Mexico or the North Atlantic, massive tankers, and snaking transcontinental pipelines. The manageable scope and renovated scale of the LAGI projects collected here provide a stark contrast to the brutality of twentieth-century industrialism, which were based on massive expropriations of land, often from Indigenous peoples, and ever-present threats of ecological devastation. The narrative subjects embedded or depicted in the following pages are human figures who might be seen to perform across a variety of local sites.

Circulating beyond the exigencies of a specific design brief or single set of circumstances, Santa Monica, the plans and proposal presented in this book become part of an archive or databank that provide images of renovated civic engagements and human-scale urban developments. Continuing to echo the language of James Clifford, we might say that the subjects imagined or represented here turn toward power, or more directly toward public involvement in power generation and sustainable approaches to carbon neutrality, but they also turn away from overdetermined narratives of control and hegemonic dominance. Art, design, architecture, engineering, research, or innovation—the selected projects respond to and perform different identities as they "play themselves" across a range of social situations, political contexts, and discursive formations. These site-specific interventions invite us to make connections that extend beyond the local; they invite readers to see what is possible in Santa Monica as concrete examples of what is needed elsewhere. Bearing more than one name, they enter multiple fields of force and invite us to follow their lead across faraway places and very different geopolitical locations. They encourage us to wonder what new forms of power (and power generation) might look like in Kitimat, Vancouver, Fort McMurray, Attawapiskat, Doha—the list grows. They invite us to want to reestablish meaningful connections with other people and places with whom energy is shared. Or put in another way, the proposals gathered here encourage us to think about energy and citizenship across new networks that are capable of rebalancing and countering past inequities and disparities.

RE:GENERATING—SPATIAL PRACTICE

To outline how we might read LAGI's utopic vision/s within a more overtly political context, one that is rooted in questions of social justice and equitable access to resources, I'd like to reframe this discussion in the context of contemporary urban theory. Arguably, artworks that focus on energy generation are a priori political, and as such, can be seen to be embedded in a representational confluence that connects art, philosophy, science, government, and the economy. Public art that self-consciously represents or imagines new forms of power tends to invite thinking about political efficacy and our collective access to material resources—including fuel, energy, and social power. But how do we begin to read these works? Beyond saying that they provide politically provocative imagery, how do we begin to plug them into dynamic debates about power, the environment, and social equity? Peak oil, global warming, and other related forms of environmental crises tend to highlight concerns around government control over power (energy) as a material resource (renewable or not). However, they also suggest opportunities for new social formations, based on new thinking and new possibilities for transformative and transformational social engagement. To work through what I see as the inherently political nature of the LAGI platform, I want to suggest that the associated geographies of power that define the unique sites taken up by LAGI 2010 through LAGI 2016 are of central importance to our interpretation or assessment of proposed interventions.

Situating LAGI in relation to the "spatial turn" in cultural criticism allows us to consider the geographic elements of these proposals and the vast networks of geopolitical power in which they are situated. Instead of focusing attention on the natural or environmental aspects of each LAGI site in isolation, I want to outline a spatial approach that is based on an assumption that any successful attempt to harness or reflect energy—solar, wind, tidal—requires integration with the power grid. As such, the most provocative proposals offer a point of access to thinking about the specific power relations that define the spatial or geographic aspect of the site. It is beyond the scope of my short text to explore the geopolitical contingencies of Santa Monica or Southern California, let alone compare them to those at play in the United Arab Emirates, Denmark, or New York. Nevertheless, I want to provide a thumbnail sketch of how we might approach LAGI's strategic objective, its drive "to advance the successful implementation of sustainable design solutions by integrating art and interdisciplinary creative processes into the conception of renewable energy infrastructure"[2], through the lens of social power and justice.

Too often global warming is discussed as a temporal concern. The media presents historical causes for increasingly apparent climate changes (for example, the overconsumption of cheap/subsidized oil, overdevelopment, and globalization), or pundits offer timelines to help viewers understand the effects (past) and to underline the growing seriousness of the problem (future). The effect of these narratives is to disempower the public; the forces and impacts are too great for individuals to comprehend, let alone resist. When specific geographical locations or regions enter discussion (for example, dwindling polar ice caps, disappearing rain forests, and growing deserts), they tend to be elsewhere—places with little direct connection with everyday life in the powerful metropolitan centers. More to the point these distant sites come to be subsumed in larger historical narratives. These remote spaces and the ecological devastations they are asked to represent are put forward as objective proof that older generations have made terrible mistakes that younger generations will need to respond to or live with. There is a clear and persuasive logic to these arguments and the growing intergenerational chasm they foment. However, when the rain forests, deserts, and polar ice caps are located within dominant linear histories, their immediate relevance is denied; they are spaced out or distanced from local political concerns. Dominant narratives downplay our connections with ecological turmoil by systemically banishing the geography of environmental devastation from thinking about the here and now—an increasingly urban here and now.

In response, instead of separating these sites from urban centers, contemporary cultural theorists have sought to reassert the primacy of spatial thinking, arguing for a reintegration of space, alongside time, in social analysis. Proponents of this "spatial turn" draw on the works of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said, each of whom sought in different ways and across distinct disciplinary configurations to reestablish the subject of geography in social critique. We might also cite influential social geographers David Harvey and Edward Soja, among others, who build on the work of Lefebvre (and to a lesser extent Foucault and Said) to

explore North American urban contexts. In this critical context, the urban focus of the LAGI projects represented in this publication becomes important and provides a means of articulating the project within a larger discussion of social justice as a regional or territorial concern. Borrowing from this work, I seek to position LAGI 2016 as a means of thinking through connections between environmentally engaged art and what Soja (2010) terms *spatial justice*. Highlighting LAGI as spatial practice allows us to consider some of the more radical possibilities that come to light in its growing archive of images and ideals.

At the core of this line of reasoning is the work of Lefebvre, whose 1974 publication *The Production of Space* proffers a radical break from the historicism of postwar social thought, Marxist in particular.[3] This break hinges on the contention that space should be understood as social process. Lefebvre argues that space is neither a stage nor an empty container for historical events to take place. Space, he contends, is better thought of as a social dynamic, the means for producing and reproducing social relation. Controlling space, crucial to the growth of industrial capitalism, can therefore be seen a locus of control and of emancipation.

