

'I' Statements

In the context of Montreal artist Kim Kielhofner's exhibition *Reading Patterns* at LUX, Erik Martinson presents a programme of works by First Nations moving image artists. The screening will be followed by a discussion between Martinson, Kathryn Siegel and Carly Whitefield on Canadian artist's moving image and its distinct trajectories and traditions.

'I' Statements are postulated somewhere between assertive and empathetic. Used in therapeutic as well as corporate lingo, they smooth requests—make them palatable—to anchor them in the personal so their user becomes relatable. Their attached demands, pills hard to swallow, are ushered through, coated with honey. That's the idea. The inferred 'you' affected the speaking 'I' and something, a behaviour for example, needs to be acknowledged and likely modified.

'I' Statements are tools. Their tactical deployment provides a means for many ends. They can be coded in many ways. The works in this programme assert themselves: speaking, showing and complicating the relations of the 'you' and the 'I' on the spectrum the 'I' Statement operates on. Indigenous politics, identity, experience and sovereignty inform moving-image questions, requests and statements. Battling and breathing from the context of settler-colonialism in Canada, which includes macro and micro instances of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. There are many statements that need to be heard, ingested whether they are seasoned with pain and anger, or humour and hope, or a mix thereof. The works featured in *'I' Statements* can come from the gut, and hit there too, but they also enact a simultaneous questioning of tropes, stereotypes, narrative and image-making conventions. They say things by saying them, but also by not saying them in highly coded and nuanced ways. Behaviours may be adjusted as a result.

Works by: Shelley Niro, Thirza Cuthand, Mike MacDonald, Wanda Nanibush, Rebecca Belmore and Paul Wong, Ehren Bear Witness Thomas, Danis Goulet, Dana Claxton, and Adam Garnet Jones.

Curated by Erik Martinson

Programme:

The Shirt, Shelley Niro, 2003, 5:55.

Helpless Maiden Makes An "I" Statement, Thirza Cuthand, 1999, 6:00.

Rat Art, Mike MacDonald, 1990, 10:00.

Arrivals and Departures, Wanda Nanibush, 2012, 5:15.

VIGIL 5.4, Paul Wong, 2010, 8:29. *Vigil* performance by Rebecca Belmore, 2002.

Woodcarver, Ehren Bear Witness Thomas, 2011, 5:44.

Wakening, Danis Goulet, 2013, 8:51.

Hope, Dana Claxton, 2007, 9:51.

Secret Weapons, Adam Garnet Jones, 2008, 5:30.

Total duration: 65:35

With the support of Canada House and thanks to Gabriel Araujo, CFMDC, and Vtape.

Programme Notes:

The Shirt, Shelley Niro, 2003, 5:55.

Irony narrative/performance chronicling the effects of colonialism on native people in North America. (SN)

Shelley Niro was born in Niagara Falls, NY and currently lives in Brantford Ontario. Niro is a member of the Six Nations Reserve, Bay of Quinte Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) Nation, Turtle Clan. Niro is a visual artist whose work has shown at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), The National Museum of the American Indian (New York and Washington, DC) and has recently exhibited at the Museum of Indian Art Institute in Santa Fe (New Mexico). Niro is a winner of the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts 2017 and Scotiabank Photography Award 2017. (shelleyniro.ca)

Helpless Maiden Makes An "I" Statement, Thirza Cuthand, 1999, 6:00.

By using clips of evil queens/witches this video plays off the sadomasochistic lesboerotic subtexts commonly found in children's entertainment. A helpless maiden is tiring of her consensual s/m relationship with her lover, and "evil" queen. She wants to break up. An impassioned monologue in a dungeon with our heroine in wrist cuffs quickly becomes an emotionally messy ending in flames. This video was inspired by the artist's own childhood "kiddie porn", Disney movies which turned her on to no end and kicked off many a prepubescent masturbation session. (TC)

Thirza Cuthand was born in Saskatchewan and grew up in Saskatoon. Since 1995 she has been making short experimental narrative videos and films about sexuality, madness, youth, love, and race, which have screened in festivals internationally, including Mix Brasil Festival of Sexual Diversity, Frameline, Vancouver Queer Film Festival, and Oberhausen International Short Film Festival where her short *Helpless Maiden Makes an 'I' Statement* won honourable mention. Her work has also screened at galleries including the Mendel, The Ottawa Art Gallery, and Urban Shaman. She has work in the collection at the National Gallery in Ottawa and at UCLA. She has written a feature screenplay and sometimes does performance art if she is in the mood. She is of Plains Cree and Scots descent and currently resides in Saskatoon. (www.thirzacuthand.com)

Rat Art, Mike MacDonald, 1990, 10:00.

