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Jordy Hamilton Freedom Machine 2011 Detail

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Studies In Decay: Where Endings Are Beginnings

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If the world inherently tends towards decay, as thinkers such as Walter Benjamin have suggested, then how does that affect our concept of everyday reality? Should thoughts of decay provoke a gloomy pessimism fed by inevitable disaster? Or, conversely, is decay a signal of imminent transformative potential, a hopeful bridging of beginnings and ends? These are some of the questions raised in "Studies of Decay," an exhibition of works by [Raymond Boisjoly](#), [Jordy Hamilton](#) and [Laura Piasta](#) currently on view at [Or Gallery](#). (Boisjoly and Hamilton are based in Vancouver, while Piasta, who was born there, is now based in Sweden.)

Rather than offering concrete answers to the implications of decay, the works in the exhibition, as curator Jonah Gray explains in a related text, remain open-ended, seizing on present-day tensions between fading pasts and possible futures. In Boisjoly's ongoing series *The Writing Lesson*, the apocalyptic branding power of black-metal band "wordmarks" is transferred into historical-political critique as logos for indigenous place names like Clayoquot, Chilliwack, Masset and Nanaimo. Here, the latest work in the series, *Spuzzum*, is printed on a 9-by-12 foot tarp, a material choice that lends Boisjoly's textual erosion of identity a pointedly temporary form. Hamilton's *Freedom Machine* is a video and collection of fading family photos taken at an annual motorcycle-club barbeque and skeet-shooting contest in the early 1990s. The work centres on the event's cathartic explosion of a motorcycle—a display of intense destruction and ritual-style celebration that, at a glance, may seem oddly foreign, but is also undeniably familiar, at the very least in more recent images of G20 vandalism in Toronto or the Stanley Cup riot in Vancouver. Finally, in Piasta's *Crystallized Lee Jean Jacket*, a vintage denim jacket that has been steeped in salt water, and then dried, hangs from the wall, its stiff surface marked with intricate crystalline residue. Material presence stands in stark contrast to figurative absence; the iconic power of the object is left still and empty, yet preserved. It recalls a remark by the poet W.B. Yeats: "All that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt."