

Things that do not come by the road

UBC Master of Fine Arts Graduate Exhibition

5 May - 4 June 2023

Reggie Harrold

Sarv Iraj

Ramneet Kaur

Alejandra Morales

Kitt Peacock

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Introduction

Thingness and the Fugitives

Althea Thauberger

Things that do not come by the road may be an ominous or empowering evocation. We may think of that which is external to how society expects them to perform. We may be reminded of supernatural beings, or of being removed outside of typical routes by unconventional methods. Oblique pathways, smugglers' channels, winding rivers, borrowed entry cards, fire escapes, fields.

Reggie Harrold, Sarv Iraj, Ramneet Kaur, Alejandra Morales and Kitt Peacock, from Fort Nelson First Nation, Tehran, Ludhiana, Monterrey and O'dham Jeweḡ, came to Musqueam territory at the University of British Columbia in a time of crises concerning uncertainty and division. They moved through third places and quarantines. Their first conversations took place virtually, glitchingly, with unreliable connectivity. They did not arrive at the same times. There were wait times, cancellations, vaccinations, chokepoints.

In January 2022, the cohort was united, finally, in their studios and seminars for an extended period of study and experimentation. They were joined by PhD candidate Melissa Armstrong who found their way through Zoology and institutional struggle. The year was marked by breaking points, military aggressions in Ukraine, brutal repressions in Iran and climate catastrophe in Pakistan. The world population hit eight billion. A queen finally died. Morocco advanced to the World Cup Semi-Final. Six artists spent the year entangled with ideas and dialogues, wayfinding, working, worrying, laughing, struggling, fighting.

In an interview with Stevphen Shukaitis and Stefano Harney, Fred Moten reflects on the relationship between the undercommons¹ and intellectuality: "When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. ... To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice."² Through studies – working, dancing, suffering – alongside Manuel Piña, Marina Roy, Dan Starling, Gareth James, Andy Keech, Timothy Fernandes and many others, the cohort cohered – it became a *thing*.

To study
To wrestle
To withdraw
To clash
To support
To lift
To circumvent
To inflect
To evade
To resist
To not come by the road

Thingness

...perhaps the artwork's most essential feature is the enigma of its Dinglichkeit, its thingness pure and simple, which should of course never imply be confused with its physicality: the ambiguous fact of its self-doubting, self-questioning materiality – a "spirit in the material world"³

Martin Heidegger's ontological explorations of thingness in both *What Is a Thing?* (1962) and "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1950) postulates a condition of nearness. Thingness is not materiality, but its particular holding power. In these texts, Heidegger emphasized the etymology of the German word *Ding* and Latin *cosa* as relating to gathering, assembly, public debate. That a thing is a thing involves contestedness and coherence, or gathering of properties, however rudimentary, though the properties need not be physical, nor the coherence total. Its nameability, as a thing, is the coherence or agreement, but the thing as such also remains partially unknown, un/formed but formative; even magical.

In the 1951 Hollywood film (and its 1982 remake), *The Thing* is an alien and threatening life, its properties only partly discernable, its movements mysterious and oblique. *The Thing* is almost pure thingness as unfathomable form in terrifying proximity.

Rather than building a wall between art and thingness, the work of art should be analyzed as... a sci-fi monster.⁴

The Fugitives

Snuck out of the lab, after-hours, by what names should they be called?

Feathered one?

Garment?

Tale?

Implement?

Redaction?

Score?

Netting?

Shroud?

Ruptured loom?

Stain?

Blossom?

Transcript?

Reverse accumulation?

Well?

The movement of things can be felt and touched and exists in language and in fantasy, it is flight, it is motion, it is fugitivity itself. Fugitivity is being separate from settling. It is a being in motion that has learned that “organizations are obstacles to organizing ourselves” (The Invisible Committee in The Coming Insurrection) and that there are spaces and modalities that exist separate from the logical, logistical, the housed and the positioned.⁵

Alejandra, Kitt, Melissa, Ramneet, Reggie, Sarv, may you always evade control, capture and categorization – may you follow the art of smuggling. May you accompany rivers with *things* close at hand. May you organize yourselves behind stage doors, at the wetland beyond the village, by the light of a television or melting sky, and alongside driftwood bodies. May you always gather, study, dance and resist.