"*Rat Art*, my video piece was inspired by the popular TV program, *America's Funniest Home Videos* as well as a 1989 Vancouver performance event by Rick Gibson that concerned the fate of a rat called Sniffy. The star of my video escaped technology only to be done in by nature in the form of Aura, our cat." (MM)

Mike MacDonald was born in 1941 in Sydney, Nova Scotia of Mi'kmaq ancestry. He was at the forefront of video and media art from the late 1970s and continued his artwork up until his passing in 2006. MacDonald drove across Canada every year working as a video installation artist and gardener in addition to pursuing photography and new media projects. Self-taught, he focused on the environment, incorporating plants and animals in his artworks. Inspired by both Mi'kmaq and Western thought, he drew from science as well as traditional medicine and ethno-botany. His artwork has been exhibited internationally at venues including the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona and the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, France. In 1994, he was awarded the prestigious Jack and Doris Shadbolt Prize from the Vancouver Institute for Visual Arts and in 2000, he received the first Aboriginal Achievement Award for New Media presented at the Toronto imagineNATIVE Festival.

Arrivals and Departures, Wanda Nanibush, 2012, 5:15.

A lyrical story of entry into foster care inaugurating a life of arrivals and departures. (WN)

Wanda Nanibush is an Anishinaabe-kwe image and word warrior, curator and community organizer living in her territory of Chimnissing. Currently, Nanibush is a guest curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario and is touring her exhibition *The Fifth World*, which opened January 2016 at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. The island life allows her to finish upcoming projects, including a film called *A Love Letter to My People*, also a documentary on Gerald Vizenor, and a book called *Violence No More* (Arp Press), as well as an anthology of Indigenous Curatorial Writing and more. She has a Masters Degree in Visual Studies from the University of Toronto and has taught doctoral courses on Indigenous history and politics at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. (www.nanibush.com)

VIGIL 5.4, Paul Wong, 2010, 8:29. Vigil performance by Rebecca Belmore, 2002.

At the 2002 Talking Stick Festival in Vancouver Paul Wong recorded Rebecca Belmore's performance VIGIL. The unedited document and excerpts have been used by Belmore in various ways. 8 years later Wong edits his short version of this seminal performance and recording. "Performing on a street corner in the Downtown East Side, Belmore commemorates the lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women who have disappeared from the streets of Vancouver. She scrubs the street on hands and knees, lights votive candles, and nails the long red dress she is wearing to a telephone pole. As she struggles to free herself, the dress is torn from her body and hangs in tatters from the nails, reminiscent of the tattered lives of women forced onto the streets for their survival in an alien urban environment. Once freed, Belmore, vulnerable and exposed in her underwear, silently reads the names of the missing women that she has written on her arms and then yells them out one by one. After each name is called, she draws a flower between her teeth, stripping it of blossom and leaf, just as the lives of these forgotten and dispossessed women were shredded in the teeth of indifference. Belmore lets each woman know that she is not forgotten: her spirit is evoked and she is given life by the power of naming." Description from (rebeccabelmore.com). In the closing moments, Belmore is leaning against a pickup truck, playing on the sound system is 'Its A Man's World' by James Brown. On Dec. 9, 2007 serial killer Robert Pickton (58), was found guilty on six counts of 2nd degree murder in the deaths of Sereena Abotsway, Mona Wilson, Andrea Koesbury, Georgina Papin, Brenda Wolfe and Marina Frey. He is suspected in the disappearance of dozens of women. (PW)

Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe) is a Winnipeg-based multi-disciplinary artist from Upsala, Ontario. In 2013 she won the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. She gained international acclaim at the 2005 Venice Biennale's Canadian Pavilion, where she was the first Indigenous woman to represent Canada. Belmore has exhibited and performed internationally and nationally since 1987. She won the Jack and Doris Shadbolt Foundation's prestigious VIVA Award 2004 and the 2009 Hnatyshyn Visual Arts Award. Her work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Canada Council Art Bank, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and many others. Belmore is exhibiting as part of Documenta14 in 2017. (rebeccabelmore.com)

Paul Wong is a media-maestro making art for site-specific spaces and screens of all sizes. He is an award winning artist and curator who is known for pioneering early visual and media art in Canada, founding several artist-run groups, leading public arts policy, and organizing events, festivals, conferences and public interventions since the 1970s. Writing, publishing and teaching have been an important part of his praxis. With a career spanning four decades he has been instrumental proponent to contemporary art. Born in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, in 1954, Paul Wong has shown and produced projects throughout North America, Europe and Asia. His works are in many public collections including those of the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Canada Council Art Bank Ottawa, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. In 2005, Paul Wong received Canada's Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Art. (paulwongprojects.com)

Woodcarver, Ehren Bear Witness Thomas, 2011, 5:44.

This project was made in response to the murder of John T. Williams by a Seattle police officer. We decided to make this piece when we first heard the news reports that the officer who shot Williams four times was not being criminally charged. The idea was to produce an audio-visual work that could be used to create awareness for people and communities who otherwise would never have been exposed to Williams' death as well as to the ongoing violence against Aboriginal peoples in North America. (ET)

A founding member of A Tribe Called Red and The NDN Talent Collective, **Ehren Bear Witness Thomas** (Cayuga), produces experimental video installation and screen works, as well as audio installation, video editing and video production. He is the recipient of four APCMA's, a Juno Award and the Emerging Artist Award from the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival. He exhibited his solo show *The Only Good NDN* at the Sydney Festival in Australia. His video work has screened at prestigious film festivals around the world including Oberhausen, Berlinale, and Rotterdam. A Tribe Called Red has created a signature style called Pow Wow Step, a mix of traditional powwow vocals and drumming with cutting-edge electronic music. The groups' success has grown from their Electric Powwow events in Ottawa, which were created to continue the idea of powwow culture by bringing people together to celebrate good music, dance, and most of all, to have a good time. (atribecalledred.com)

Wakening, Danis Goulet, 2013, 8:51.

In the near future, the environment has been destroyed and society suffocates under a brutal military occupation. A lone Cree wanderer Weesakechak searches an urban war zone to find the ancient and dangerous Weetigo to help fight against the occupiers. *Wakening* is part of the Stage to Screen anthology of films created by Producer Glen Wood to celebrate The Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre's 100th Anniversary at TIFF 2013. The film was shot entirely on location at The Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre and premiered there during TIFF 2013. (DG)

Danis Goulet is an award-winning writer and director whose work has screened at numerous festivals including TIFF, Sundance, Berlin, Aspen Shortsfest, and imagineNATIVE. In early 2014, her film *Wakening* had its U.S. premiere at the Sundance Film Festival, following its screening at the 2013 TIFF opening night gala at the Elgin Theatre. In 2013, her short film *Barefoot* was recognized with a Special Mention from the Berlin International Film Festival Generation 14plus international jury. Her work has been broadcast on ARTE, CBC, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, Air Canada, and Movieola – The Short Film Channel. She is an alumnus of the National Screen Institute's Drama Prize Program and the TIFF Talent lab. She is also a former director of the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto. Danis (Cree/Métis) was born in La Ronge, Saskatchewan and now resides in Toronto.

Hope, Dana Claxton, 2007, 9:51.

