

The background of the entire page is a painting. It depicts two hunters, one in a green jacket and orange hat, the other in a pink jacket and green hat, both holding shotguns and standing in a dense, golden-brown reed bed. The reeds are tall and thin, creating a textured, almost abstract pattern. In the foreground, several ducks are swimming in the water. One duck is in the lower left, another in the lower center, and a third in the lower right. The water is a deep blue, reflecting the sky and the reeds. In the background, a body of water stretches to a distant shoreline with some buildings and hills under a pale blue sky.

one sentence too many, one word too few

UBC MASTER OF FINE ARTS GRADUATE EXHIBITION

JULY 17 – AUGUST 16, 2020

Matthew Ballantyne
Alejandro A. Barbosa
Rosamunde Bordo

Sam Kinsley
Nazanin Oghanian
Jay Pahre

Contents

4 INTRODUCTION

For Alejandro, Jay, Matthew, Nazanin, Rosamunde and Sam
Marina Roy

8 MATTHEW BALLANTYNE

Artist as Birdwatcher
Nathan Ballantyne

12 ALEJANDRO A. BARBOSA

Alejandra Bonilla Restrepo

16 ROSAMUNDE BORDO

Partial Cento (for R.)
Sheryda Warrenner

20 SAM KINSLEY

The Onto-Encyclopedic Museum
Erin Silver

24 NAZANIN OGHANIAN

Remembering
Dónal O'Donoghue

28 JAY PAHRE

Michelle McGeough

32 List of Works

34 Acknowledgements

Introduction

For Alejandro, Jay, Matthew, Nazanin, Rosamunde and Sam

Marina Roy

In the present, awareness climbs all at once to the heights of being. Cool and bright, every moment enters its space; you are no different from its brightness, its coolness, its jubilation. Bad experiences give way to new opportunities. No history makes you old. The unkindnesses of yesterday compel you to nothing. In light of such a presence of spirit, the spell of reenactments is broken. Every conscious second eradicates what is hopelessly past and becomes the first second of an Other History.

– Peter Sloterdijk

What counts as history? How will we recount history? Who will count?

Who will repeat words spoken to us from on high? Who will keep the smaller fires burning?

Who will side with the victors, those carrying the sticks, hiding the risks and perpetuating tragedy? Who will respond to others' suffering? Who will give a shit?

When will the wave hit you against the side of the head?

Between the time it takes for the wave to crest and the time it takes to crash, a door yawns open and you fall into oblivion. In this reprieve, the inevitable we sense looming is stalled for a time – the truncated lives that enfold into sundry accretions, living matter turning over into primordial matter, gradually reconstituting, here and there reborn, as simple or complex forms, new chemical compositions, disintegrating again, all interpenetrating, an animate compost, adapting to the changing conditions – all emerging from what has passed before.

We have time to think of what it might mean to be part of “an Other History.”

In thinking through the possible paths, we learn to read what has been preserved against the grain, looking into the gaps, scratching around, trying to channel the energy hidden underground, overhead, in closets, museums, archives, caskets. To be attentive to all that is alive, dead and undead, to listen for the burbling of the unconscious, what is muffled by the constant din or the detritus dispersed throughout. We are ethically bound to what is latent, overlooked and silenced.

For some time now, we had been bracing ourselves, the prognosis increasingly dire; but we hadn't prepared for the implications of isolation. How long will this go on? Stuck in limbo, we wonder, what will the future look like? While some continue to take and take, others give unreservedly. Who, ultimately, will change the narrative? How will we build community in an age of looming disaster?

It's 2020. “Science fiction come to life” comes to mind. It unfolds in our minds, as it does in our day-to-day rituals. Our quiet readjustments and online resistances might feel futile, but it's all we have. We find ourselves stopping in our tracks, becoming increasingly heedful of the lives of others. We have been made to slow down – what many of us had dreamt of before this hit us – in the fight, not only to save lives, but for a more livable life. Halting, then redirecting the trade routes, thinking about where we come from, where we are standing, what we stand for, making space for those voices that might normally be drowned out by a privileged few who have taken up too much of it for far too long. We are taking the time to look around, read the signs in the landscape, across multiple news feeds, multiplying the forecasts, thinking of how things could be otherwise, given the choices, learning to communicate nonlinearly across time, to envision what the future might look like. We are

altering our way of knowing, communicating and creating new relationships, as much with humans as nonhumans. To make space for a future “brightness, ... coolness, ... jubilation,” through a process of reimagining.

