

Amanda Donnan

The Circle (Un)broken: Duane Linklater's *mymothersside*

We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches. . . . We are rooted just like the trees. But our roots come out of our nose and mouth, like an umbilical cord, forever connected to the rest of the world. . . . Nothing that we do, do we do by ourselves. We do not see by ourselves. We do not hear by ourselves. . . . That which the tree exhales, I inhale. That which I exhale, the trees inhale. Together we form a circle.

—Jack D. Forbes

The title of this essay is derived from that of the 2019 work *can the circle be unbroken* (pp. 90–97) by Duane Linklater, who in turn borrowed it from a song released by the Carter Family in 1935, which they adapted from a 1907 Christian hymn. The Carter Family reworked the verses to make the hymn into a funeral song, with lyrics that tell of the death and mourning of a beloved mother from the perspective of one of her children. Linklater, who makes music as well as art and frequently references influential bands in his visual work, adopted the title for a set of five tepee-cover paintings that he created following the passing of his mom, Pauline Linklater. These transform the notched semicircular covering of the traditional Cree dwelling into a support for digitally printed imagery, which the artist then dyed and smudged with plant matter indigenous to the region around his home in North Bay, Ontario. Installed on the walls and on the floor, with some pieces folded up or draped, *can the circle be unbroken* evokes a loss of center: the internal structures are missing, the ends don't meet, the circle of home is broken.

Symbolic of the unity of the four directions in the Medicine Wheel, the tepee form is deeply rooted in Linklater's Omaskêko Cree culture and in his immediate family background as well. While he was raised in the city of Timmins, Ontario, where he went to public schools and got into punk rock and skateboarding, his mother and aunt were born in a tepee and grew up in "fly-in" territory in Northern

Ontario; his grandparents lived entirely in the bush until they were compelled to move to residential schools, a church-operated forced-assimilation program that was not fully abolished until 1996. But the provenance of the title and of the printed imagery gestures to wider circles of reference, too, and the ways in which different cultural forms migrate across, commingle with, and supersede one another. The floral designs printed on the work's joined linen components are sampled from the paintings of Dutch master Ambrosius Bosschaert the elder (1573–1621), whose work inspired the patterning of fabrics that the English traded with Cree peoples beginning in the seventeenth century. In beading and other crafts, these kinds of European floral patterns largely supplanted customary geometric designs, marking another break in the continuum, another instance of loss on the scale of collective history.

In other tepee-cover pieces, Linklater incorporates imagery that affirms the survivance and flourishing of his Indigenous culture, such as the pattern from his daughter Sassa's powwow dress that appears in the three-part *winter in america_no door_âkamenimok* (2020) (pp. 116–21). The pattern nearly disappears behind the hundreds of charcoal markings that outline increasingly distinct and prominent circles across the components of the installation. Created under the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and amid Black Lives Matter protests for racial justice, these markings are multivalent: reflecting on the passing of time, the cyclicity of social history, the whole comprising the many, the strength of family bonds, fear and hope, protection and interconnection. Here again the title includes a reference to music, specifically "Winter in America," a 1975 song by Gil Scott-Heron that describes a dystopic American society in which "robins perched in barren treetops" are "watching last-ditch racists marching across the floor."

These two works make manifest the tensions of conflictual dual heritage represented by the image of the (un)broken circle, but they, and it, are imprinted across the past decade of Linklater's practice in other less representational forms. Working in both post-conceptual and material-driven modes, the artist has consistently addressed the inconsistencies of contemporary Indigenous life within and yet beyond settler systems of knowledge, representation, and value. *Duane Linklater: mymothersside* brings together sculptures, video works, digital prints on linen, and new adaptations of key installations to reflect the range of historical and cultural entanglements that traverse Linklater's frame of reference, accentuating the "difficulty of representing . . . an experience

crossed by contradictions and founded in an alienation from one's scripts."¹ The coexistence of this sense of alienation with integrated ways of living in the present is what I take to epitomize the (un)broken circle.

Using his own metaphorical terms, Linklater has described his methodology as an "excavation" of the aggregated "pile" of misrepresentations that circumscribe Indigenous subjectivities. The pile was and is amassed not only through stereotypical depictions in art, literature, and popular media but through a whole program of alien and alienating systems of representation and classification structured into the epistemology, language, law, economy, space, and social relations of colonial societies. The artist Jimmie Durham, of disputed Cherokee descent, described the supposedly rational carving-up of the world in terms of a "square" episteme, observing in 1974 that capitalist nation-states are "divided in non-connecting squares, each represent[ing] an area of human activity or knowledge." "When new things come into our circle it expands," he wrote, but "when new things come into the Western society, another square is added."² The violent imposition of the square fragmented the Indigenous circle, disconnecting colonized peoples from their histories, landscapes, and own ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting.³

Against this paradigm, Linklater seeks to maintain the expansive, holistic mode of engaging with the world that he calls "simultaneity"—an attunement to the web of historical contexts and cultural meanings in which objects, materials, symbols, places, and people are inextricably enmeshed. Mark Rifkin has described Indigenous temporality in similar terms, as an experience that "operates less as a chronological sequence than as overlapping networks of affective connection (to persons, nonhuman entities, and place) that orient one's way of moving through space and time."⁴ Achieving simultaneity, or "temporal sovereignty" in Rifkin's analysis, despite the persistent legacy of colonial dispossession, consists not in a return to the past but "in an ongoing *re-creation* oriented by an engagement with the historical density—the 'pieces'—of collective identity and experience."⁵ The artist's collaborative project Wood Land School, which since 2011 has organized symposia, exhibitions, and workshops that center Indigenous ideas in institutional contexts, is one way he has worked to gather up the pieces, redress historical omissions, and forge new communities. In his artwork, he has variously unveiled the means by which Indigenous cultures are atomized—frequently focusing on the physical and ideological structures of the museum—and brought

fragments together in fluid new forms that attest to the adaptive endurance of the circle.