- 1 For Moten and Harney, the undercommons can be understood as a shared mode of sociality, belonging and thought that exists outside of, despite, or in resistance to the elitism of the university, and which is developed through the Black radical tradition.
- 2 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2013), 110.
- 3 Dieter Roelstraete, "Art as Object Attachment: Thoughts on Thingness," in *When Things Cast No Shadow: 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Adam Szymczyk (Berlin and Zurich: KunstWerke and JRP/Ringier, 2008), 446.
- 4 Sven Lütticken, "Art and Thingness, Part I: Breton's Ball and Duchamp's Carrot," *e-flux* 13 (February 2010), www.e-flux.com/journal/13/61327/art-and-thingness-part-i-breton-s-ball-andduchamp-s-carrot/.
- 5 Jack Halberstam, "The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons," introduction to *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2013), 11.

REGGIE HARROLD

Inside-Out: Reggie Harrold's Sinewy Nets

T'ai Smith

Reggie Harrold's knitted forms are neither sculpture nor clothing, and their relationship to the body is just as ambiguous. As sinewy nets, they seem both to carry and capture.

Look at the photograph *Stretch* (2022): two hands pull on a tubular, knitted form, which extends vertically from the figure's neck upward. The textile is rendered taut; the wrists are contorted from the effort and the arms have become angular, spider-like. The appendages seem to grow from the figure's shoulders with the force of pea shoots, ready to separate and become something distinct... but they are accompanied by a mesh of tendril-filaments, and so cling to the roots from whence they came.

Admittedly, witnessing this interaction of body and net leaves me uncomfortable, or as (un)comfortable as I imagine this person to be. Are they struggling or playing? Hanging or being held? Suffocating or breathing? Trapped or hiding?

The threads at once spring forth from and manipulate the person's head – like strings that control a marionette's mobility (or immobility). But their expression also appears relaxed – like a baby spider nesting comfortably inside a spun cocoon. In the flatness of the image, the net and head appear to be of the same filament substance; this sinuous flesh covers and grows out of their skin. More, the specific features of eyes, nose, mouth are partially hidden by the network of threads, veiled by the mesh and its mottled patterns of folds, which afford their anonymity. They both perform for and deftly evade the camera's gaze; they both attract recognition and succeed in avoiding it. Camouflaged, they manage to hide in plain sight.

Having learned the technique as a child from her mother, Reggie Harrold has for years created tubes of fabric by knitting rows of "vertical interloopings" and building them up, layer by layer.¹ Rather than use two needles or sticks, as is typically done with this



Reggie Harrold, *Stretch*, 2022, inkjet print on paper. Courtesy of the artist

technique, the artist deploys a knitting frame or spool – a simple device that was initially developed to facilitate the production of socks. The process involves the wrapping of yarn or threads between and around nails or pegs arranged in a circle. Repeating these gestures at once rhythmically and mechanically, the threads are wound into loops, often in a hexagonal pattern. Sometimes Harrold uses remnants from the cutting-room floor, pieces of discarded fabric from her mother’s dress shop, for instance; sometimes she uses everyday refuse, like single-use masks – the abundant leftovers of the Covid pandemic. A kind of nest – or what the artist calls a creature – is built.

More recently, however, Harrold has been knitting experiments with a type of thread called sinew. Also known by the term “babiche” – an Algonquin word that “loosely translates to ‘cord’ (in Mi’kmaq, *ababich*) or ‘thread’ (in [some eastern Ojibwe dialects, *asabābis*])”² – this material is created in various ways by numerous Indigenous nations, as informed by their own knowledge practices. For Nametau Innu, it is made from carefully prepared caribou rawhide, cut or torn into strips.³ As described in *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis (Gwich’in), a “bundle of babiche thickly stripped raw moosehide” could be a precious, life-saving gift that “served many purposes” – from making toboggans to traverse the snow to setting snares to catch rabbits.⁴ Although animal-sourced babiche is less common today, a polymer version known as sinew remains abundantly used across Indigenous nations, including among the Dene, Gwich’in and Slavey/Cree communities related to Harrold’s Fort Nelson First Nation in northeastern British Columbia. Whether organic or artificial, babiche and sinew can be split into thinner and thinner threads, divided and subdivided to adapt to different uses – to bind the frames of snowshoes, make nets for catching fish, the surfaces of drums, or bags for carrying other things.⁵ This thread is also used to create the weblike form of net charms, known as “dream catchers,” or “*asabikeshiiwasabiig* ‘spider nets’ in Ojibwe.”⁶ In this way, it could be said to symbolize the resilience, strength, ingenuity and longevity of manifold Indigenous communities who have lived on this land since time immemorial. As the name “sinew” suggests, this thread is flexible but deceptively strong, like the muscle tendons of which some types of (organic) sinew are made. Or like the “schemas [that] converge in Swampy Cree elder Louis Bird’s interpretation of an origin story about how Ahap the giant spider lowered the first humans from the sky to the earth on a silken filament,” a process that continues to connect kin, past and present.⁷