To feel the urgency, in our bones, blood, lungs, spleen, stomach. To embrace new paths out of ignorance. To be empathic. To be wide open. To try to get along. To challenge one another to be and do better. To consider what better means. To not meet up to expectation. To be one sentence too many, one word too few. To try to get it right.

And finally, for all that you pass on, for all that you write, express and make – the feelings and thinking they spark – and for the prodigious energy you emit against the flow of anaesthetizing capital – thank you.

MATTHEW BALLANTYNE

Artist as Birdwatcher

Nathan Ballantyne

Matthew Ballantyne's artwork often meditates on the lives of birds. His bird-focused works – from photographs to taxidermy, haiku emblazoned on flags to pieces made using found materials – reveal a search for empathy in an enchanted but tragic world.

Let me begin to explain by telling you about a rhinoceros I met in February. I plopped a handful of apple slices into her open mouth and rubbed her blunted horn for maybe ten seconds. Then my moment with the rhino was up. I won't forget this animal. Anybody can know the rhinoceros is pretty neat just by watching an Attenborough-narrated documentary. But direct contact somehow reconfigured my basic idea of this animal. Fifteen hundred pounds of hulking ungulate – breathing, chewing, looking me in the eyes. What a tremendous *life*. Respect her, and thou shalt not kill her for a horn. On a winter's day at the San Diego Safari Park, I came to see a rhinoceros as more valuable and beautiful than I could have fathomed earlier.

We all routinely treat other lives, animal or human, as mere objects. We visit many kinds of "zoos" where we encounter other beings through plexiglass and netting. These barriers impede meaningful contact. But empathy sometimes requires a face-to-face, hand-to-horn connection.

Ballantyne's bird art releases his subjects from their standard frames, their "cages." His pieces call our attention to our anthropocentric presumption and ignorance, and the upshot is a surprising kindness toward his winged subjects.

Ballantyne is an artist-naturalist hybrid. The artist and the birdwatcher share much in common. They observe and record. They are patient and persevering, expending long hours in wait. This is a passionate, personal search. Birds can become, as Ballantyne puts it, "poetic and haunting obsessions." Catching sight of a bird and adding it to one's life list is not the end of the story for him. He probes the ecology, natural history, and cultural situation, spotting unexpected linkages between avian and human domains. To take



Matthew Ballantyne, *Undesirable Moral Spillover*, 2018-present, book and northern flicker shafts

one example (*Undesirable Moral Spillover*, 2018–present), the artist displays the curious relationship between the northern flicker and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, a body of law prohibiting the killing, possession, sale, and transport of various migratory birds, including the northern flicker. In Aldous Huxley's novel *Island*, birds mimic the word “attention,” reminding the novel's human characters to pay heed to what's going on around them. In our world, birds also carry messages and Ballantyne seeks to decode them. Bird is the Word.

One photograph (*Combrowicz's Sparrows*, 2019) shows a dead sparrow hanging by a string from the top of a lamppost. The bird had woven a string into its nest inside the lamp's casing but had then become fatally snarled up in the string. Visiting the lamppost later on, Ballantyne observed and photographed a second sparrow which had taken over the dead

bird's abandoned home. He felt troubled by the idea of the hanging bird leaving behind babies in the nest, "going out for food and never returning, yet being only inches from the front door."

Ballantyne's study elevates birds to a place in our consciousness that's greater than fluttering, chirping adornments of nature – and more than "merely ornamental objects for humans to exploit," as the artist notes. Like the birdwatcher, the artist has the capacity to see birds as feeling creatures with lives unto themselves, worthy of sustained attention. Birds may thrive for a season but then suffer, oftentimes by the hand of human negligence or cruelty. These artworks transcribe the artist's experience of seeing birds, both the quick and the dead, in urban and rural spaces, through history and culture, in image and metaphor.