Fluidity is frequently “baked into” Linklater’s process, even when what you see in the galleries is a stable object, for now. Repetition, reformatting, site-responsive improvisation, collaboration, quotation, and outsourcing: the artist builds in detours that defer closure and defy settled states. *Duane Linklater: mymothersside* involves all of these strategies, as well as modification of the orientations or locations of certain works over time. Linklater describes this not only as a way of embedding a questioning open-endedness into the exhibition but as a means of continually activating institutional labor and relational functions of care on his behalf. His long-running iterative installation *Blueberries for 15 Vessels* (2012/2021) (pp. 62–65) is one such catalyst, and a project that well expresses the contradictions and complexities described above.

Mutuality and Misunderstanding

On the surface, *Blueberries for 15 Vessels* (or *12 Vessels*, as was the case in a 2015 iteration [fig. 1]), is just what it sounds like: blueberry bushes planted in ceramic containers that have sometimes been positioned on tables or a mound of soil with grow lights above. The containers are created anew for each installation by a local potter



Fig. 1. Duane Linklater. *Blueberries for 12 Vessels*, 2015. Blueberry bushes, clay, earth. Dimensions variable. Installation view, *O Horizon*, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 2015



of the host institution's choosing, and their form is based on the image of an "artifact" in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which Linklater photographed from his computer screen. This reappropriated container was not part of the *Blueberries* project when Linklater initiated the work in 2012, however. He was then a student at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College — a place where he has said he was subject to racist comments and behavior and generally felt ill at ease.⁶ For his thesis project, Linklater planted twelve blueberry bushes in the Hessel Museum's front lawn (fig. 2) and transferred the removed sod into a gallery space (fig. 3), a proposition with echoes of Robert Smithson's *Nonsites* and Gordon Matta-Clark's *Cherry Tree* (1970). The artist has described the project as a gesture, not only toward Indigenous presence in a place where precontact histories have been all but disappeared but also of generosity toward "the difficult community" he was part of there. Linklater elaborated on the impetus for the project in a 2017 interview with Kitty Scott:

It's beautiful to go berry picking, and it is a significant and poetic act. . . . The idea of the berry and berry picking is important in relation to some of these other things I'm interested in, such as the politics of resource extraction and my implication as an artist and Indigenous person in that kind of a system. The berry is a resource, a physical resource that has the possibility to nourish, to give life, to whoever chooses to take it. . . . In my language blueberries are considered inanimate while raspberries are considered animate. That is how the Cree language organizes itself, animacy and inanimacy, alive and not alive. So the conceptual proposition is that these particular resources are alive. And rather than the berry being an "it," the berry itself is an agent, it is a he or she or they.⁷

Left: Fig. 2. Duane Linklater. *a blueberry garden for Bard College*, 2012. Site-specific installation of twelve blueberry bushes. Dimensions variable. Hessel Museum of Art lawn, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Right: Fig. 3. Duane Linklater. *Untitled*, 2012. Three installations of wood pallets and sod from museum lawn. Dimensions variable. Bard College Exhibition Center/UBS Gallery, Red Hook, New York

Though not explicitly instructed to do so, many of his peers picked and ate berries from the bushes following his presentation, thereby enacting a dynamics of resource extraction and ingesting lively agents imbued with meaning by their lives and relationships over the millennia. The artist's act of offering the berries makes the fruit discernible as condensation and carrier of cultural significance, as an other-than-human entity with its own distinctive memory, affinities, and desires. Linklater told me that the distinction between animate and inanimate in the Cree language is in fact more fluid and context-sensitive than the categories discerned by European linguists imply — a blueberry can always be animate, depending on how one is talking about it.

This kind of elastic boundary between subjects and objects is characteristic of many Indigenous epistemologies and dovetails with a view of humans' interconnected relation to the environment that runs counter to Western models of human exceptionalism. Jack Forbes's description — written in 1992 — of the human being connected by an umbilical cord to everything else in the world is illuminating here. In recent years, this kind of thinking — melded with Marxist analysis — has been adopted under the framework of New Materialism in fields like anthropology, with the aim of “listen[ing] to a story told by objects rather than *about* them.”⁸ Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson notes that, while not actually new, materialist approaches do “hold out the promise that our objects might adequately articulate their origins, counteracting capitalism's pervasive veils and mystifications.” She posits a question that is valuable vis-à-vis Linklater's concern with resources: “If we take seriously the idea that we are comprised of the stuff around us (and the substances inside us), might this open up important conversations about justice, accountability, and care?”⁹

The blueberries demand care in a very direct sense, and Linklater brings accountability to bear acutely, too, by specifying that the exhibition curator be the one who tends to the plants. In doing so, he activates the “old” meaning of the word “curator” as a keeper or custodian, from the Latin *curare*, “to take care of or provide for.” This meaning has been largely supplanted by the contemporary model of the curator as producer, who selects, organizes, and interprets exhibitions but has little to do with the hands-on aspects of their upkeep. Assigning ongoing accountability in this way, Linklater structures a mutual relationship in which the emphasis is on duration rather than development, process rather than product. At the end of the exhibition, the bushes

are donated to community gardens, where they may continue to do their work and be worked upon in turn. In this way, the piece functions as a mechanism for replicating an anticolonial “system of reciprocal relations and obligations,” which urges us to interact with “one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms.”¹⁰