Highlighting the critical importance of lived experience, Lefebvre's theory of social space moves beyond a conventional binary that pits materialist perceptions of space or descriptive analyses against idealist conceptions of space—images and ideal representation. It offers instead an understanding of spatial consciousness that rests on a three-part social production that brings together scientific description, philosophical speculation, and embodied engagement or everyday life. Countering the dehumanizing drive of scientific rationalism and the Enlightenment, Lefebvre sought to describe a multiscalar geography power. Against the objectifying drive of European expansion, which sought to assert economic, political, and philosophical control over massive expanses of the planet—through imperial expansion and the emergent power of modern industrial nations—Lefebvre provides a blueprint for redefining the inter- or cross-disciplinary connections among philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, geographers, artists, and designers.

Lefebvre's work offers an excellent means for understanding the political efficacy of public art and engagement. The micro-power plants planned and designed for LAGI 2016 might thus be understood as more than fanciful visions. They are more than simply creative responses to what might happen at a particular site along the Santa Monica waterfront. Representing the Santa Monica shoreline as a social space or site for public arts, they embed its natural splendors in complex geopolitical processes and suggest ways of redefining and reorganizing social relations. The public that is depicted, or in some cases implied, by the works collected here are already involved in reliving power relations and our immediate access to public energy. They experience electricity and water as renewable resources and basic human rights. As responses to an emergent shift in larger modes of production (postindustrial, global, carbon-neutral), these proposals have already begun to reimagine and remake sustainable energy and social relations.

RE:DISTRIBUTION—TOWARD SPATIAL JUSTICE

Taking up the work of Lefebvre, linking the concept of social space directly to questions of social justice, cultural geographer Edward Soja's *Seeking Spatial Justice* develops the idea of spatial justice.[4] Soja argues that discussions of universal justice, social justice, and distributive justice tend to hinge on a dialectic focused around the historical struggles of a social group (class) and time-based injustice. With *spatial justice*, he seeks to introduce "space," or more particularly the concerns around space as social process, into the equation. Revisiting John Rawls's idea of distributive justice, Soja explores examples in which spatial issues impact, or even lead to injustice. Access to justice (as well as the geographic basis of injustice) needs to be understood in relation to theory-praxis dialectic, or so he contends. Drawing on examples from Los Angeles, including the bus riders strike and the Rodney King protests, Soja suggests that justice is shared or meted out through space and time, and that communities are empowered or they are marginalized by their geographic location:

> Human spatiality in all its forms and expressions is socially produced. We make our geographies, for good or bad, just or unjust, in much the same way it can be said that we make our histories, under conditions not of our own choosing but in real-world context already shaped by sociospatial process in the past and the enveloping historically and socially constituted geographies of the present. This profoundly displaces the idea of space merely as external environment or container, a naturalized or neutral stage for life's seemingly time-driven social drama. (p. 103)

His work invites us to think about what types of space-driven drama we might want or need to radically change the course of history and the apparent impacts of global warming.

For Soja, spatial justice involves a radical shift in thinking about cities. Discussing the work of the Marxist geographer Harvey's work around urban struggle, as well as the writings of Lefebvre, Soja rearticulates "the right to the city" as basic citizenship rights. He argues that human rights and civic rights, which are linked conceptually with notions of the citizen as city-dweller, need to be expanded to comprise larger interconnected geographies of power. The creation and administration of things in space and time, or better the distribution of goods and services, are spatially determined and need to be reasserted in our discussion of justice, including social and environmental justice. This is at the heart of Soja's argument. It is also, I suggest, crucial to how we make sense of both LAGI 2016 and the larger network of projects LAGI has initiated. The place-based nature of the proposals challenge us to think about how access to the power grid—flows of electricity and water, like ideas and political power—are spatial. The focus of these projects is geographic, about how this place at this time might be reimagined and reused. Providing a rationale by which a community, or even a few houses, might move off the larger power grid and onto different networks—networks charged and running through contemporary art and culture, I might add—the proposed projects remind us of the often-taken-for-granted systems of power, the megaprojects and vast resources developments that are required to maintain so-called modern conveniences. The disparity in scale between LAGI projects and the megaindustries of a state or national economy give us pause to think about how our power consumption might be distributed and better redistributed.

LAGI Art+Energy Camp, 2015, Pittsburgh, PA
Image courtesy of the Land Art Generator Initiative

"CHANGING SITUATIONS"

Collapsing expressways, underfunded public school systems, and abandoned social services—bold dreams of universal public health and well-being—too often give way to overmediated stories of despair and reckless abandon. The genius of the too "long neoliberal moment" (Derksen)[5] has been to use bleak images of inevitable futures to justify growing private interests and entrenched divisions between those who have too much and those who have too little. However, amid crumbling urban infrastructures, above the din of populist hysteria, there are alternatives, or so the artists, architects, engineers, and designers involved in this publication contend. Their work provides bold views of how the grid might be meticulously dismantled and repurposed. While bureaucratic systems fail to meet local needs and national economies obsess with the fleeting, capricious interests of increasingly mobile, detached elites, there is growing frustration not only among the working poor and disenfranchised, but also among the socially conscious, critically engaged artists and theorists. Older divisions of culture and labor, separations of utility from function, differences linking here and elsewhere flicker and disappear; the brittle old stock rips and burns before falling to the floor of a derelict projection room.

Tentative, pixelated to begin with, the new, shared imagery that LAGI taps into vies for attention on our streets, across abandoned lots, and along the harbor. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, new images take shape. This is how I read the meticulous drawings rendered here. With each iteration (or page turn), the display refreshes, resolution and definition filling in. Dynamic range, dimensionality and image depth become more realistic. As I think about what is needed and possible in Santa Monica, I think of LAGI's impressive and growing network of interconnected projects. My mind travels to other cities, following Robert and Elizabeth home to work with youth in the inner city of Pittsburgh or Maasai women in Kenya. Tracking closer to home, I think about how similar projects might function among Aboriginal communities. I see these relatively small-scale public gestures intertwining themselves with the longer lines of power—the power lines of a massive North American grid, and in so doing, they demonstrate new approaches—energy and support—for others who are willing to think through and combat structural inequalities. Distinct alongside stories about the rising tide of ecological devastation and social unrest, the generous and generative potentials that open out of this 2016 version of LAGI provide much-needed counterpoints to the increasingly bleak but also probable futures of peak oil and global warming. Placed alongside the reports on forced migrations, police brutality, and genocide, these urban interventions propose creative, critical re-evaluations of everyday life and its significance in positive political change.

Taken as both platform and process, LAGI 2016 offers a vital lexicon or rich visual repository with which to imagine alternatives to what sometimes feels like the overwhelming lethargy of public debate. The innovative contributions featured here represent a

[1] James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 47.

[2] See http://landartgenerator.org

[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). Originally published 1974.