Harrold's knitted, sinewy forms could most plainly be described as bodily. But they are not "bodily" in the sense of a delineated, anthropomorphic figure, or of a dress form that encloses and separates one "person" from another. They are, rather, a complex topology – like a donut turned inside out, or like the tube that connects a creature's mouth to its anus, through which other substances are masticated, digested, internalized and then used (as energy or material) to create other things. Perhaps this is why the net in the photograph *Stretch* seems at once to swallow the person and be spun by them. These threads are like the proteins which are spit out from the spider's spinneret as silk and then woven to capture and ingest other creatures – a continuous process that renders these molecules, once again, as spiders-cum-webs anew. The cycle is endless. Harrold's sinewy nets indeed lead us to ask: where does one thread or body begin and the other end?

- 1 Irene Emery, cited in Lisbeth Freiss, "Knitting," in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, ed. Anika Reineke et al. (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2017), 145.
- 2 A description and definition of "babiche" can be found on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/babiche>.
- 3 To learn about the traditional method of making babiche from Nametau Innu perspectives, see the video on "rawhide" under the "Caribou Hide" page at *Nametau Innu: Memory and knowledge of Nitassinan*, "a website dedicated to the Innu nation in which elders pass on their skills and knowledge to younger generations," <http://www.nametauinnu.ca/en/nomad/detail/47>.
- 4 Velma Wallis, *Two Old Women* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 7.
- 5 Examples of such traditional items using babiche can be found in the collection of the UBC Museum of Anthropology, including a Dene Bag (A2.76) and Gwich'in snowshoes (A2.547 a-b).
- 6 Anthropologist George Fulford, drawing on the work of Cath Oberholtzer, notes that these "net charms ... which have entered the lexicon of popular North American culture as 'dream catchers' ... are termed *asabikeshiiwasabiig* 'spider nets' in Ojibwe." Fulford, "Net Charms in Cree and Ojibwe Language, Culture, and Worldview," *Papers of the Algonquin Conference* 44 (2012), 67. Tracing linguistic relationships among words used to describe "strings," "nets," "umbilical cords" and "great grandparents," in various languages from the larger cultural group of the Anishinaabeg, Fulford's essay seeks to provide an introduction to a more complex understanding of animacy and relationality in these communities.
- 7 Fulford, 68.

SARV IRAJI

White Cube :: Black Box 14 notes adjacent to the work of Sarv Iraji

Ido Radon

Destituere in Latin means: to place standing separate, raise up in isolation; to abandon; put aside, let drop, knock down; to let down, deceive. Whereas constituent logic crashes against the power apparatus it means to take control of, a destituent potential is concerned instead with escaping from it, with removing any hold on it which the apparatus might have, as it increases its hold on the world in the separate space that it forms. Its characteristic gesture exiting...¹

- The Invisible Committee

Flee, but while fleeing, pick up a weapon.²

- Sadie Plant

- 1 A strike is a radical gesture: a withholding, a blow, a redaction, an excision.
- 2 The moment of insurrection tears the scar tissue of history which would overwrite/erase both wrongs and wounds and any possibility that anything could now or ever have been otherwise. It rends a hole in the fabric of reality, revealing all that is ostensibly neutral, all that is business-as-usual, all that is "just the way things are," for the construct that it is.
- 3 In the moment of insurrection, the social mask is removed to reveal the black mask beneath. Bloc is a tactic, the black boxing of the predicate-laden subject in favour of a temporary operative collective composition.
- 4 Black box is to theatre as white cube is to gallery. The purportedly neutral space with the potential to produce any space in a space outside of the world. But of course, that which structures the world infuses every atom of white cube and black box. These spaces are anything but neutral.