The vessels in which the blueberries are planted gesture to an opposing dynamic, in which the pursuit of knowledge has been intertwined with domination, and collection (often, more accurately, confiscation), classification, and categorization have served to fragment cultures and estrange peoples from their own histories. The vessels are modeled on a “globular jar representing a human head with ears pierced” (as it is described in the NMAI collection database) created between 1400 and 1500 during what archaeologists call the Late Mississippian period. The term “Mississippian” is a catch-all category for diverse agrarian societies concentrated in settlements across the midwestern and southeastern United States between 900 and 1450. The so-called Mississippians are the ancestors of many modern tribal nations, and more would be known about them had lineages of knowledge not been violently disrupted by colonial genocide and forced resettlement. As things stand, researchers filling in the gaps have suggested that the head pots functioned as effigies and offerings to the dead, but surviving examples are rare.¹¹ Linklater’s chosen pot was sold to a precursor of the National Museum of the American Indian in 1916 from the collection of “jeweler and amateur archaeologist” Charles F. Antes (1847–1916) and originates from the so-called Big Bone Bank in Posey County, Indiana — a Mississippian cemetery that was eroded by the movement of the Wabash River and first officially excavated in 1828. A website dedicated to archaeological research at the site notes that “a popular regional pastime in the late 1800s and early 1900s was to go to the Wabash riverbank to ‘dig’ out display-quality artifacts,”¹² and Antes likely acquired the head pot on such a foray.

Though naive, this kind of casual misappropriation of significant tribal objects — thought of as collectible curiosities rather than sacred ancestral belongings and community property — is nonetheless linked to an exoticizing and acquisitive colonial worldview. It was common for privileged white people in Antes’s time, especially in “frontier” towns like Seattle, to have “curio corners” in their homes where they displayed Indian baskets and other novelties that reflected on both the owner’s social status and

a pervasive, misplaced nostalgia for “dead or dying” Indigenous cultures.¹³ That many such objects were created expressly for the tourist market and functioned as souvenirs only demonstrates the extent to which they were valued as metonymic devices, bound up with settler fantasies of authenticity and processes of place-making. Linklater’s piece *there’s really only so much I can do and say* (2017) (pp. 88–89) reveals the continuance of this dynamic, presenting framed prints depicting Mesoamerican artworks that he discovered for sale in a bin at a secondhand shop in his town. Without opening the frames, the artist scanned and reframed the prints, activating them as readymades that speak to both meanings of the term “appropriation”: the images apparently functioned for the previous owner as attractive, free-floating signifiers of an Other culture. The four prints are hung as a set with their frames overlapping, which calls attention to them as mediated objects rather than straightforward representations.

Linklater goes several steps further with the Mississippian head pot for *Blueberries for 15 Vessels*, using the faulty translation processes of rephotography and delegated reproduction to allegorize the loss of knowledge that occurs through the expropriation and recontextualization of cultural objects. The artist Raymond Boisjoly (Haida/Quebecois), a friend of Linklater’s, applied a similar methodology of “productive misrecognition” in his series of inkjet prints *From age to age, as its shape slowly unraveled . . .* (2015) (fig. 4), which presents distorted images of African sculptures created by making scans of his mobile device as Alain Resnais and Chris Marker’s film *Statues Also Die* (1953) played on-screen. Boisjoly has likened his approach to introducing a “detour or obstacle” in the process of viewing cultural objects, saying, “If we disorient our vision, if we seek to misunderstand that which is being viewed or recorded, then another type of understanding can emerge. . . . When you don’t have direct or immediate access, it ultimately changes your knowledge of the content and how you might proceed to actually speak to others about it.”¹⁴ This is a useful perspective in relation to Linklater’s recursive replication of the head pot, which “misunderstands” the object again and again, unsettling the ethnographic narrative that contains it and assigning a speculative new purpose as bearer of life-giving fruits.

Fig. 4. Raymond Boisjoly. *(What Comes After) What Came Before*, from *From age to age, as its shape slowly unraveled . . .*, 2015. Solvent-based inkjet print on vinyl. 52 × 75 in.



Knowledge Frameworks

In 2015, Linklater undertook a related project at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA), Salt Lake City, using flawed reproduction processes to evoke the loss and alienation that attend the detachment of objects from their intended functions and broader contexts. Without seeing them in person, he chose seventeen unattributed Indigenous objects created between 1875 and 1978 from the museum’s encyclopedic collection—including nine woven wool Navajo textiles, four Northwest Coast masks and headdresses (Kwakiutl, Cowichan, and Tsimshian), a Haida model totem pole, two Pueblo pots, and a Hopi kachina doll (figs. 5, 6)—and created a low-fidelity copy of each (fig. 7). As noted by the project’s curator, Whitney Tassie, in selecting items with unknown authorship from a diversity of cultures and (not-so-distant) time periods, “Linklater references the history of collecting practices that reduced non-Western makers to simplistic, often stereotypical, cultural categories” while according significant value to the specific origins and



Top left: Fig. 5. Kwakiutl. *Raven Mask*, early 20th century. Pigment on wood. Ulfert Wilke Collection, purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum, from the Permanent Collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts at the University of Utah. UMFA1981.016.002
 Top right: Fig. 6. Unknown artist, Santa Clara Pueblo. *Pot with Bird Design*, ca. 1978. Earthenware. Gift of Kent C. Day, from the Permanent Collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts at the University of Utah. UMFA2003.10.20
 Bottom: Fig. 7. Installation view, *Salt 11: Duane Linklater*, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, February 27–August 2, 2015



Fig. 8. James Luna. *The Artifact Piece* (detail), 1987. Wood, metal, and Plexiglas vitrines; sand, text panels, and artist's possessions. 35% x 74 x 45% in.

provenance of Western artworks.¹⁵ This treatment of Indigenous objects as categorical and ethnographic, as specimens rather than art, is closely linked to the harmful, aforementioned view of Indigenous peoples as existing in the past. Frequent museum interventionist Fred Wilson has noted that ethnographic displays also “create a distance between cultures that doesn’t need to be there. This difference cuts off any connections and flattens out the complexity of our relations.”¹⁶ Artists such as James Luna, who in *The Artifact Piece* (1987) (fig. 8) exhibited himself and his everyday items in vitrines at the San Diego Museum of Man (now the Museum of Us), have addressed these problems before, but Linklater’s approach is distinctive.

As with the Mississippian head pot, the artist photographed images of the Navajo textiles from the museum’s collection database on his computer screen; he then printed his photographs on linen to the scale of the actual objects. Compressed five times in the translation from physical object to printed photograph, the images are extremely pixelated, the texture of the original weavings flattened, their colors and patterns distorted and intersected by moiré lines (pp. 74–75). The sculptural objects were scanned and printed at the University of Utah’s then-new 3D-printing lab rather than at a more capable industrial facility — a choice in favor of inferior precision. Indeed, printed in standard monochromatic off-white ABS plastic with visible seams and other blemishes, the resulting objects are depleted of all color and much of their characteristic detail (pp. 76–79). In this way, Linklater transformed ethnographic

artifacts — fetishized for their authenticity and valued as evidence linked to Western classification schema — into technological artifacts: degraded simulacra that make visible the lossy processes by which they were created and disseminated. Hito Steyerl’s theorization of “poor” images is useful here, describing low-quality copies of photographs and films that achieve broader circulation than the originals, often in defiance of “patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright.” Such images, Steyerl asserts, “tend toward abstraction,” as they are “liberated from the vaults . . . and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of [their] own substance.”¹⁷

Linklater’s transposition of “poor” copies in a museum setting may be seen to trouble the institution’s patrimonial claim on the originals and to gesture to the necessarily incomplete but totalizing impetus of encyclopedic collections. It also underscores the abstracting effects that the mediation of display and cultural generalizations have on the original objects and the people attached to them. Divorced from their makers and community, the textiles, pots, masks, and other belongings are transformed into ideological embodiments of “the specific histories that produced them as well as the global histories of Western expansion that resulted in their collection, their transfer to museums, and their new function as teaching objects.”¹⁸ It is perhaps appropriate that unlike Steyerl’s “poor” images, the artist’s copies were not “liberated” from captivity and do not democratically proliferate but linger in the restricted circulation of private and public collections, including UMFA’s. In conversation, Linklater remarked on the difficulty of undertaking such collection-based projects: they entail extended meditation on the erasure of Indigenous histories, practices, and peoples, which is an

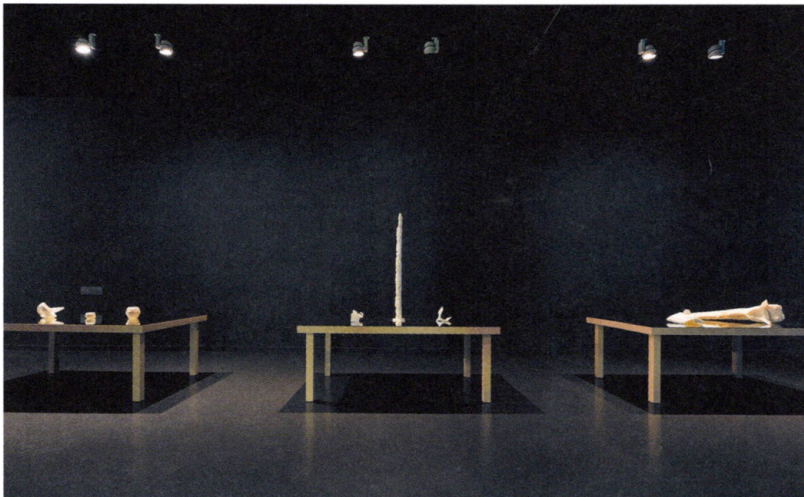


Fig. 9. Installation view, SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul, 2016

exhausting and upsetting place to dwell. He often talks about the role of grief in his work, too, and certainly there is a ghostly aspect to the UMFA installation, which was heightened when the 3D pieces were displayed at SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016 on mirror-top tables in a room with a matte black ceiling and walls (fig. 9).