"A man," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is measured by the angle at which he looks at objects." Emerson's dictum holds not only for inanimate things, but also for the way we observe the living. The birdwatcher's neck tilts and bends to glimpse an elusive bird. Ballantyne's angle on birds points us to the possibility of compassionate inquiry into other lives. And not just the lives of birds, but all creatures beneath the skies.

ALEJANDRO A. BARBOSA

Alejandra Bonilla Restrepo

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

Sunday, March 1, 2020

My dear friend and colleague,

I listened to your words and decided to write what felt closer to our hearts. I've been working on the essay for the exhibition catalogue, revisiting our relationship, finding connections that allow me to feel as close as possible to the work. I would like to revisit some of these with you, in order to clarify some of my intuitions.

Do you remember the day we met? That day, while walking from the coffee shop near Montreal's *Vieux Port* to my studio, you mentioned two concepts that conjured a change in my epistemological locus: the *personal self* and the *historical self*. I recall feeling at first confused and amazed; being able to finally recognize this distinction and translate it to the realm of reason allowed me to cruise the complexity of inhabiting the world while fending and acknowledging my own place of difference. Somehow, the video you sent to me, the image of you wearing your gold *calzones* and pink netted shirt, standing on the line created by the two wooden blocks, takes me back to that day, to that conversation. The narrative interpretation I am making on some of your anecdotes, juxtaposed with the image of your most recent work, revealed something to me: the tension between history and story, the image of your body as the entity that allows this back-and-forth between them.

That day, I believe, we created and shared an imaginary place from which to argue, question, discover and build our own sense of community: the *in-between*, *el entre*. It might seem anecdotal that this happened while we both were away from our birth places. Two *latinas* wearing winter jackets and boots, walking through white paths covered with snow, but it is everything. It was through that geographic dislocation – conceded to us by our own will and effort, our curiosity about image – that the perception of our place in the world changed.



Alejandro A. Barbosa, *Somatics of the Self as Citational Form* (still), 2020, video

Being able to explore the distance between one side of our bodies and the other – the stage of the personal and the stage of the historical – moved me to look for the possibilities in sculpting bonds beyond geography. This brought me to embrace the responsibility of questioning the way we understand and relate to ourselves through our sense of placement in order to find a way to redefine those precepts. That is why I insist on the text I am writing for you, on the vocabulary related to location or words that work as coordinates, because your body poetically suggests to me these inquiries on the nature of location, on the representation of ourselves in correspondence with the context, on the possibilities of building a relationship with the *idea* of the world – and ourselves – from the small spot we inhabit, about carrying the memory of our bodies while performing them. Aren't our bodies the main territory that is colonized, conquered, delineated, exploited, but also wandered and explored?

I find a link between your recent work and the video you streamed two years ago, *The Stain Are We Ourselves*, which I was able to experience from a distance. The research you've been pursuing through the photographic system and language is nourishing the soil with questions about how we consume and relate to images that are not entirely visible. In one part of the essay I am writing, I say “...*a drawing on the floor, a video, a fictional photograph from before on your mother's shelves. You were, you are. Puto, marica, goloso, an image for the others, invisible. An image to yourself, a ghost.*” There the relevance of singularity emerges; where the codes seem all exposed and explained you catch them, rearrange them, erode them, you create an interrupted image, you create *un-tiempo-otro*. Where the discipline is concerned about the result you create space for the process, for the vulnerability in the process streamed. Before, you used playfully the representation of the world as a balloon – *un globo terráqueo que es un globo de helio*. Now you place your own body in front of the camera to explore the ways you are consumed as an image by others and by yourself.

I've been thinking lately about your practice as a map that is not static, printed, immobile, but intriguing and unusual every time. The intellectual labour you are developing about image and digital platforms gave me a clue: when google maps is malfunctioning and is not able to show the entire picture, the fragments that emerge, the errors, the failure on the system, create another time, a gap in our attention that requests confidence in the feeling of uncertainty, acceptance of the grey areas and respect for the coordinates that

are settled. It comforts me to know we can explore and build this place together, even navigating the mysteries of distance; that is what I consider the main power of art practices.