Sarv Iraj, *chelleh*, 2022, loom with cotton thread, video and audio. Courtesy of the artist

- 5 A black box is also any system that can only be perceived in terms of inputs and outputs. What goes on within it is inaccessible, occluded, hidden from view. Machine, algorithm, government.
- 6 The real itself may be said to be inaccessible, locked away in the black box of ideologically determined and socially reproduced reality.
- 7 Now picture here in the white cube a black box, a void struck from the immediately perceivable. Picture the absence of Dr. Who's phone booth, the monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, any black cuboid work of Minimalism, say a glossy John McCracken, an Anne Truitt.

Iraj refers to this monolithic box as a “kiosk,” a word derived from the Persian *kūshk*. In common usage, a kiosk is a site of exchange, of vending, of distribution of information on a street corner, in a mall.

This dislocated kiosk, however, is at least externally rendered inoperative, a site of exclusion, its contents black-boxed.

- 8 Marcel Broodthaers's *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance*) foregrounds the all-important structure of Mallarmé's poem of the same name by meticulously redacting or black-boxing each typographically exuberant line.

The scene framed by the intertitle, "A picture shot in the back," in Godard's *King Lear* is situated in a cinema to consider the conditions of collective reception of the projected image. The reflected light of the screen offering the only illumination.

Iraji's microcinema, this kiosk/booth/monolith, demands a consideration of that which structures presentation, participation, and reception... a consideration, that is, of the conditions under which the event of the work takes place. These conditions themselves may be said to be black-boxed, taking place as they do "behind the backs of men."

- 9 "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."³

In Iraji's play, *Chronicles of an Escape*, the space of the stage is permeable. Players repeatedly move through a stage door to the outside world where insurrection stirs the streets. The audience invades the space of the stage. History and legend weigh upon the players, intrude upon and shape action and reception.

- 10 A cinema for one, Iraji's black box negates the possibility of collective simultaneous reception.

It structures the approach, demands a stepping into, a stepping out of. It isolates, limits options for movement and alternative modes of perception. It makes evident the modulations that structure any reception.⁴

- 11 It folds the subject into its sculptural form, transforms subject into an invisible object contained within.

12 In the common use of the term, subject paradoxically is used to mean both “a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions” AND a subjected being, “who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission.”⁵

13 Stepping into the black box is to step into what Marcuse calls the aesthetic dimension. Though it may be conventionally designated as “unreal” in the ordinary sense of the word,

*it is “unreal” not because it is less, but because it is more as well as qualitatively “other” than the established reality. As fictitious world, as illusion, it contains more truth than does everyday reality. For the latter is mystified in its institutions and relationships, which make necessity into choice, and alienation into self-realization. Only in the “illusory world” do things appear as what they are and what they can be.*⁶

It offers, that is, an inversion of the world. He writes that it is a place in which one can call things by their name.

14 “The destituent gesture does not oppose the institution. It doesn't even mount a frontal fight, it neutralizes it, empties it of its substance, then steps to the side and watches it expire.”⁷

1 The Invisible Committee, *Now*, tr. Robert Hurley (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2017): 78-79.

2 Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture, The Situationist International in a Post-Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1992), 150. This is a version of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari quoting George Jackson saying, “I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon,” in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 277. The footnote for Deleuze and Guattari's quote of Jackson is blank.

3 Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon (1851-52),” *Die Revolution* (New York, 1852), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>.

4 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” *Grey Room* 39 (Spring 2010): 11-38.

5 Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (1971),” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001): 121-176.

6 Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Communications and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 54.

7 The Invisible Committee, *Now*, 81-82.

RAMNEET KAUR

Agency, Reciprocity and Vitality

Dan Starling

An artist walks from her studio together with a large sheet of fabric to the beach;¹ they are both in a receptive and reverential state of listening, sensing and experiencing.

This shoreline, like others, "is never fixed, and just as it evades territoriality, it eludes colonial cartography and control."²

Their attitude is that they are not different from the land, the water, the sky.

The "majority of Indigenous societies conceives that we (humans) are made from land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil."³

They engage in a dialogue with the non-human agents, intuiting the necessity of ethical reciprocity in the relationship.

We have "certain obligations to the land, animals, plants and lakes, in much the same way that we hold obligations to other people."⁴

The fabric lies over a large tree trunk and the artist places their body close to it, open to the moment.

"To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence."⁵

As it turns out, the tree is also an artist and they make a drawing together.