The question of how to visually register loss — a deficit, something that is not visible — had preoccupied Linklater for years before he undertook his collection translations. In his 2011 performance and video piece *Sunrise at Cape Spear* (pp. 60–61), he approached the question through embodiment, literally inhabiting a space of erasure and attempting to convey the enormity of what was no longer there. The work began with the artist making the journey from Ontario to the island now known as Newfoundland, where Indigenous North Americans are thought to have first come in contact with Europeans when Norse explorers landed around 1000. From the airport in Saint John's he drove to Cape Spear, the most easterly point in North America, to record the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean in one static take. The island's original residents, the Beothuk people, must have observed the same view for part of each year over the course of centuries, as they migrated in patterns that mirrored those of fish, seals, and caribou. However, according to historical records, the Beothuk progressively moved inland as European waterfront settlements grew in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many were killed in violent clashes or by foreign diseases such as tuberculosis and smallpox, and over time, the remainder allegedly succumbed to starvation as the caribou population was depleted. In 1829, the group was declared extinct.¹⁹ All of this is based on settler accounts, though; the Beothuk cannot speak for themselves. Today, while little trace remains of the original inhabitants, the 1836 lighthouse at Cape Spear — a National Historic Site — and the concrete bunkers of a World War II gun battery remain as attractions and serve as apt symbols of the exploration, subsequent occupation, and fortification of the land that precipitated the Beothuk's demise.

Linklater's presence on the shore that day bore witness to the Beothuk's absence and enacted a modest Indigenous counterforce, but the intention was furthermore to unsettle the historical record and, perhaps, redress in a microcosmic way "the violence perpetrated through the organization of history around the coordinates of settler occupation."²⁰ After his trip, Linklater attempted numerous times to insert a sentence about his presence at the site into the Cape Spear Wikipedia entry, which currently notes that "there

is no known archaeological evidence to indicate that Cape Spear was viewed by local Indigenous communities as a place of symbolic geographical importance [as ‘land’s end’].”²¹ His contribution, effectively representing by the fact of his sunrise pilgrimage that the area was and is symbolically significant to Indigenous communities, was repeatedly removed. Pinned to the wall adjacent to the video, emails between Linklater and site administrators document the ensuing dispute over the relevance of his addition to the public record and gesture to the power structures of historical gatekeeping that have suppressed Indigenous perspectives, past and present.

Western knowledge frameworks represented by encyclopedias, even “democratically” authored ones, generally do not square with Indigenous epistemologies and require verifiable references to source texts that usually have not been authored by Indigenous individuals. Hence, despite Linklater’s speculative interloping, the official history so far remains stubbornly fixed. In many ways, the story of the Beothuk encapsulates the kind of teleological narrative that settler colonialism requires in order to justify settlers’ right to stolen land — a process Édouard Glissant called “filiation,” through which colonizers nativize by either assimilating or annihilating the peoples who have prior claims to territory.²² This “conquering linearity” allows colonization to appear as an event that has passed rather than an ongoing process of dispossession and exploitation, a dynamic that, as Glen Coulthard has observed, has been abetted by the shift from an “unconcealed structure of domination” to a “seemingly more conciliatory” set of policies and practices oriented around accommodation and recognition.²³

Land and Architecture

In the colony that became Canada, a foundational step in the process of rendering the land “empty” and thus free for the taking was the declaration of *terra nullius*, meaning that a territory had not been annexed by any recognized nation. This status was enabled by the claim that Indigenous peoples were too “primitive” to bear legal rights to territory — a stunning example of the interdependence of Western anthropological hierarchies of humanity and the operations of imperial power. The abstraction of the land continued through mapping, conversion into units of capital, the renaming and reshaping of places, and urban planning based on the grid. In this process of “alienation of land from life,” *la paperson* points out,

“alienable rights are produced: the right to own (property), the right to law (protection through legitimated violence), the right to govern (supremacist sovereignty), the right to have rights (humanity). . . . In a word, what is produced is whiteness.”²⁴ With deep implications in legal, environmental, and social justice — and as a symbol of settlers’ will to achieve permanence — architecture is a condensation of many of the tensions of colonialism and a significant area of interest for Linklater.

Of particular import in this context, as the typology that commonly structures the encounter with Linklater’s work, is the architecture of the art museum. The “white cube” of the modern art gallery has long been theorized as an ideological construct — supposedly neutral and timeless, bracketed off from history and everyday life. Brian O’Doherty famously claimed in 1976 that the white cube serves to produce autonomous art objects and legitimate them as commodities: “The wall, the context of the art,” O’Doherty declared, “had become rich in a content it subtly donated to the art.”²⁵ That museum and gallery walls also function as technologies for reproducing patriarchal and white supremacist ideology is perhaps best captured in Aruna D’Souza’s notion of “whitewalling,” which brings together “the literal site of contention, i.e., the white walls of the gallery; the idea of ‘blackballing’ or excluding someone; the notion of ‘whitewashing’ or covering over that which we prefer to ignore or suppress; the idea of putting a wall around whiteness, of fencing it off, of defending it against incursions” that would force institutions to “reckon with who they are and who they are meant to serve.”²⁶

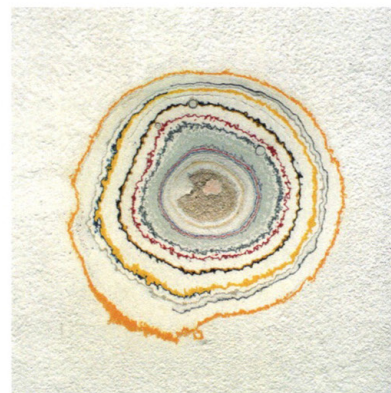
In 2016, Linklater and his wife and frequent collaborator, Tanya Lukin Linklater (Alutiiq/Sugpiaq), mounted *A Parallel Excavation* at the Art Gallery of Alberta (fig. 10), which responded directly to