Well my friend, I am very pleased to be able to talk about your process and work, I would appreciate to hear your feedback on these impressions so I can finish the essay, remember the deadline is next week on Monday.

Always yours,
Ale.

ROSAMUNDE BORDO

Partial Cento (*for R.*)

Sheryda Warrenner

I am walking in your garments

a moment yellow

alive, as if

I am very real myself with a nice patina

name trimmed with coloured ribbons

time passes in the Ackerman style

everything loose is travelling

“walking across this hotel terrace in the heat is like being in a postcard”

carte postale, banana daiquiri, breezes, music, roads, horizons

more than anything, I want to know

so while she's feather dusting, she's looking for clues

the task of looking for the puzzle piece

a pause, a rose, something on paper

a self isn't always self-evident

a planetary configuration on this table, the entire Cosmos

something about nouns



Rosamunde Bordo, Untitled, 2019, mixed media

such an intimacy in imagining an interiority

the rooms within them

clutter and fragility, the lived-in-ness

Can one's obsession be a form of autobiography?

I felt a strange sense of ownership for the objects on the table

yet I did not want to claim them

there are many ways to tell a story

change of light, passage of time

drawing was a way to think with the body

writing was the story of the body in thought
a slippery narrative composed in an unremitting continuous tense
the making of a body through a series of omissions
a funny daring relation to language
the body of a woman is a text
a spectral text that survives when all the language changes
infinite translations, infinite texts
what are all these fragments for, if not to be knit up finally?
those tallied scraps float
everything loose is travelling
a window was open so I could hear it
a window opening like an orange
I hear bells and the bells have words inside them
a funny daring relationship to language
who am I?
not the gingko or the level gaze, or the speaking voice
potted trees against the translucent curtains
just one more thing
trying to be a pattern in the world
escape the self in a portrait of another

an effect of cut-into-ribbons

I have never, in my recollection, seen myself before

the face in the toilet mirror could be anyone

look how it touches the glass

such an intimacy in imagining an interiority

apparently personal, because how do we really know

all the rest is hypothesis and dream

the dream quality, which is a poetic quality, is not vague

the open being:

water, air, space, light, skin and bones, terrain

a knot in the network of invisible relationships

a wholeness that we can comprehend

"Partial Cento" is a found poem consisting entirely of lines borrowed from the following writers (in order of appearance): Lisa Robertson, Lyn Hejinian, Deborah Landau, Heather Christle, Lyn Hejinian, Kate Zambreno, Kathryn Scanlan, Renee Gladman, Ottessa Moshfegh, Kate Zambreno, Lucia Berlin, Lucia Berlin, Lyn Hejinian, Elizabeth Willis, Olga Tokarczuk, Jeanette Winterson, Kate Zambreno, Kate Zambreno, Kate Zambreno, Kate Zambreno, Alexandra Kleeman, Alexandra Kleeman, Anne Carson, Kate Zambreno, Renee Gladman, Renee Gladman, Annie Ernaux, Elizabeth Willis, Sam Lipsyte, Kim Hyesoon (trans. Don Mee Choi), Elisa Gabbert, Elisa Gabbert, Marilynne Robinson, Susan Howe, Kathryn Scanlan, Roo Borson, Deborah Levy, Elisa Gabbert, Sam Lipsyte, André Breton, Roo Borson, Kate Zambreno, Renee Gladman, Anne Truitt, Hannah Sullivan, Erin Mouré, Kate Zambreno, Sharon Olds, Louise Glück, Jeanette Winterson, Anne Truitt, Dara Wier, Italo Calvino, Anne Truitt.