"The capacity to detect the presence of impersonal affect requires that one is caught up in it."⁶

The artists draw on the cloth with other natural materials: charcoal, rust, dirt and dye. The movements of their bodies produce matrices of lines, shapes, being more energy than image. They record sounds and listen to the mantra of the waves. They all absorb the space, being totally immersed in the moment of awareness.



Ramneet Kaur, *Of actions and what remains* (detail), 2022, graphite, compressed charcoal, burnt wood on fabric, wax, moss, audio recording and driftwood, 523.0 x 297.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist

In drawing, "each confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally you are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have become ..."⁷

Upon returning to the studio, they invite in other collaborators: rocks, mushrooms, moss, thread and dye. They make more drawings. All the artists create forms together that are open-ended, adaptable, malleable and fluid. They repeat and repeat their gestures, weaving themselves together, wearing themselves on their bodies, and invite the architecture to join them. These artists make drawings that are themselves alive. They inhabit mental, emotional, spiritual and physical place that has never been; a space beyond or between existence and non-existence.

Ramneet Kaur is a visitor to $\chi^*m\theta k^*y\grave{a}m$ from Ludhiana, India. The spiritual and philosophical traditions of her homeland consider all things on the earth (plants, rocks, animals and human beings) to share a connection because they all come from one source.⁸ In her artistic production over the last two years she has directly engaged with this part of the earth and has been open to being changed by it. Her work is evidence of transformation. Her practice, writing and research have been a fermentation of issues raised by new materialism and Indigenous ideas of non-human agency and their inflection in feminism, philosophy, science studies, cultural and decolonial theory. This movement's focus on human/non-human interaction and symbiotic relations, thinking deeply about human manipulation of the material world and humans' recognition of the agency of matter or lack thereof, has attracted artists who are urgent to see change that never seems to come fast enough.

Kaur's practice is one answer to the question that if "Indigenous studies scholarship ... draws our attention to the challenge of moving beyond general 'preachments' about the agency of non-human things and into particular practices of relational entanglement with non-human agents, then the question arises: What might those practices look like, especially in the context of scholarship and social inquiry?"⁹ As opposed to the ethnographer making drawings of the land, or photographs "taken" and used as evidence and to survey, categorize and delegate, Kaur's practice shows a respectful celebration of the world and our place in it. Engaging with her work or to work alongside her is to feel the power of living differently. Artistic co-creation between humans and non-humans holds an indispensable place today because it models a different way of relating to the world, which resonates with a form of being that goes alongside politics, science and religion, while carrying a unique potential to also encompass other forms of understanding. Embedded in the materials she works with, Kaur is committed to an embodied way of being and is dedicated to the idea that art can spark a conversation about justice, accountability, care, agency, reciprocity and vitality.

- 1 The hən̓q̓əmin̓əḥ name for the beach has not been reproduced in this text according to Musqueam permissions; readers are encouraged to visit "Musqueam Place Names Map," Musqueam, <https://placenamemap.musqueam.bc.ca/>.
- 2 Candice Hopkins, "The Land Remembers," in *Water, Kinship, Belief: Toronto Biennial of Art 2019-2022*, ed. Candice Hopkins, Katie Lawson and Tairone Bastien (Toronto: Toronto Biennial of Art, Art Metropole, 2022), 72.
- 3 Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2:1 (2013): 27.
- 4 Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 61.
- 5 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.
- 6 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xv.
- 7 John Berger, *Drawing is Discovery* (1953), reprinted in *New Statesman*, 142:5156 (3-9 May 2013): 53.
- 8 Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), 75.
- 9 Jerry Lee Rosiek, Jimmy Snyder and Scott L. Pratt, "The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26:3-4 (March-April 2020): 341.

ALEJANDRA MORALES

On Alejandra Morales's Paintings

Nicholas Backman

How to best characterize the broad array of paintings produced by Alejandra Morales? While her artworks touch on a range of themes, it would be accurate to say that her art embodies a precarious sense of fragility, a vulnerable, precious beauty. These are, broadly speaking, paintings of flowers, birds, small animals and insects, evoking the frailty of existence, the tenuous nature of sentience, fleeting moments of stillness and solitude. The artist has represented images of an idealized, dreamlike and harmonious world, where leopards, swans and colourful birds can coexist without conflict, where the sky is a psychedelic hue, where avocados stay perfectly ripe. Take for example the tenderness of *Because I'm empty* (2022) and the emotional depth of *And we can never quarantine the past* (2022). The optimistic and gentle vision expressed through these paintings is something profoundly admirable (in a climate where it is easier for an artist to be sardonic than sincere). It provides an intriguing counterbalance against the acerbic social commentary on consumerism and human wastefulness set forth in *They can make festivals in our struggles* (2021), *You think you're not different if you don't exist* (2021) or *Some are more others than equal* (2021). This essay features reflections on some of the key subjects and themes appearing in the artwork as well as the underlying worldview suggested by the artist's paintings.