[4] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

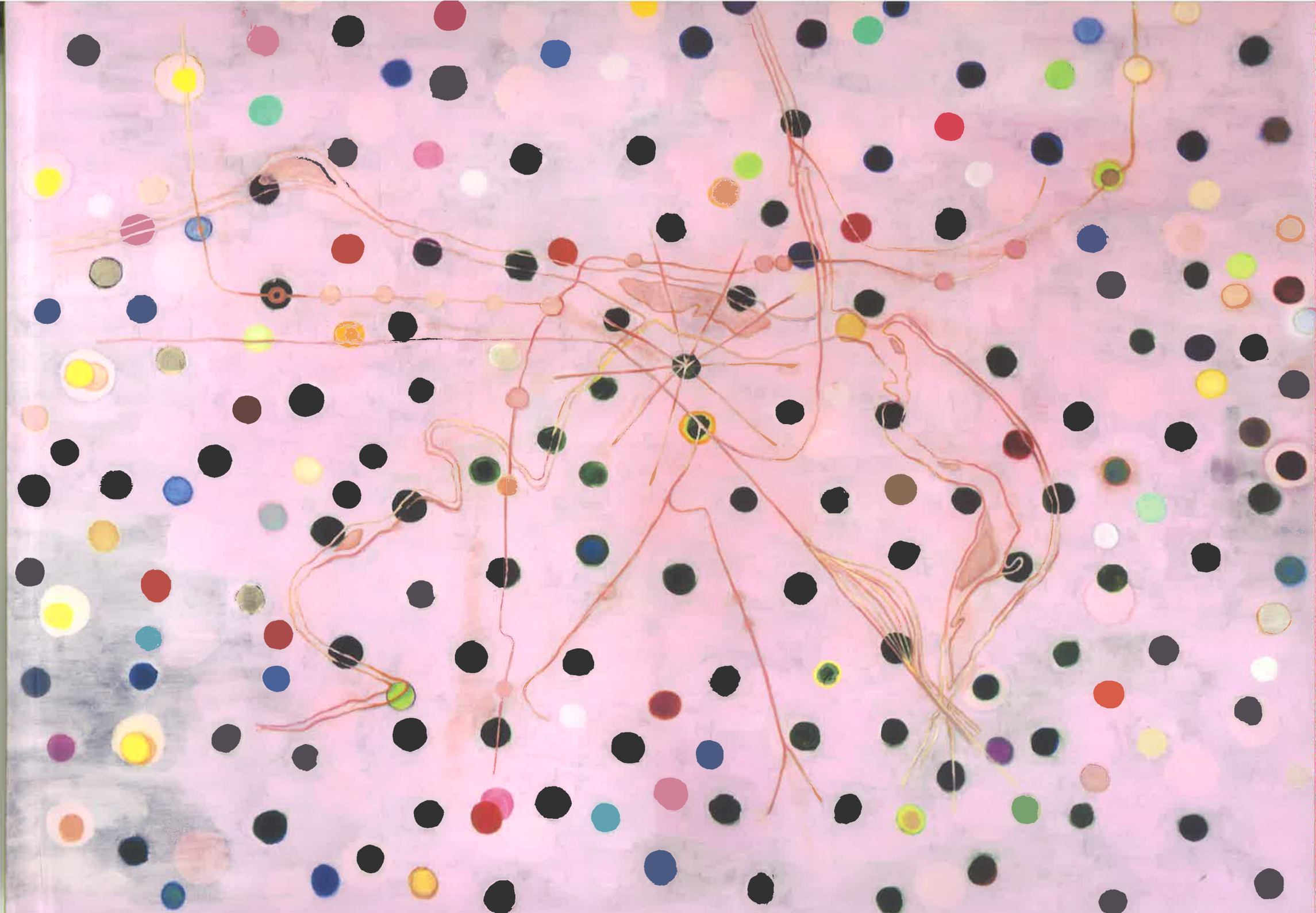
[5] Jeff Derksen, "Poetry and the Long Neoliberal Moment," *West Coast LINE* 51 40.3 (2006), 4–11.

powerful grounding of the (super)structural changes that define the first decades of the twenty-first century as a crucial moment of global change and development. When I look at the new and creative approaches to power generation collected here, I am struck by growing counternarratives, which contest outmoded civic (dis)engagements; the conceptual genius of these proposals, which provoke and evoke positive urban development, is their ability to challenge dominant discourses of scarcity and neglect.

The scale and public focus of these proposed artworks provide a necessary frame or foil with which to view the crumbling monuments of state-funded energy, the built environment, and policies and practices involved in the mass production and consumption of energy. To the extent that they invite us to imagine micropower plants coming online alongside older power plants, these urban designs provide vital counterpoints to the megawatt stations of Niagara, James Bay, or the Bruce, and to the built environment of twentieth-century power and the social, political, and ecological developments these massive power stations made possible. Taken together, these proposals for public artworks provide a rich portfolio of ideas that rearticulate links across contemporary art, urban architecture, and sustainable development. These works foreground important questions about the relationship between social justice and creative practice. And they do this at a human scale and in a manner that resituates everyday life within a renovated notion of the public sphere and reflects the changing situations of place.

Elizabeth Monoian and Robert Ferry of LAGI working with Olorgesailie Maasai Women Artisans of Kenya and Idia'Dega, 2016

Photograph by Tereneh Mosley



LANDON MACKENZIE NERVOUS CENTRE

NERVOUS CENTRES: LANDON MACKENZIE'S PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS, 1993–2012

GLEN LOWRY

Kinetic, performative, cybernetic, time based—this is not the vocabulary one usually brings to a discussion about painting. Yet, each of these terms points to a crucial aspect of Landon Mackenzie's engagement with the medium and helps to describe her unique commitment to exploring the formal and conceptual limits of contemporary art. Her paintings and works on paper push against the fixity of materials—oil paint, synthetic polymer (acrylic), ink, watercolour, paper, linen, canvas, and wood—and against a deceptively simple typology of abstract figures—circles, ovoids, squares, polyhedrons, and crisscrossing lines that reference (or seem to reference) nets, ladders, bridges, leaves, stars, and cell matter. As we move through this exhibition, viewing works selected from different periods in her development over the past nineteen years, we witness the range of Mackenzie's creative projects and practices, at the heart of which is an unflinching ability to use painting and drawing to excite both motion and emotion, deep thought and feeling. In particular, Mackenzie's large-scale paintings—we might also think of them as cinematic screens, maps, scores, platforms—possess the power to mobilize viewers. Her use of scale, together with an extraordinary deployment of colour and composition, imbue the work with a kinetic potential that drives our attention towards multiple points of entry into an ongoing flow of ideas, possibilities, places, and times.