SAM KINSLEY

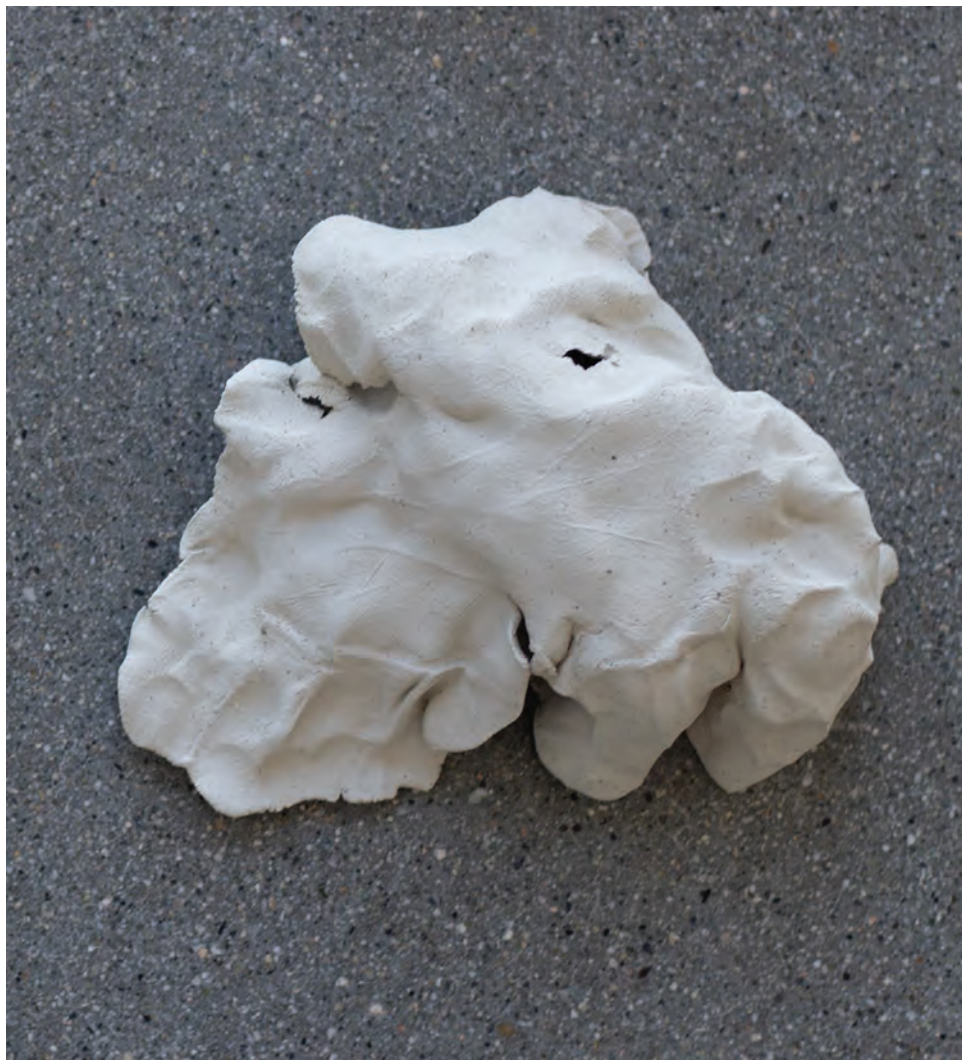
The Onto-Encyclopedic Museum

Erin Silver

Sam Kinsley's studio is a space that variably holds objects usually discarded, bodily excesses, in this space, purposefully preserved, taxonomized, aestheticized, indexing Kinsley's shedded skins, fixing in place the retinal ghost image of where a person once stood, who a person once was, in growth and decay. A day's worth of hair loss, detached from the scalp, becomes briefly abject before taking new root in intricate wooden mobiles. Eyelashes, among the most ephemeral of the body's refuse, are captured within a plexiglass box, their natural tendency to cling – usually to fingertips before being cast off with a wish – amplified as they hug the transparent walls that contain them.

Obsessive repetition, a pathologizing of daily ritual and routine, feels like a necessary aggrandizement for this most ambitious of investigations. The objects are the form-keepers for practices of living that are bigger than can be contained. In "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes his ontology of "flesh," an exchange between the sensing body and the world of things: "A touching of the sleek and the rough, a touching of the things – a passive sentiment of the body and of its space – and finally a veritable touching of the touch, when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the 'touching subject' passes over it to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the thing."¹ Kinsley's practice is at once a laboratory, a cabinet of curiosities, an encyclopedia, a library, an archive of an existence, existences, past existence, possible existences, and the distinct figures they cut in the world.