The artist ponders the possibilities of reconciliation. Upon the first round of rebuilding, it works perfectly and then another try makes it more difficult. This work considers geo-politics, earth democracy and cross-cultural repair. (DC)

Dana Claxton works in film, video, installation, photography, performance art, curation, aboriginal broadcasting and pedagogy. The critical intent of her practice is to seek social justice for Indian people in North America. Her work is held in international public collections including the Vancouver Art Gallery, National Gallery of Canada and the Eitljorg Museum and has been screened at MOMA in NYC, Walker Art Centre, Sundance and Microwave in Hong Kong. Dana is of Lakota descent and her family reserve is Woodmountain. (www.danaclaxton.com)

***Secret Weapons*, Adam Garnet Jones, 2008, 5:30.**

Secret Weapons is an experimental animated filmic essay that tries to work through the emotional and political confusion that has shaped the way I, and many other young Queer Aboriginal artists, relate to the world. After looking at the films of Mike Hoolboom, my thoughts began to centre on the experiences of growing up under the fear of AIDS in the 1990s, and of the cultural loss and grief that has cycled through the Native community since colonization began. I divided the image into four channels to reference Hoolboom's film "Frank's Cock," while also reinterpreting the framework of the four channels as a digital medicine wheel. Each channel represents a different part of the medicine wheel, a different part of life's journey, a different part of the whole self. The animated channel of *Secret Weapons* gave me an opportunity to move the scope of the film beyond my internal monologue to engage with my network of artists, activists, youth, and allies in the Queer & Aboriginal communities. Each of them manipulated the same set of images in a different way, creating a moving portrait of a community, my own network of "Secret Weapons." Commissioned for CFMDC ReGeneration. (AGJ)

Over the last ten years, **Adam Garnet Jones** (Cree/Métis/Danish) has written and directed a series of award-winning films that toured the international film circuit from Toronto to L.A., Sydney, Berlin and Beijing. Adam released his first dramatic feature-length film, "Fire Song", at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2015. "Fire Song" went on to win the Air Canada Audience Choice Award at imagineNATIVE, the world's largest Indigenous Media Arts Festival before picking up three more audience choice awards and two jury prizes for best film. Even before the film was green-lit for production, the script for "Fire Song" won the WGC's Jim Burt Screenwriting Prize. Adam is currently in the midst of the release for his second feature, "Great Great Great", which picked up awards for Best Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Performance when it premiered this year at the Canadian Film Festival. (adamgarnetjones.com)

Schedule:

Sun 4 Jun 2017 / 4:30 pm - 8:00 pm

LUX, Waterlow Park Centre, Dartmouth Park Hill, London N19 5JF

4:30 pm *"I" Statements* screening

6:00 pm Erik Martinson in conversation with Kathryn Siegel and Carly Whitefield

7:00 pm Reception organised by Canada House

Panelist Bios:

Erik Martinson (Canada/Latvia) is an independent curator and writer based in London, UK. He worked in Toronto at Vtape, a not-for-profit video art distributor from 2005-2014, and was a member of the Pleasure Dome curatorial collective from 2006-2014. He has curated screenings/exhibitions for The Images Festival (2012); A Space Gallery (2012); Art Gallery of Mississauga (2013); Institute of Contemporary Arts London (2015); Chalton Gallery (2016); DIY Space for London (2016); LUX (2016); and Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (2016). He participated in the Independent Curators International (ICI) Curatorial Intensive on Time-Based Media, New York (2013) and was on the selection jury for Videonale.15 at Kunstmuseum Bonn (2015). He was assistant editor for the Nuclear Culture Source Book (edited by Ele Carpenter) published by Black Dog Publishing in partnership with Bildmuseet and Arts Catalyst (2016). Recently he completed his MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths, University of London (2016) and was in residence at Rupert, Vilnius (2016).

Online: erik-martinson.com

Kathryn Siegel is a Canadian researcher and writer. She graduated from the MRes Art: Moving Image programme at Central Saint Martins and is currently undertaking PhD research between King's College London and LUX as the Sir Richard Trainor Scholar in Film Studies. Critical intersections between print culture and the moving image are an ongoing focus of her work.

Carly Whitefield is a curator and editor currently working as Assistant Curator of Film at Tate Modern. She graduated from the MRes Art: Moving Image programme from Central Saint Martins/LUX in 2015. Her research examines contemporary mobilisations of the lecture performance within cinematic practice as well as its longer history in proto-cinematic traditions. Before relocating to the UK, she was an Associate Programmer for the Planet in Focus Environmental Film Festival and a board member for Pleasure Dome in Toronto.