Underwritten by the artist's characteristic desire to explore (Thom, 2000) and constantly re-evaluate the permeable boundaries connecting the work of art and its material context, the so-called "real world," the paintings collected here draw on five series, or bodies, of work. This work, spanning two decades of creative production, includes several pieces borrowed from the Vancouver Art Gallery, as well as others from the artist and other collectors. Together with a selection of smaller canvases that Mackenzie calls her suitcase paintings, and works on paper in ink and watercolour, this exhibition constitutes an impressive staging of Mackenzie's critical project.

The narrative of Mackenzie's artistic development—her education, research and teaching—invokes many of the key historical events and geographic trajectories that have come to define Canadian art's emergence over the past forty years. A descendant of a line of practicing painters that reaches back three generations, Mackenzie grew up in Toronto during the 1950s, and 1960s until she left for Halifax in 1972. Through her parents and family, she was exposed to people and ideas that helped define the influential Toronto art scene. Art writer Robin Laurence (2010) states,

> Mackenzie spent her childhood immersed in a world of images, abstraction and ideas. On occasion, the family's Toronto home was the site of lively parties, whose guest lists included writers, artists, dancers and thinkers who were redefining Canadian culture . . . a large, framed Town collage hung in the front hall alongside a Jock Macdonald watercolour, a wedding gift from the artist to her parents (p. 90).

Her artistic sensibilities were tuned to the burgeoning collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Jack Pollock, Isaacs, and Carman Lamana galleries, which were close to her home. Mackenzie had rare access to the artists and ideas about contemporary art that were instrumental in framing a nationalist discourse on Canadian art and culture and its relation to an emergent internationalism.

Leaving Toronto at seventeen to study at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), Mackenzie entered a very different space. At NSCAD, she found herself in the centre of an exciting dialogue regarding Conceptual Art. The school's youthful president, Garry Neill Kennedy, had established NSCAD as a hub for visiting luminaries from Europe and the US. Mackenzie and her schoolmates were exposed to the work and ideas of Vito Acconci,

Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Beuys, and Philip Glass, among others. The American concrete poet Emmett Williams taught Mackenzie's Foundation class and helped to shape her interest in the relationship between visual art and text. Her experience at NSCAD was crucial to her unique approach to art making. It is therefore important to recognize that within the ethos of Conceptual Art and in the context of her NSCAD experience, painting was contested as a critical artistic enterprise and had come to be seen as symptomatic of bourgeois culture. Painting, Mackenzie was told, *was dead*. So Mackenzie began her studio training in life drawing and printmaking, studying the rigorous and meticulous methods of lithography, etching, aquatint, drypoint, and serigraphy in the NSCAD Printshop. Having avoided studying painting during her undergraduate and graduate education, she turned to paint in 1979 in the context of group studios, first on Montréal's Peel Street and then Clark Street. After a decade of working almost entirely in black and white in her prints and drawings, Mackenzie's exploration of painting entered her into a new relationship with colour, one that has stuck. In many ways, her decision to work with painting has continued to position her work as a counterpoint to larger conceptualist conversations around form and abstraction, especially in a Canadian context.

While completing the Master of Fine Arts program at Concordia University, Mackenzie spent an entire year working on one 17' x 17' etching plate, unveiling systematized and abstract image after image. This type of methodological drive and respect for creative processes continue to shape Mackenzie's daily practice. Under the supervision of Guido Molinari and Irene Whittome, she found a respect for her ideas and behaviour from these two senior artists, and their challenges were key to her mature work. In 1981, three years after leaving the Bourget Building of the MFA Studios, and two years after she began painting, two of her figurative "Lost River" series works were chosen for the 3rd Biennale of Painting in Quebéc; Mackenzie won first prize in the blind jury process. This placed Mackenzie's work on a national stage, connecting it with what was being called "New Image Painting." She began exhibiting with Galerie France Morin, who also showed the work of international artists such as Daniel Burin, Hans Hacke, and local legend Betty Goodwin. From her early success with the "Lost River" series, Mackenzie would go on to create a career of national and international significance.

In 1986, following a few years where she worked as a young teacher at Concordia and divided her studio between Montréal and Toronto, with a stint at the University of Alberta, Mackenzie took a position at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design (now Emily Carr University). This gave her a new context and a new city from which to develop her work. It also broadened her geographic focus and sphere of reference, changing her approach to both the country and the spatial dynamic underlying it. With her Emily Carr colleagues and fellow artists, Mackenzie became part of Vancouver's meteoric rise during the 1990s as a key city in the production of contemporary art. The list of artists who have worked in the Third Avenue building that houses her studio reads like a recent issue of *Canadian Art*. Converted from an art college teaching space twenty-five years ago, Mackenzie, Ian Wallace, and Terrance Johnson helped transform this studio building into a cornerstone of Vancouver production. Along with long-term studio mates Al McWilliams, Lyse Lemieux, Marcia Pitch, and Elspeth Pratt, others have come and gone. Over the years, Ian Wallace, Ben Reeves, Stephen Shearer, Renee Van Halm, Ron Terada, Elizabeth McIntosh, Allyson Clay, Arabella Campbell, Etienne Zack, Damian Moppett, and others have made this an ideal studio for Mackenzie to think about and create paintings. This space continues to be extremely important to Mackenzie; as she suggests, the patterns of work and friendships developed over the years in the Third Avenue warehouse are inseparable from the evolution of her working methods.

While she also keeps a studio in PEI, living in Vancouver and teaching at Emily Carr provides Mackenzie with access to current dialogues about contemporary practices that are vital to her work. Surrounded by other artists, established and emerging, Mackenzie remains tuned to the rare moments of brilliance that emerge through a process of shuttling among the various facets of her busy life—teaching, working in the studio, and balancing the pressures of raising three children (with Donald MacPherson). Taking a cue from her artwork, we might think of the various orbits of existence being dependent on each other. As we consider huge works like *Circle of Willis*, *World of Knots* and *Troubles*, *Sailscape*, or *Simulator-Neurostar*, our eye moves from one point of light/colour/activity to another in a manner reminiscent of movements across different planes of quotidian activity or points of focus: university classroom, studio, gallery.