I walk down to the beach / take a handful of sand / take a handful of sand / walk down to the beach – This text, which describes the process behind the work *Evidence of Action: VI* (2019), is an almost palindromic performative utterance that mirrors the event to which it refers. The text attempts a translation of a singular experience, played out in multiple. It also leaves out a critical part of the action, the only part which remains legible and briefly



Sam Kinsley, *Place Holder III* (detail), 2020, clay

tangible: each day's handful of sand, which Kinsley would deposit on a piece of paper in her studio. The sand, originally wet and given form within the negative space of Kinsley's fist, would eventually dry and settle, the ocean seeping and drying on its paper plinth, evaporating back into the air, depriving the sand of its binding and thus, its form. Over time, by nature of its particulate nature, grains would also be carried back into the world – on the soles of shoes, through the ruffling and shifting of the newsprint sheets stacked on top of one another or by the bristles of a broom.

Kinsley's gatherings – a conscious confusion of takings and offerings – when viewed in the gallery, evoke Robert Smithson's *non-site*, which he describes as a "two dimensional analogy or metaphor," a "logical picture" or representation of an actual site that does not resemble it, the nonsite of the gallery providing the discursive, controlled and yet malleable environment for forms of symbolic and evocative engagement.² In a piece of writing begun in 1983 and completed in 1992, what he called an "interview with a ghost," artist Gordon Lebrecht interrogates Smithson's view to the museum as exemplary of the nonsite, writing:

The museum, as soon as it opens, that is, to the extent that one can say that it is at some point open, always harbours within itself an extra space, one more empty square. An open and discounted, discarded face.
"Perfectly superficial." Which, as I take it, means that any labour spent to exceed its limits will never be completed; the onto-encyclopedic museum "spreads its surfaces everywhere..." The limit is no longer a limit.³

Borders become porous in Kinsley's collecting and modes of display and dispersal: found and handmade objects commingle; the venerated handmade is presented on the floor, while unsightly stray hairs are presented in elaborate display cases on the wall; art-making materials become integral supports. The impulse to collect, Kinsley acknowledges, carries a colonial impulse, one mirrored and repeated through art's histories and reinforced via national collections, stolen, pilfered loot, at once held in pride and as damning evidence. Kinsley holds the sand, this material that only takes form when contained, in similar contradiction. Her impulse to collect ultimately bends to an intuition that dictates when the impulse begins its revolt and turns its attention back to the specific tension of what it is to at once form and be formed.

- 1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 133-34.
- 2 Robert Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- 3 Gordon Lebrecht, *Accessory After the Fact*, 2005, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.umanitoba.ca/schools/art/content/galleryoneoneone/lebrecht31.html>

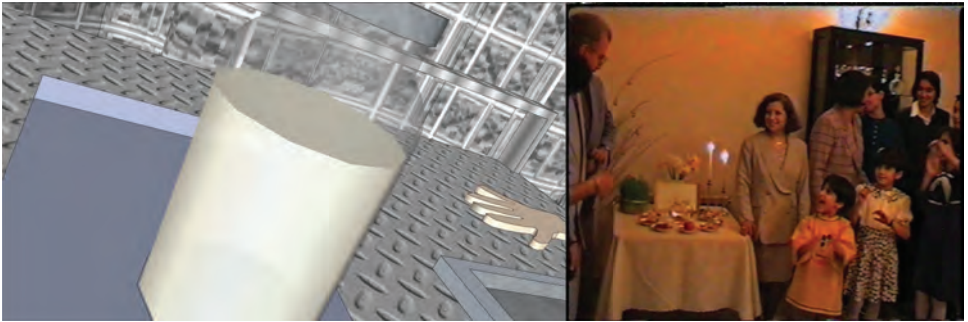
NAZANIN OGHANIAN

Remembering

Dónal O'Donoghue

On a Friday morning in late February, I visit Nazanin Oghanian's studio at the University of British Columbia. Seated across the table from Nazanin, I know if I look to my left, I will see the North Shore Mountains, in the distance, the far distance. If I look to my left, I know my view of the mountains will be obstructed in part by university buildings, other buildings and even some tall trees. But on this Friday morning, while the mountains, buildings and trees are in my peripheral vision, something else holds my attention. It is the most recent work of Nazanin. Two short films. One, an animation film that brings the viewer inside and around a cold, sterile, clinical physical environment – an environment that calls to mind a hospital room. The other, a film made from video footage shot during Nazanin's childhood that shows her playing piano, swimming, dancing, playing card games with family members and so on. Much of this footage was shot by Nazanin. All of it, she tells me, was culled from the home-produced videos made by her family.