It would be fair to say that although some of the subjects are inherently beautiful things occurring in nature, such as the flowers in *Romantic reflections of an idealized past* (2021), *Widespread open secret* (2021) or *Before Mother turned into a quilt* (2022), the artist has also turned her creative attentions to depicting the wastefulness of mankind in images which are jarring, dissonant and frankly repellent to the viewer, such as upturned trash cans strewn in the middle of a roadway or a pair of portable washrooms blotting the view of suburban sprawl. Creative inspiration is drawn from images of fauna and flora, but perhaps one might ask what beauty can possibly be distilled from the graffiti-covered, desecrated trash bins depicted in *They can make festivals in our struggles*,



Alejandra Morales, *For whom ? You are loved*, 2020, acrylic and oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

which is primarily a social critique. Some of the most thought-provoking paintings portray the intersection of these paradigms, such as *You think you're not different if you don't exist* or *Our one haven of refuge is ourselves* (2021). To the point expressed earlier in this essay, when nature's fragile beings confront the urban landscape, the moose – or deer in the headlights, as it were – are one step away from existential danger.

Speaking of moose, let us consider, for a brief moment, the exquisite rendering of the image of the moose portrayed in *In the midst of aridity* (2021). What could be the significance of this animal for an artist who was born and raised in Monterrey, Mexico? The answer is relatively straightforward – Morales has spent much of her adult life, including formative years of her artistic career, living in Quebec and British Columbia. *In the midst of aridity* is an expression of nostalgia for the land she adopted as her home in recent years.

Speaking to a profound solitude and emotional unrest, the works *And we can never quarantine the past* (2022), *Our heroes have killed themselves* (2022) or *And you're empty* (2022) are arguably, from the perspective of the artist, the most intimate and stark articulations of the precarious sense of frailty, and even of suffering, mentioned at the outset. The title of *And we can never quarantine the past* alludes to the social isolation and fragmentation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this piece, Morales has methodically captured a profoundly melancholic and dejected expression in the eyes of her subject. The pandemic has impacted the human psyche in untold ways, and the isolation represented in these paintings is something to which many viewers can undoubtedly relate.

To conclude, Morales has mastered the art of portraying the fragility of a flower, the abrasive presence of a waste bin and the abject solitude expressed in the eyes of a ram. Fundamentally, her paintings offer a more optimistic, happier vision of the intersection between nature and the urban world. The artist has reimagined a gentler, kinder version of the environment, where natural predators and prey can coexist in harmony, where true beauty is something deeply fragile and ethereal, yet all-prevailing. Morales's art represents an invaluable salve for the human psyche, particularly in these unsettled and precarious times.

KITT PEACOCK

Between Two Worlds

Carmen Levy-Milne

Storytelling is a kind of suturing. But I am also writing from within the cuts.¹

- KJ Cerankowski

Do you want to hear a story?

This is the rhetorical invitation that Kitt offers the audience before entering their own fiction. The room is dark per their request, and we are left with no choice but to listen as they hold us in a place of uncertainty, of disorientation, ready to hear what comes next.

As I sit with Kitt in their studio, I am greeted by the smell of beeswax that has recently been poured into rock vessels. Bits of mushroom spores scatter their desk, and their past projects surround us, each representing milestones in their transformative and familiar practice. Here, we speak of the dynamics of oral storytelling, of the imagined versus actualized violence against trans and gender-non-conforming people – especially the racialized trans members of their community who are the most at risk of these threats of violence – and what it means for trans people to take up the role of the ghost in response to such a contentious environment.

Techniques of folk oral storytelling are commonly woven throughout Kitt's practice of trans re-imaginings. It is a method that, as Kitt writes, provides "a site for queer dis-orientations and a vessel for transgender healing."² Through speaking queerness into these stories, Kitt creates lore for transness, finding space in the fantastical futures that trans and gender-non-conforming people have often been left out of or forced to witness from the margins.

Who is allowed to tell stories? Who receives them? And what does this negotiation divulge?

In the story they tell, we follow the character who (in this iteration) is called Liliwhite. As a trans person who is unable to cope or relate to his environment, we follow this character as he runs away from his family and surrounding village. On this journey, he leaves, gets



Kitt Peacock, *Untitled*, 2022, digital photograph. Courtesy of the artist

lost in an unforgiving landscape, is helped by an elusive spirit, is hidden – whether through death or deception, it is unclear – and is almost always saved by his own use of violence.

Here, Kitt writes: “In all of the bog stories, violence is the burden that saves Liliwhite. But there’s also another story, after the hunters turn back. Liliwhite makes peace with his actions eventually, but what do the hunters do to the next trans or gender-non-conforming person born in that village? Does the threat of violence save them, or mark them as a terror that must be resolved? Because real violence always returns to the most vulnerable members of our community...”³

Liliwhite’s desire to stay hidden, and use of violence, is always an act of self-preservation. In his article, “Necrointimacies: Affect and the Virtual Reverberations of Violent Intimacy,” Nael Bhanji traces how the afterlives of trans deaths (and particularly racialized trans deaths) are a time of immense politicality.⁴ When racialized trans deaths are used to affirm morbid structures of belonging – that centre white trans existence in processes

of memorialization – perhaps it is through taking up the role of the ghost that trans folks are able to take agency over their afterlives and, therefore, stay hidden.

Ghosts are often characterized by the traces and absences left in the wake of violence – whether they are the ones that committed this violence and are now tethered to the ground that hosted their retaliation, or it is the violence inflicted onto them where their aggressors attempt to erase them from the landscape. For Avery Gordon, ghosts, and particularly the act of haunting, is described as “an animated state in which suppressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely.”⁵ In this definition, the ghost exists as an agentic being that takes up an inherently liberatory position – whereby, on the one hand, the haunting figure is evidence that violence has not succeeded in its mission of erasure and suppression. And, on the other hand, it recognizes the ghost as having a self-determined afterlife – or lives.

Accordingly, much of my own thinking through the radical potential of ghostly beings is informed by stories of Jewish ghosts, demons and creatures. In a series of zines featuring monsters from Jewish mythology and folklore, artist Ezra Rose explains that such creatures – despite various fearful interpretations – are not anti-divinity, but rather, “part of the spiritual order rather than antagonistic towards it.”⁶ Like Liliwhite, they are not one-dimensional terrors – but simply beings that exist between two worlds, often defined by their encounters with violence, and who find haunting as a, in this case, divine resolution.

Perhaps Kitt’s articulations, then, call for a heeding to the haunt – to live as and alongside ghosts. This heed, this attentiveness to the agentic beings of ghosts, recognizes the subversive, self-determined and elusive nature of hauntings that Kitt’s practice draws into (in)attention.

How are stories of trans survival told?

How do we hold space for those made monstrous to haunt the landscape back?

- 1 KJ Cerankowski, *Suture: Trauma and trans becoming* (Goleta, CA: punctum books, 2021), 19.
- 2 Kitt Peacock, UBC Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory MFA Roundtable Presentation, Vancouver, BC, 20 January 2023.
- 3 Peacock, MFA Roundtable Presentation.
- 4 Nael Bhanji, "Necrointimacies: Affect and the Virtual Reverberations of Violent Intimacy," *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* 1:4 (2019): 115.
- 5 Avery Gordon and Janice Radway, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.
- 6 *The Witch Wave*, "#96 - Ezra Rose, Jewish Monster Maker," podcast, hosted by Pam Grossman, 11 October 2022, 1h 18 m.