Fig. 10. Installation view, *A Parallel Excavation*: Duane Linklater & Tanya Lukin Linklater, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, April 30–September 18, 2016

the relegation of their work to a small, ancillary space within the large provincial gallery complex. With project curators Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective, they set out expressly to “explore the complicated relationship between Indigenous peoples and institutions, and more specifically, the role of Indigenous art in the destabilization of institutional discourses through the implied physical breakdown of barriers.”²⁷ Lukin Linklater created layered juxtapositions of excavation tools such as wooden archaeological screens with Inuit prints drawn from the gallery’s collection. Linklater’s proposal to demolish a wall to create more space was denied, so he symbolically dismantled and refigured it in his sculptural works, incorporating construction materials—gypsum board (i.e., drywall), wood, and metal studs—in various ways. In several pieces, he converted these elements of gallery architecture into platforms for items such as a pair of handmade moose-hide moccasins and, in *Trap* (2016) (pp. 80–81), a steel animal snare like those he and his family members have long used for hunting. Other works, including wall-hung assemblages featuring fashion photographs of a young white model in “native” mukluks and patterned garments—the kind of appropriative fashion I recently saw described in *Vogue* magazine as “Indigibberish”²⁸—referenced the “pile” of misrepresentations that the artists seek to excavate (fig. 11). The mixture of allusions to the abstracted dominant picture versus the realities of Indigenous life continued through Linklater’s choice of a specific mold-resistant drywall used in low-cost government housing of the kind frequently found on Indian reserves in Canada.

The artist pursued his interrogation of institutional architecture with *What Then Remainz* (2016/2021) (pp. 82–85) at Mercer Union in Toronto (and later at 80WSE Gallery in New York City), which realized his desire to literally tear down the gallery walls. The piece involves removing the drywall from one or more permanent walls, exposing the internal structure, then taking out the metal studs and replacing them with new framing elements that have been painted red and powder-coated to spell out the work’s title. The deconstructive gesture recalls installations by Michael Asher in which, for example, entire walls were removed to reveal the behind-the-scenes business of commercial spaces like Claire



Top: Fig. 11. Duane Linklater. *A Sort of Naiveté 2* (detail). Four digital prints on archival paper, push pins, drum rim. 25 x 18 x 3 in. Installation view, *A Parallel Excavation: Duane Linklater & Tanya Lukin Linklater*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, 2016

Bottom: Fig. 12. Pierre Huyghe. *Timekeeper*, Wiener secession, 28.04.1999, Scale 1, 1999. Print on transfer paper to be stuck on the wall, architectural intervention, successive exhibitions layer. 9 in. diam.

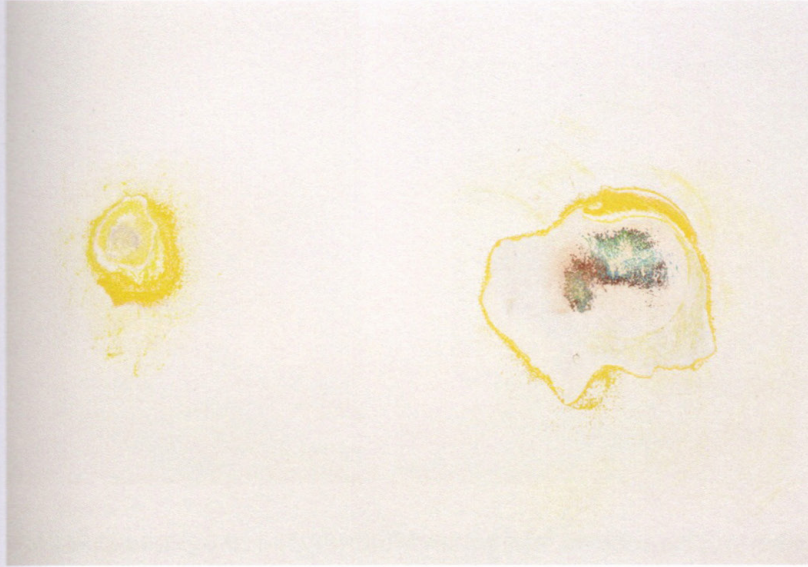
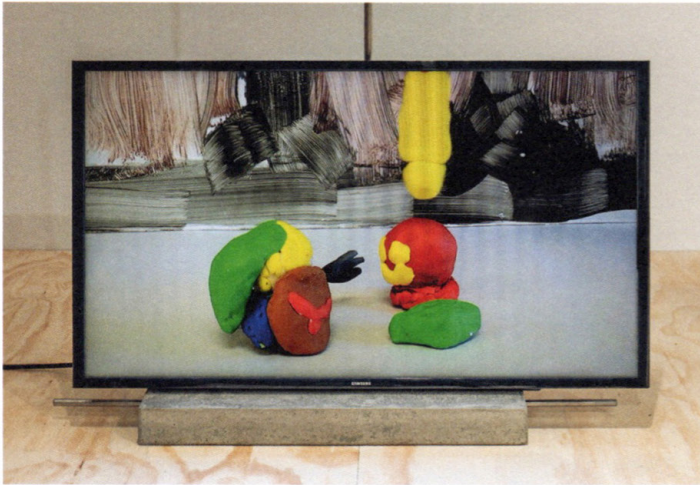


Fig. 13. Installation view (detail), Duane Linklater: *It means it is raining*. Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, June 25–August 17, 2014

Copley Gallery as well as more surface-level historical excavations such as Pierre Huyghe's *Timekeeper* pieces (1999–2014) (fig. 12) and Linklater's own partial retrieval of a painted-over Kimowan McLain mural at Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 2015 (fig. 13). However, in *What Then Remainz*, Linklater dismantles the supposedly timeless and neutral construct of the white cube in order to illuminate a wider web of material relations and their social and economic ramifications.