Toronto, Halifax, Montréal, Vancouver—these cities are but nodes in Mackenzie's larger geography. Looking back over her oeuvre, it is apparent that Mackenzie's paintings and drawings offer a protracted dialogue with geography—rural and urban. Her work carefully considers the problems inherent in representing different types of spaces—physical and psychological, local and global, terrestrial and celestial. From the mythopoeic early dark and layered "Lost River" series to the feminist and nationalist critique of *Canadian Shield* and *Target* produced in Vancouver, from the archival research of her prairie landscapes to the conceptual drawings of the Paris Metro, Mackenzie draws on a plethora of source materials: imagery and text borrowed from hand-drawn maps, travelogues, letters, and conversational snippets as well as subway diagrams, MRI scans, and satellite imaging. Following the emergent topography of her paintings and drawings, it is clear that Mackenzie has used her interest in landscapes (places and paintings of places) to develop a nuanced study of mapping, map making, or what we might now call way finding. Tending not to paint plein air (except on road trips and during residencies), preferring to work in the studio under artificial light, eschewing the use of photographs, Mackenzie resists the objective conceits of conventional landscape painting. Speaking of her own creative process, Mackenzie emphasizes the importance of keeping her own intuitive/inductive approach separate from her analytical critique. Unlike other painters who work from the photograph or some strong sense of a work's final shape, Mackenzie enters her paintings with only a feeling for potential directions. As the artist returns to the canvas again and again, she paints one day's work into or over the next; various levels of meaning, intention, reference recede into a visual palimpsest—they remain only partially obscured. Painting, repainting, unpainting, moving from acrylic to oil, from one canvas to another, she works her paintings until she "begins to recognize them," achieving a particular balance, often one that pushes the limits of visual memory or reference but which resists falling over into chaos.

During the 1990s, Mackenzie's research took her to important geographically remote sites such as the Cumberland Delta, near an old inland Hudson's Bay post (Cumberland House) on the Saskatchewan and Manitoba border, as well as to distant map rooms and archives, such as those of the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge, UK. From this research, she produced paintings investigating the geographies and histories of the Canadian West and North. Her "Trilogy," made up of "Saskatchewan Paintings," "Tracking Athabasca," and "Houbart's Hope," numbers about twenty paintings in all from 1993 to 2005, and all utilizing similar methodologies and dimensions (7'6" x 10'3"), the paintings recall the historic networks of European exploration and trade, pathways that had at one time been instrumental to the colonial project. Mackenzie's engagement with Prairies and North constitutes an effort to reorient or recalibrate our maps towards the watersheds of the Arctic Ocean and Hudson's Bay and to rethink the continued impact of communication networks that can be traced back hundreds if not thousands of years (trails, river ways, telegraph lines, early satellites, etc.) in new contexts.

In a monograph on Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle Valley, art historian Robert Stacey describes Mackenzie's method of working with "Saskatchewan maps, place names, and lines of communication" as a means of linking "past and present, content and form, place and time, tradition and innovation" (Stacey, 2002, p. 132). Naming Mackenzie's *Snowfall on Telegraph Trail Over the Blue Night of the Runway* (1997, Private Collection) as an important way of thinking about the region, Stacey provides excerpts from an exchange in which Mackenzie describes her creative process and use of historical detail. She writes,

> I couldn't resist "re-immerging" a faint trace of the line from the Qu'Appelle so your viewers can—*if they know their geography*—find it, even though the idea of lost organic animal and later human paths (which follow the logic of the natural terrain, water and wood) are hidden by snow and finally (an attempted erasure) with the Dominion Survey (imperial) Grid (132–133; emphasis added).

Working against "an attempted erasure," the colonial past and new nation's "imperial" grid—one form of violence subsumed by another—Mackenzie's prairie landscapes present different "beaten paths"—narratives of movement and mobility—that have been imperfectly erased from the popular memory of our industrial nation. The river systems of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (as well as those of northern Ontario, Quebéc, Newfoundland, and the territories) provide access to the continent's most valued resources (furs, minerals, and fossil fuels) from the north. Shifting focus away from Canada's east-west expansion, the paintings comprising the "Saskatchewan Paintings," "Tracking Athabasca," and "Houbart's Hope" series recall a relation to Canadian geography that contests the Laurentian theory and confounds the primacy of east-west expansion. Presenting images of interrupted development, the waves of exploration and settlement that predate

Confederation, these works remind us that the St. Lawrence is but one point of entry. Examining other trajectories and other historical networks, Mackenzie's paintings of the 1990s and early 2000s perform an important decentring of a national imaginary, which both recentres so-called hinterlands and challenges a dominant paradigm. Four important examples from this period are on generous loan from the Vancouver Art Gallery in this exhibition. Typical of Mackenzie's elaborate titles, *Interior Lowlands (Still the Restless Whispers Never Leave Me)* and *Gabriel's Crossing to Humboldt* are from "Saskatchewan Paintings." *Space Station*; *Falls Thought to be the Longest in the Known World So Far* and *Short Lines; Network of Stoppages* are from "Tracking Athabasca."

In Mackenzie's paintings and drawings from this period, form and concept converge in a manner that foregrounds the politics of representation. When Mackenzie suggests that she works from an "interest in the intersecting territories of history, maps, waterways, and dark and light space as *nervous systems*" (as cited in Wylie, 2011, 51; emphasis added), she gestures towards the fraught social processes involved in representing space. Her concept of "nervous systems" provides a useful way into thinking about our entanglement with other systems of exchange, knowledge, belief, or culture. Invoking this interest in the land or particular landscape, Mackenzie allows her formal strategies, the interplay between dark and light colours, to be read through the history of land-based struggles: colonialism, settlement, and environmental globalization. Her work is "not only concerned with making visible what has been obscured and unrecognized, but also in exploring the processes through which erasure takes place" (McCallum & Radtke, 2002, p. 9). As Katherine Harmon (2009) argues in *The Map as Art*, Mackenzie's "frequent use of obscured, painted-over text in these paintings emphasizes how records and maps both reveal and conceal history" (69). And as McCallum and Radtke suggest, when Mackenzie "situate[s] herself within the generally masculine tradition of large oil paintings" (9), she challenges male privilege and dominance. Her reference through titles to figures such as Josiah Houbart in her *Houbart's Hope*; *Tracing One Warm Line* (2001–2004, Musee d'Art Contemporain,) or Gabriel Dumont in *Gabriel's Crossing to Humboldt* undoes historical narratives by placing these men within the flow of time. Houbart, an obscure seventeenth-century naval pilot, surveyed Hudson's Bay with Captain Thomas Button in the hope of locating a Northwest Passage to the Orient. Despite the expedition's failure, the marker of a river inlet on the Bay as "Houbart's Hope" remained on maps for almost a century. Mackenzie's allusion to Gabriel Dumont in *Gabriel's Crossing to Humboldt* comes from an old survey map she found in the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan and focuses on Dumont the ferryman, a link that predates his controversial association with Louis Riel and the 1869–70 Red River Rebellion or the 1885 North West Conflict. The figure also alludes to the mythical angel Gabriel, a reference that is reinforced by Mackenzie's placement of the dark crop circles in the form of quatrefoil windows. Her slightly irreverent references to these men suggest something of the hubris of individual agency. Faced with temporality of the map and the ebb and flow of historical enterprise, the question of geography as cultural memory is seen as fleeting or whimsical—possibly tragic, depending on one's point of view.