During my visit, we watch both films. Both are screened simultaneously on adjacent and adjoining walls. As I move my eyes from one to the other and back again, I ask some questions. The works seem to demand such a response. Nazanin explains that both films are informed by her childhood experiences. Not strictly autobiographical. But, to some extent, autobiographical, she explains. At the age of eight, she tells me, unexpectedly, and without fully knowing the reasons, she had to undergo a series of medical procedures. "I was so confused. I couldn't tell what was wrong, but there was something wrong with my body," she explains. These procedures would be repeated every 28 days for seven years. These procedures would transform her into a medicalized subject, not entirely or in perpetuity, of course, but in part. Through these procedures, her body would become a body that was routinely observed, measured, weighed, evaluated, classified and categorized by medical professionals, who focussed on what they perceived to be a problem to be corrected. It would become a body that was shaped by the forms of surveillance and procedures that would be applied to it from the outside in an effort to change its course from the inside. Outside of this context and beyond the reach of medical



Nazanin Oghanian, *I am 164cm* from the *Patient #17301* series (still), 2020, two-channel video

discourse, although not entirely immune from it, another subject was in formation, she tells me. “Those days of the checkups, shots, blood tests, radiology were part of my other life,” she says. I think: two subjects, two films, two sets of experiences, two lives in one.

Watching both films, and registering that neither has an immediately recognizable narrative structure, I sense that the films are searching for something that they never seem to find. Watching both films, I think of how in life, we learn how to be in situations that we do not yet know how to be in. We take our cues from others. When we feel others’ anxiety, we tend to downplay our own. When we see their joy, we participate in it. When we sense their confusion, we strive to appear intentional in our words and actions. Viewing both films, I think, to live in the here and now is also to live with memories of the then and there. Memories that are animated by the here and now, but memories of the then and there that shape the here and now.

Watching these two films, projected simultaneously on two adjacent walls perpendicular to one another, I notice that they touch at the corner where these walls meet. But, in touching, the films do not overlap. This is their only point of contact. That they make contact is important. In making contact, they draw attention to the invisible border that both separates them and connects them simultaneously. In making contact, they seem to amplify their separateness and self-containment, while also suggesting their connectedness. The line between them suggests a condition of betweenness that seems to infuse much of Nazanin’s work. The line between childhood and adulthood. Between

two languages. Between here and there. Between now and then. Between a childhood imagined and a childhood lived. Between the body that is and the body that is desired. Between a growing body and a body whose growth is being slowed. Between something observed and something felt. Between what cannot be known in advance and what can only be known afterwards. Between recording and remembering. Between selecting and discarding. Between telling and showing. Between the desire to make something explicit and the refusal to give it a representation.

Like my view of the North Shore Mountains from Nazanin's studio, which is obstructed in part by buildings, trees and other things, I wonder if these films, which seem to be concerned, in part, with noticing and registering what is present but not visible under certain regimes of specularity, can ever be viewed in isolation from the conditions that contributed to their making, and indeed to their viewing. I am reminded of Michael Craig-Martin's words, "Works of art are not straightforward embodiments of their initiating ideas."¹ And so, on leaving these films, I carry with me the idea that things become something in the hands of others. Things take form, and are given form, in the intentions, knowledges, actions, desires and imaginations of others. But what gets formed and takes form can never fully be explained or reduced to the intentions, knowledges, actions, desires and imaginations of those who contribute to their formation, even though they can never exist entirely free of them. Many things can happen in the experience of viewing.

- 1 Michael Craig-Martin, *On Being an Artist*. (London, UK: Art Books Publishing Ltd., 2019), 259.

