

PLACED

Andrea Carvalho Laura Madera Czarina Mendoza Casey Plett

Curated by Nadja Pelkey

Belonging is a Longing: The virtue of Dislocation

Placed gathers the work of three artists and one writer whose works address biography, place and landscape. Re-casting objects, memories, and materials in the service of dislocating assumed narratives, the works share a spectre of inherited memory and the repeated performance of belonging.

The works are interspersed through the gallery space with excerpts from Casey Plett's *Little Fish*, a novel about a young trans woman reconciling a family secret rooted in rural Manitoba with her life in Winnipeg. Plett's protagonist, Wendy, is always moving from one space to another; hardly ever still she is alternately searching and retreating. Shifting from the gift shop where she works to the apartment, the bar, the vendor, and the frozen streets of Winnipeg as she reconsiders what she understands of her family:

"...shuddering and watery from freezing rain, she went right up to her room and opened the second photo album she'd taken from her Oma's house, the one from the early eighties." (PLETT)

The family photo album, functions as a way to search for past evidence of future being through the identification of any similarity as proof of belonging. In Plett's work, it is an absence from the album that provides evidence of the presence of a secret. The incomplete narrative signals a break in the timeline and provides Wendy with a point at which to enter into the re-construction of the way she understands herself and how she may belong to her family.

Belonging is exercised differently in the works of Andrea Carvalho and Czarina Mendoza, each of which address the experience of first generation Canadians and their complicated relationships to maintaining distinct cultural identities. These identities are rooted in traditions experienced largely indirectly, through the dislocated repetition

of ritualized practices by relatives. Andrea Carvalho uses the colloquial poetry of a Portuguese proverb to examine domestic and decorative forms in wall works like "Where there is lace there are nets" and "The Maria's". The quasi-figural, sculptural forms of "When will you get tired?" and "lean in" blend wood, glass fringe and foam in figurations whose improbable balance gesture towards a potential dissolution. Tension in repose. Carvalho's works approach an understanding of her provenance as filtered through time and place, the way news travels through a family, losing and gaining pieces as it travels.

Czarina Mendoza's work *Pambahay (intended for in the house)* uses sheets and Camay soap to evoke the linen closets of relatives where the strong scent of perfumed soap permeates the abundance of sheets. In *Manilla Ambicion*, Mendoza uses found fabrics with a MahJong table where she has arranged tiles, hand painted with "MOST ORIENTAL" and "MOST OCCIDENTAL". Mendoza's work uses an accumulation of pattern and material to address themes of hospitality, belonging and acculturation.

While Mendoza, Carvalho and Plett's works make oblique reference to place, there is no concrete depiction. The watercolour paintings of Laura Madera interspersed throughout the exhibition provide spaces to consider place as physical. Using latex resists and watercolour pigments, Madera's works suggest immense pictorial depth while being no more dense than a warm breath. Both physically and metaphorically, place is fragile here. The forms that populate Madera's scenes are derived from the natural world, re-cast in the invented landscapes. "Large panel with hot spots" is electric and acidic, while "Heart Ridge" "Fecundity" "Glow", and "Sad Poppy Lamp" can be interpreted as nightscapes where more is hidden than revealed. "Lost and Found: Detritus" is the only work for which there is a physical analog - a lump of latex pulled from

the surface of another work. The inclusion of this work functions as a way of introducing the making in the seeing.

Inasmuch as identity is tied to place, it is the practice of the place that fixes the idea. When the practice is relocated the continued repetition of inherited acts is a dislocated gesture of belonging. Dislocation becomes the means through which new forms can emerge, and new practices develop in new places.

Edited by Karen Engle

Laura Madera

Laura Madera received her BFA from Emily Carr University, BC and an MFA from the University of Guelph, ON. Her practice explores the potential of watercolour as a means to poetically investigate phenomena within a contemporary context. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Oshawa ON, Monastiraki Montreal QC, The Bakery Vancouver BC and is held in private collections across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Canadian Art Magazine has consistently listed her solo exhibitions in their "Must-sees This Week". She was named as one of Canada's most promising emerging painters by the Magenta Foundation. She is a recent recipient of an Emerging Artist Production grant from the Ontario Arts Council and served as a member of the Board of Directors at Artspace. lauramadera.ca

Andrea Carvalho

Andrea Carvalho is Portuguese-Canadian, she holds an MFA from Concordia University, Montreal QC. Her practice is centred within a dialogue of place, experiences of the built environment, and materiality. She has participated in several group exhibitions at Eastern Edge, Cambridge Galleries, Dare-Dare, Art-Mur, Burlington Arts Centre, as well as solo exhibitions at Forest City Gallery, and Latcham Gallery. She has been invited to participate in residencies in Windsor and speak in Newfoundland, Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. She is a member of (F)NOR collective and is based in Hamilton, Ontario. <http://andreacarvalho.ca/>

Casey Plett

Casey Plett wrote the novel *Little Fish*, the short story collection *A Safe Girl to Love*, and co-edited *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Science Fiction and Fantasy From Transgender Writers*. She is the recipient of the Amazon.ca First Novel Award, the ALA Stonewall Barbara Gittings Literature Award, and a two-time recipient of the Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Fiction. Caseyplett.com

Czarina Mendoza

Czarina Mendoza (b. 1991, Alberta) holds an Honours Bachelor degree in Media Art History & Visual Culture from the University of Windsor. She draws reference from exported goods, inherited cultural memory and Asian supermarkets. Her practice explores the intrinsic structures of gift-giving traditions that come to define Filipino culture. While her work examines the diasporic identity, her main focus lies in the intricacies of reciprocating ritual practice, language and familial expectation. Czarina is a collaborative member of LEFT Contemporary gallery and studio space. www.czarinamendoza.com

Nadja Pelkey

Nadja Pelkey is an artist, writer, and cultural worker based in Windsor, Ontario. She earned a BFA from the University of Windsor, and an MFA from the University of Guelph. She has contributed catalogue essays, reviews, and criticism to both regional and national publications. In 2014 she was nominated for the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts by senior artist nominee Iain Baxter. Her work has appeared in both commercial and public galleries in Ontario, Alberta, the United States, and Finland.

Forward to Publication - N. Pelkey:

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