List of Works

Reggie Harrold
Stretch, 2022
inkjet print on paper
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Reggie Harrold
Untitled, 2022
inkjet print on paper
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Reggie Harrold
Untitled, 2022
inkjet print on paper
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Reggie Harrold
Untitled (series), 2022-23
sinew and assorted gifted beads
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Reggie Harold
Untitled, 2023
sinew and beads
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Sarv Irajii
After a thousand stories being told, After a thousand stories not being told, 2023
video and pinewood, cotton fabric and acrylic paint
20 m and 200.0 x 125.0 x 125.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Ramneet Kaur
Reverberations, 2023
graphite, compressed charcoal, soft pastel, burnt wood
on fabric, thread, spore prints and audio recording
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Alejandra Morales
A nadie le importa tanto como a tí, 2023
acrylic and oil on canvas
127.0 x 91.4 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Alejandra Morales
It tasted sad, as though time itself were starting to freeze over, 2023
acrylic and oil on canvas
127.0 x 127.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Alejandra Morales

I dreamed about some rotten soap, 2023

acrylic and oil on canvas

127.0 x 127.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Alejandra Morales

*Porque estás vacío, y porque estoy vacía, y porque
no podemos poner el pasado en cuarentena, 2023*

acrylic and oil on canvas

119.4 cm x 160.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Alejandra Morales

A landscape of consumable dreams, 2022

acrylic and oil on canvas

61.0 x 61.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Kitt Peacock

After Tjövik, 2023

ritual; scree field (dirt, rocks, moss and lichen),
lanterns, tent, sound recording and polar night

dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Ritual led on 4 May 2023 beginning at 6 pm

On the Outdoor Screen

Melissa S. Armstrong

Transmute ^{[5:18:11.20] Δ [7:22:2.23]}_[5:23:6.23], 2023

video

9 m 18 s

Courtesy of the artist

The artists acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x̣ṃəθḳʷəỵəm (Musqueam) people.

Things that do not come by the road is animated by kinships and alliances across multiple subjectivities. In producing this exhibition, the artists have valued entanglements with the outside – with supernatural, non-human, contradictory, sensory and ambiguous forces.

These alternative paths of connection have been woven into the fabric of the exhibition. For the past year and a half, interdisciplinary artist Melissa Armstrong has developed their practice in community with the MFA cohort. Our work has been deeply affected by their presence and generosity. We have invited Melissa Armstrong to present their work with ours in the 2023 MFA exhibition in order to highlight and affirm the importance of the connections we make outside of institutional structures.

We would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory (AHVA) and the staff of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery for their support. And we'd like to extend special thanks to our advisors, professors and committee members: Ninan Abraham, Dana Claxton, Michael Gordon, Gareth James, Phillip McCrum, Karice Mitchell, Manuel Piña, Kavita Philip, Marina Roy, T'ai Smith, Dan Starling, Althea Thauberger and Gu Xiong.

Thank you to the AHVA staff for their support over the past two years: Yasmin Amaratunga, Robert Bos, Rémi Castonguay, Tracy Chiu, Ian Craig, Bryn

Dharmaratne, Tim Fernandes, Greg Gibson, Jeremy Jaud, Andrew Keech, Trey Le, Brandon Leung, Jeff O'Brien, Andrea Tuele and Rachel Warwick. We are grateful to the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery for extending the invitation to us to show our work.

Thanks to the writers for their generous contributions to this catalogue: Nicholas Backman, Carmen Levy-Milne, Ido Radon, T'ai Smith, Dan Starling and Althea Thauberger.

We would like to thank our colleagues in the MFA program: Francisco Berlanga, Alex Gibson, Tiffany Law, Olivier Mbabazi, Jesse Ross and Morgan Sears-Williams, along with Melissa Armstrong and our colleagues in Art History and Critical and Curatorial Studies.

Many thanks to the visiting artists and curators for their dedicated conversations in the studios: Daniel Barrow, Autumn Star Chacon, Heather Igloliorte, Germaine Koh, Taqralik Partridge, Diamond Point and Hajra Waheed.

We would also like to thank our friends, families and communities for their support and guidance.

Finally, we are grateful for the funding sources that helped to make our studies possible: the BC Arts Council Scholarship, the B.C. Binning Memorial Fellowship, the Roloff Bery Foundation Scholarship, the First Citizens Cultural Council Indigenous Scholarship, the New Relationship Trust Education Award, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Award and the UBC Faculty of Arts Graduate Award.

This catalogue was produced in conjunction with *Things that do not come by the road: UBC Master of Fine Arts Graduate Exhibition 2023* presented at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery from 5 May-4 June 2023. The exhibition and catalogue production are made possible with support from the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia.

Edited by Jacqueline Morrissette-Addison

Designed by David Aitken

ISBN 978-0-88865-488-5



MORRIS AND HELEN **BELKIN ART GALLERY**
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