The duality of landscape as signified and signifier, as place and painting, provides an important hinge in Mackenzie's work. Together, her paintings and drawings help to transform the meaning of "'landscape' from noun to verb" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 1). Centering human agency in the production of object knowledge or fact, Mackenzie's artworks enter into an important dialogue with science and technology. As one curator suggests, the map provides a key concept in Mackenzie's artworks because "it is with this confluence of ideas and imagery that the combination of abstraction and representation in her work begins and resides" (Wylie, 2011, 21). In the context of hyper-digitization and the miniaturization or flattening of images to fit the palm-held device or desk screen, Mackenzie's large-scale paintings function as a reminder of serious limitations of new media. Through computers and mobile devices, we have unprecedented access to visual databanks and information about almost anything. However, Mackenzie's work reminds us that we are missing other types of knowledge/information that are not available on screen; even when we view her works in high-quality reproductions (as in this catalogue), we miss crucial elements of the work.

The artist's choice of materials and subject matter are strongly linked to her interest in the liminal space between abstraction and representation, which we might rephrase in terms of a tension between the painted surface and illusions of visual depth. For example, what does it mean to read that Mackenzie paints her large Saskatchewan works on linen? Intellectually, we might make something of the fact that linen is manufactured from flax, and as such, the material form provides a direct reference to the social and economic history of the Prairies. But how do we understand the aesthetic differences at play in the

work? More to the point, what do we miss when we lose access to the texture of the gesso and the layers of oil paint or synthetic polymers? Her works also resist the purity of abstraction and surface—her titles and chosen imagery suggest an important external reference. The material object is of primary importance to the way Mackenzie works, but the painted object exists always in relation to other material objects, spaces, and time. For her, the painting is itself a site, a platform, a stage, and a screen—a landscape or a cosmos in its own right.

Early in her career, Mackenzie sets the terms of her creative project by wondering, "How could anyone make a landscape painting again?" This question led her into a long engagement with historical and contemporary landscape art and contradictory complexities inherent in visual representation. Her paintings continue to find new ways to trouble the visual technologies neutralized or naturalized by the dominant visual traditions: map making, landscape painting, medical diagrams, MRI scans, or images from space. Faced with the spectacular visual and intellectual energy unleashed in her large canvases, there is a desire to turn her initial question back on itself. We are encouraged to ask, "How can one paint anything but landscapes?" Taken at scale, the surface imagery and brush strokes and dribbles of the painted canvas form an immediate topography that reflects and refracts the larger social practices organizing or delimiting space. Mackenzie's virtuosic layering of pigment and different sources of artistic inspiration/intension accrues a geography of its own. The physical terrain of her paintings seems to orchestrate a perpetual movement between modes of detailed analysis and pleasurable contemplation—they draw us in and push us back. Direct approach gives way to oblique circumspection. As we shuffle between different vantage points and the various modes of appreciation they facilitate, it is as if Mackenzie's paintings choreograph the space around their installation. The gallery, studio, or wherever it is that we are lucky enough to experience the work, is activated through a kind of dance between viewer and canvas. Physically, we are drawn into a kinetic process that begins with the artist's tracking of ideas (research, travels, drawings, suitcase paintings), extends through her obsessive reworking of the canvas on the floor of her studio, and includes ongoing dialogue (with family, colleagues, and the finished and unfinished works). The spatial-temporal dynamic set in motion in Mackenzie's work is sprung by our embodied presence.

The power of her work to affect embodied viewing grows from Mackenzie's tendency to approach painting in medias res. Rather than acting as points of origin or absolute representations of an idea or object, her paintings mediate the flow of ideas. The stories reverberating through her work often begin before our arrival and carry on through the work after we leave it. By mixing text and image, Mackenzie has learned to infuse her painting with a highly discursive aspect. Although her recent works have moved away from the use of words, which were present in her early prints and "Trilogy," they continue to track movements of people and ideas through the repetition of "readable" gestures. Setting out a visual iconography of squares as pixels, ladders, sails, nets, lines of static, subway maps, fencing, and other recognizable tropes, she invites us to contemplate new types of visual relationships and data drawn from a range of social contexts that reach beyond the conventional purview of landscape paintings—a language of signs that nevertheless remains crucial to our conception of the natural world and the boundaries of human experience or existence.

Historically, European landscape painting and map making share a mutual reliance on Euclidian geometry, which tends to cast space as inert or external to human life. Through a drive for objective representations of places or landscapes, each has helped to perpetuate an idea of nature as the opposite to the social world, as that which remains outside culture. Mackenzie, to the contrary, works to foreground the subjective experience involved in landscape painting and to return to the human stories and experiences elided from the official maps. In her most recent paintings and drawings, she shifts this focus to urban sites and international networks (Paris, Berlin, the ash clouds of the Icelandic volcano that disrupted European air travel). No longer bound by a national imaginary, these recent works highlight Mackenzie's movement through and across interconnected urban spaces, collapsing distances between cities and countries. Works such as *Neurocity (Aqua Blue)* or *Pink Dot* look at spaces that are nodes in larger networks of mobility. *Pink Dot*, for example, centres on Calgary's original fort and the Atlantic Avenue Art Block and features references to the train tracks, tram lines, and river ways that pass through and around the Inglewood neighbourhood and link the space to other places and other times. Shifting attention onto these non-metropolitan sites, Mackenzie centres on local interests and tilts "the world" off axis. Figuratively, she invites viewers to ask what it means to begin mapping here, to describe a place without orienting to an outside grid or system of coordinates.

Stretched across the floor of her studio, Mackenzie's paintings come into being as spaces that the artist visits and traverses as she works. About halfway through the process, often after weeks, she stretches the linens on their frames and continues on the wall "to figure them out like puzzles" (Mackenzie interview, 2012). With time, they function as stages for creative performance and dialogue. Not simply the representation of places or things, these works are in and of themselves things; they are not about objective facts as much as they are social acts that become facts. Her large-scale works invite viewers to contemplate the intricate layering of entangled differences. As we move to consider the legible and the not-quite legible, the apparently flat surface of the painting gives way to a complex topography of its own. The here and now of our contemplation or viewing brings to light the considerable time and care that has gone into each work; in the process, the artist's layering of paint and stains reemerges as a temporality that engulfs and elongates the present.