Asking the question, “What is the museum made out of?” — in a very literal sense, in a very material sense — is important . . . [particularly] when the galleries are located on contested lands, and the actual material that they are made of [such as wood, gypsum, and concrete] is extracted from the land. . . . Often those materials are found in the peripheries of cities, out in the countryside, out in the bush. Indigenous peoples live in or around those spaces; . . . often [they] have to be removed in order for those resources to be extracted.²⁹

The words made manifest in the work amplify the connection to Indigenous rights, referring to a US Supreme Court judgment on the prosecutorial sovereignty of tribal nations written by Justice Sonia Sotomayor in the 2016 case *Dollar General Corporation v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*. Sotomayor's statement, Linklater notes, is for the most part composed in the obfuscating “structural language” of American legalese, which hinges on interpretation of



highly specific yet multivalent terms such as “obligation,” “liability,” “contingent,” “gratuitous,” and “onerous.” He was drawn to the tension that her uncharacteristically poetic phrase “What then remains of the sovereignty of the Indians?” created in this detached, but highly consequential, judicial context: the abstraction of language and yet its real effects on people’s lives. The artist heightens this tension with the subversive “z” pluralization reminiscent of meme culture, which lends a sense of offhand informality and accessibility, and by positioning the installation as a backdrop for objects that attest to the creative agency of Indigenous people close to him. In the 2016 iteration, this included a claymation video by his son, Tobias (fig. 14), and elaborately beaded mittens and moccasins made by his late grandmother Ethel Linklater. The latter were loaned from the collection of Thunder Bay Art Gallery and installed on concrete and steel display structures, titled *Speculative apparatuses*, that Linklater made for them (fig. 15).

What Then Remainz is aligned with, for example, the appropriated text pieces of Hock E Aye Vi Edgar *Heap of Birds*, which underscore the unacknowledged histories and persistent injustices of the settler state (fig. 16), but goes further to directly implicate the art museum and audiences in the social and economic mechanisms by which Indigenous people are disenfranchised. However, like the UMFA copies, the installation does symbolic work while acknowledging its own limitations: at the end of the exhibition, dry-wall is applied over the red-painted studs, which live on invisibly within the museum, reenacting the suppression to which the title alludes. As an artist working in and with the settler institution that he critiques, Linklater is concerned with examining his own role

Left: Fig. 14. Duane Linklater. *Speculative apparatus for the work of nikosis*, 2016. Concrete, stainless steel, flat-screen TV, Apple Mac mini. 36 × 43 × 16 in. With Tobias Linklater’s *Origin of the Hero*, 2016. Stop-motion video (color, sound); 2:43 min. On long-term loan to the Tate Modern, lent by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of the North American Acquisitions Committee 2020. Installation view, *From Our Hands*, Mercer Union, Toronto, Canada, 2016

Right: Fig. 15. Duane Linklater. *Speculative apparatus 3 for the work of nohkompan*, 2016. Concrete, stainless steel. 24 × 16 × 45 in. On long-term loan to the Tate Modern, lent by the Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of the North American Acquisitions Committee 2020. Installation view, *From Our Hands*, 80WSE Gallery, New York City, 2016



Fig. 16. Hock E Aye Vi Edgar
Heap of Birds. *Genocide and
Democracy*, 2016. Ink on paper.
24 sheets, each 22 x 15 in.

in the replication of harmful tendencies and seeks to spark questions around the complicity of Indigenous artists in the fragmentary display and assimilation of their own cultures. His work demands accountability from him, too, and the very uneasiness of his relation to the art institution is part of the way he articulates the precarity of Indigenous life within systems of broader scope and scale.

Nonetheless, Linklater did not want to continually contribute to the very types of resource extraction and displacement to which his drywall assemblages call attention, akin to trying to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools, in Audre Lorde's formulation. In his subsequent engagements with architecture, he moved away from the deconstructive modality toward an affirmative, but still contextually critical, approach centering on the internal structure of the tepee. The artist first used the tepee form, created with prepared sapling poles bound together with rope at the apex, when he was invited to create a public artwork for the 2018 High Line exhibition *Agora*. In response to the grandiose architectural surrounds — the eastern portion of the \$25 billion Hudson Yards project, for example, was then nearing completion — he created a series of five elemental four-pole tepees, each with a large quarried stone suspended in the center, titled *pêyakotênaw* (2018) (fig. 17). The title is drawn from the Cree word for “family,” which, formed from *pêyak* (meaning the number one) and *otênaw* (the word for “city” or “town”), contains within it the



Fig. 17. Duane Linklater.
pêyakotênaw, 2018. Tepee
poles, rope, stones, flagging
tape, paint. Each approximately
181 x 143 x 136 in. Installation
view, *Agora*, a High Line
Commission, New York City, 2018



Fig. 18. Duane Linklater, *dislodgevanishskinground*, 2019. Twelve painted tepee poles, steel cable, charcoal, rope, digital print on linen (black tea, blueberry extract, sumac, charcoal). 220 x 174 x 174 in. Installation view, *Danica Barboza, Jason Hirata, Yuki Kimura, Duane Linklater, Artists Space, New York City, 2019*

notion of a city consisting in relationships rather than of physical structures or fixed geographic footings.