JAY PAHRE

Michelle McGeough

This piece is a speculative one in that it is an attempt to think, speak and make on with beyond human entities with inter-frictive un-and-re-hinging becomings which actively configure and reconfigure.¹

We speculate about the future as the mounting evidence of just how precarious our existence is, confronts us on a daily basis. We tune in to the daily news to images of the planet on fire, while here in our corner of the world, the nightly news informs of the record-breaking rainfall that we have experienced this winter. Even though we are challenged with the evidence of this seemingly irreversible trajectory toward our demise, we attend conferences, subscribe to listservs and recycle. We even come up with fancy names: the Anthropocene, the term that scholars use to describe the impact we, “the human beings,” have on the earth’s geology and ecosystems. I wonder about the people that live off the land and the other beings who feel this impact more readily than most of us, does it matter to them that this phenomenon has a name?

These are not speculations that stretch out, reach out, project themselves into different spacetimes. This is about digging deep. This is about seeing a point at which you might tether yourself to a passing piece of atmosphere and letting yourself be pulled along. This is about feeling that tension, that static pull of your deep, deep, dig which pulls you back again and again, swiveling around points which grow wider and wider in their swings.²

Jay and I sit in his studio, the skies are grey as they so often are these days. From our perch high off the ground we can still see the mountains, as they present their newly acquired mantles of white, what appears as rain here in the Lower Mainland is transfigured into snow. I see a bird fly by, and I mistake a seagull for an eagle. We laugh, as we ease into the studio visit. On the walls and the floor of Jay’s studio is the accumulative evidence of his creative process. Taking it all in, I turn to Jay and ask, “You’re staying with the trouble, aren’t you?” It is a reference to Donna Haraway’s newest treatise that eschews the term



Jay Pahre, *Piebald Undercoat* (detail), 2020, copper-coated steel wire, aluminum wire and gauze

“Anthropocene” for a different vision of the future; the Chthulucene, where she asks us to think more deeply about our relationship to those other than human beings, to understand how our fates are inextricably bound together by an intricate web. I see the web, the strings where he is reimagining and thinking through these connections, thinking about his future, thinking beyond a future predicated on biological reproduction, thinking about transmaterialities and queer bodies, thinking about making kin and the possibilities of trans/formations.

Once more: I want to stretch out as a wolf yearns across the ice of frozen lake-water not knowing what lies on the other side. Knowing you will unmake parts of you. That there will be a shifting and you may not come back at all. That you will eat poisonous shit. That you will drown in a mine.³

It is these trans/formations and alliances with those other than human beings that are a predominant theme throughout Pahre's recently completed works. It is these ideas

that Pahre explores in *Guard Hairs* (2019). While it is a meditative act of devotion, care and duty, Pahre visually captures the involuntary primordial instincts of survival; excitement or fear. Crafted painstakingly out of small pieces of copper-coated steel wire, carefully woven between the weft and warp threads of gauze, the handmade hide of animal guard hair hangs tethered and suspended from the ceiling by copper wire wrapped around the extraneous gauze-like fabric. The suspended weight of the piece produces a precariousness, unease. The metaphors in this piece run deep. And while this sculpture could be tightly framed within a context of the ongoing settler violence and extractive practices, you are pulled deeper, down to the molecular level, where proton and electron attraction is based upon repulsion, the precarious exchange and balance of energy, of being and becoming. I see the traces of Karen Barad's influence and her imaginings of the possibilities offered with an "alliance with nature's ongoing radical deconstruction of naturalness."⁴ It is a way of staying with the trouble and in doing so, Pahre explores the possibilities presented in the process of re/making and discovering our queer kinship with our nonhuman relatives.

When I am speaking of queer and trans ecologies I am not speaking of gay penguins or fish or frogs that change gender. Nor am I quite speaking with bacteria, yet. There is a scaling down there where entities become processes and I am still chewing on it and a little skeptical.⁵

- 1 Jay Pahre, "Flipping the Island: Electricity, Copper and Friction," MFA Roundtable Presentation, University of British Columbia, November 15, 2019.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Karen Barad, "TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21:2-3 (June 2015): 388.
- 5 Jay Pahre, "Flipping the Island: Electricity, Copper and Friction."

The artists wish to acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x̱mə0ḵəy̱əm (Musqueam) people and are deeply grateful to have studied and lived on this territory.

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