Drawn from three series, "Neurocity," "The Structures," and "Neurostar," her most recent works examine Mackenzie's continued artistic development and the currency of contemporary art in a world obsessed with the ephemeral flow of low-resolution imagery and information overload. A testament to an artist's virtuosic command of scale, composition, drawing and colour, these works—and the space they animate—function as a platform for conversations about the structures of twenty-first century urban life. Building on her earlier bodies of work, these new works extend Mackenzie's considerable thinking about the social function of painting and conceptual art into the realm of cognitive science. Where the works from the 1990s and early 2000s come out of her interest in the colonial archive, the intricate and rhizomatic patterns that seem to characterize much of her most recent works, as in *Point of Entry* or *Simulator-Neurostar*, reflect Mackenzie's neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and human biology research. Overlaying the microscopic with the telescopic, or vice versa, these works find visual or conceptual corollaries for vast (global/celestial) networks in the human brain and body.

If, historically, Mackenzie works to challenge the representational strictures of empire or nation, the problem of imagining "the country," her most recent paintings and drawings might be seen as extending her practice by shifting focus onto the city and to movements between cities. Works such as *Neurocity* (2009–2010 in Montreal) or *(Spin) Otis and Ash*, which reference urban travel (subway maps and the ash cloud over Iceland), point to what urban geographers term a rescaling of the work across the global-local, as opposed to the national-regional of early nationalist paradigms. Inasmuch as her early work is informed by a desire to seek out distant contexts in which she might work with others and come up with alternative maps capable of speaking back to the colonial archive, this recent work is influenced by her travels between Vancouver and Paris, Berlin, Madrid, and Beijing and dialogues with an increasingly international art world.

This melding of the global and urban that is integral to Mackenzie's recent paintings and drawings has its basis in the blending of the micro systems (computer and communication technologies) and macro contexts (global positioning systems, world trade). Mackenzie talks about her large canvases being designed to counterbalance a proliferation of smaller screens. Her intention is that the larger paintings might decouple us from the fleeting, largely inconsequential stream of messages, the by-products of our so-called "advanced communication" age, by presenting an opportunity to slow down and reflect. Mackenzie's recurrent webs, ladders, balloons, filters, neural pathways, branches, leaves, and subway maps encourage viewers to look again, to focus and refocus, to make the leap to other works as well as other places and times. As we enter the push-pull vortex of Mackenzie's dynamic compositions, we the viewers move through an abstract topography that stretches beyond the edges of individual works, quantum leaping from one work to another at the limits of cognition, or proprioception. The bands of white lines covering the surface of *World of Knots and Troubles* is visually reminiscent of television static or interference; its pallet recalls the early days of television and the birth of the mass media age. Yet the shock of bright blue, yellow, pink, and red leap off the painting to connect with other works—*Rose Square*, *Wild Red*, or *Signal (Birthday Party)*.

Coda

To better contextualize this exhibition and to provide some insight into Landon Mackenzie's thinking about her own work in relation to great traditions of Western Art, I'd like to conclude by offering an anecdote. Last summer, when she learned I would be travelling to Madrid, Landon encouraged me to go see the "light Goyas, upstairs in the Prado," suggesting that I might find these works useful when thinking about the canvas I had seen in her studio recently. When I arrived at Madrid's renowned Prado, my first concern was finding my way through the throngs of tourists to the rooms she suggested. Making my way to the second floor, I wondered how Goya's paintings might be related to *(Spin) Otis and Ash* or *Neurocity (Aqua Blue)* or *Signal (Birthday Party)*—all recent works I had seen in the studio a few weeks earlier. What could Francisco de Goya's pictorialism have to do with Landon's large, supercharged abstracts and the unique cosmos each seemed to want to call into being?

I had seen Goya's work before and was aware of his ground-breaking "Los Desastres de la Guerra" (Disasters of War) and *The Third of May 1808*, and his "Pinturas Negra" (Black Paintings), which include *Saturn Devouring His Son*. But what could Goya have to offer as a way into the series of paintings I was writing about? Surely the social commentary explicit in the "Pentre Negra" prefigures the work of the battle photographs and arguably underwrites the social contract of twentieth-century photojournalism and its struggle with social realism, the other side of Mackenzie's project. Goya's ability to frame compelling social realism no doubt adds another layer to the complex debate around the efficacy of abstract painting. But this all seemed a bit farfetched or a bit highfalutin. Besides, the "lighter" works Landon wanted me to look at were cartoons for a series of commissioned tapestries. At first blush, they were hardly the stuff one would bring into a discussion of non-representational painting. I struggled to see what these soft-edged, bucolic scenes had to do with conversations she and I had been having.

Trusting Landon, I spent time with what she calls the "light Goyas" allowing myself to enjoy them on their own terms. Moving slowly and freely through this relatively empty corner of the Prado, examining the details, noticing how the works related to each other and to the rural imagery, it occurred to me that what was important had little to do with technical brilliance (of course these works are brilliant) or the unique perspective they bring to bear. Instead, I came to see that their power had to do with the way Goya was able to transform the room around the works. Allowing my attention to drift from the centre of the frame, away from the revelry and debauchery of the human actors, I became transfixed by the different elements of Goya's compositions that seemed to reach out into or across. As we see in Mackenzie's paintings, Goya's artworks do more than create the illusion of another external world. They blend other places and times with the here and now of the viewing—external and internal worlds collide. Following this uncanny power, I became mesmerized by Goya's dogs, the way their gaze reaches out of the frame and actively engages the viewer by flouting the boundaries between the figurative ideal and built environments. For example, in the lower right corner of Goya's *La Cometa*, a brown and white spaniel gazes directly out of the painting; oblivious to the actions of the other figures in the painting, he seems to be attuned to the viewer. He gazes past the illusionistic space of the painting, reminding us that none of it would be possible without the viewers—without our suspension of disbelief, without our engagement with the painting.

Linking back to Landon's interest in cities—the way her focus seems to have shifted from the remote valleys of the Mackenzie and Athabasca rivers to the glass and steel towers of Vancouver and Calgary, the undergrounds of Berlin and Paris, the lines across and between the proliferation of urban space—I began to see Goya's tapestry cartoons as blueprints for a contemporary art capable of transforming the viewer and the space of the viewing. As Goya's were blueprints for the flourishing nineteenth-century Madrid, which would become one of the great cities of Europe, so Mackenzie's paintings invite us to think about new cities, or better, new spaces resonant with the light and energy her works channel. I began to think of the way her paintings imagine urban interiors capable of reflecting social possibilities different than the relatively austere options passed down to us by history or the government. As time-based medium, which is another way Mackenzie describes them, her paintings are imbued with cinematic qualities—screen-sized canvas, theatrical performance, propensity for dialogue, dependence on artificial light, and commitment to live action—that record visual memories of a city not yet built, the cities we might hope to live in.

Works Cited

Harmon, Katharine (2009). Landon Mackenzie: politics of the land. *The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography.* New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 66–71.

Laurence, Robin (2010). The centre of the world; Landon Mackenzie and the lessons of experience. *Canadian Art,* Winter 2010/11, 90–95.

Lowry, Glen (2012). After Goya, long after: Landon Mackenzie's *Crossing Over, Why Cloud the Whites.* Exhibition Essay. Richmond Art Gallery. Richmond, BC.

Lowry, Glen (2012). Personal interview with Landon Mackenzie.

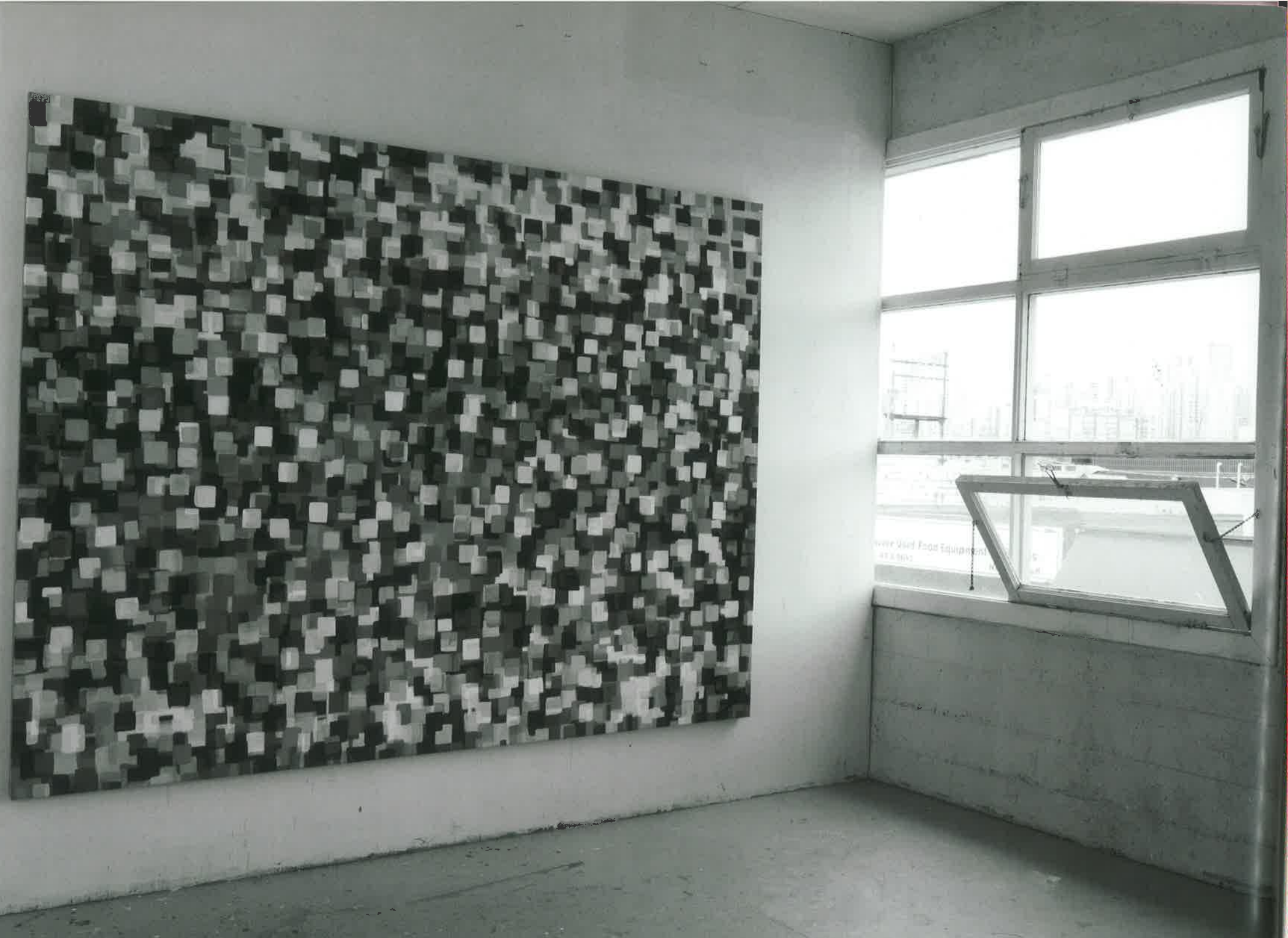
McCallum, Pamela and Radtke, Lorraine (2002). Breakthroughs, break-ins and break-ups: the impact of gender studies across the disciplines. *Resources For Feminist Research / Documentation Sur La Recherche Féministe, 29* (1–2), 9–20.

Mitchell, W.J.T. (2002). Preface. *Landscape and Power.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Stacey, Robert (2002). Who calls: a *Qu'Appelle quest. Qu'Appelle; Tale of Two Valleys.* Mendel Art Gallery. Saskatoon, SK.

Thom, Ian, M. (2000). Art BC, *Masterworks from British Columbia.* Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre.

Wylie, Liz (2011). *The Point Is: Pierre Coupey, Landon Mackenzie, Martin Pearce, Bernadette Phan, Bryan Ryley.* Exhibition Catalogue. Kelowna Art Gallery. Kelowna, BC.



Published on the occasion of the exhibition Landon Mackenzie: Nervous Centre,
September 7, 2012 to January 5, 2013.

Editor: Naomi Potter
Copy Editor: Rachel Small
Design: LPi Communications Group
Printing: Hemlock Printers Ltd., Burnaby, B.C. edition of 500

Published by Esker Foundation
444, 1011 – 9th Avenue S.E.
Calgary, AB, Canada T2G 0H7

Landon Mackenzie I Nervous Centre / Naomi Potter & Rhonda Barber, foreword; Dr. Glen Lowry, essay; Naomi Potter & Landon Mackenzie, interview.

Distributed in Canada by Esker Foundation

ISBN 978-0-9811951-2-4