The following year, Linklater recycled the tepee poles from the High Line installation into two new formations at Artists Space, also in New York, creating *landlesscolumnbundle* (2019) (pp. 100–101), a column of poles lashed together with secondhand fur coats, and *dislodgevanishskinground* (2019) (pp. 98–99), a twelve-pole tepee. The former was improvised on the spot in response to the space's characteristic dark fluted columns with a wit and economy of means that recall the work of David Hammons, whom Linklater cites as a major influence. Reprising the tepee form in *dislodgevanishskinground*, the artist this time turned it on its side and, with the help of an architectural engineer and a team of preparators, mounted it to the wall between two columns in the gallery space (fig. 18). While the orientation was necessitated by the height of the tepee, which at more than eighteen feet is too tall to fit upright in most art galleries, it nevertheless creates the effect of an imposing protrusion that suggests radical dislocation. Weathered by a year of exposure outdoors at the High Line and with charcoal rubbed over the scoured whitewash, the upended tepee recollects the history of displacement that made way for urban development in places like Manhattan and Seattle—though it should be noted that the tepee is not the traditional dwelling of either the Lenape or the Duwamish. The fact that it reads this way anyhow is to some extent a function of the way the tepee form has become a geographically displaced and genericized symbol of “Indianness” in the American construction of

Native identity. Appropriated by summer camps and kitschy roadside attractions, it is deeply enmeshed with the nostalgic complex of “playing Indian” described by Philip Deloria.³⁰ While no doubt troubling to someone for whom the form is sacred, this kind of symbolic multivalence — and the questions it raises about identity, authenticity, and misunderstanding — is an important aspect of the piece.

Linklater does take certain measures to denature the tepee and mark its movement out of cultural use and into the aesthetic realm of art. Whitewashing the poles is one of these, and keeping the structure and cover separate is another. The artist’s friend, mentor, and collaborator Brian Jungen (Dane-zaa) used the fully wrapped tepee form in his work *Furniture Sculpture* (2006) (fig. 19) but built it from the wooden framing elements and black leather “skins” of couches rather than traditional materials. Linklater’s *dislodgevanishskinground* includes both structure and cover but maintains a separation; the linen cover draped from the lashing spreads across the floor under the poles to reveal a dyed surface printed with large black X marks. While digitally printed canvases are associated with artists like Wade Guyton, who is well known for his printed “X paintings” — usually interpreted as cancellations — Linklater connects the X to the signatory marks frequently made on treaties by or for tribal representatives. These marks have often been viewed as symbols of illiteracy and naïveté, but as Scott Richard Lyons notes, it is impossible to know exactly what the signers’ intentions were; though made in a “context of coercion,” the X leaves room for “slippage [and] indeterminacy” and ultimately



Fig. 19. Brian Jungen. *Furniture Sculpture*, 2006. Eleven leather sofas. 244 × 232 × 284 in. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Purchased with significant financial support from the Audain Foundation, and additional contributions from Rick Erickson and the Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund

represents “an assent to the new.”³¹ In any case, the marks suggest a discrepancy in understandings — in contemporary discourse if not at the time of signing.

Treaties point back to the issue of land: redressing the settler state’s foundational acts of dispossession, enclosure, and privatization but also, as Linklater puts it, attending to “how we are active on the land and how we create spaces for each other.”³² Beyond drawing attention to the destructive processes of commercial resource extraction and development wrought by settler society, the artist is deeply invested in practicing countervailing models of land use and land-based education. This is captured most vividly in *Modest Livelihood* (2012) (pp. 66–67), a film he and Jungen created together while hunting moose with Jungen’s uncle, elder Jack Askoty, on Dane-zaa Treaty 8 territory in northern British Columbia. The act of hunting is central to each artist’s Indigenous identity but is charged with the debate over the legal status of ancestral ways of living, much of which hinges on the interpretation of treaty provisions pertaining to the sustenance of a “moderate livelihood.” Essentially these provisions allow for subsistence gathering on designated lands but prohibit accumulation (i.e., profit), which is understandably a contentious matter for those whose sovereign rights are externally dictated and infringed.

While the title refers to the struggle for Indigenous self-determination, the film depicts the act of hunting not only as an exercise in sovereign rights but as a relational, intergenerational ritual that connects contemporary Indigenous life to its precontact origins and reaffirms an ancestral continuum. The fifty-minute film is slow and silent, following the artists as they travel by vehicle and on foot through both beautiful natural landscapes and industrial zones like those evoked in Linklater’s architectural excavations. While Jungen and Linklater do eventually track down and kill a moose, the tenor of the film is anticlimactic and antiheroic, focusing instead on processes of waiting and observation as Askoty shares his knowledge of the land. The silence of the film enhances the poetic quality of the visuals and also safeguards the information that is relayed, granting viewers a glimpse of Indigenous pedagogy while maintaining what Glissant called the “right to opacity,” a bulwark against assimilation.³³ Again, Linklater offers crucial insights into the significance of the type of received wisdom portrayed in the film.

This kind of education that plays out within the course of [*Modest Livelihood*] was almost destroyed by the Canadian

government's interventions in our lives, by things like residential schools. The government has been so imaginative about how they would like to destroy us, and how they would like to destroy our education — how we learn from each other, how we are living on and off the land. They want to dismantle all of those things. And this is why, for me, articulating all of those relationships as artists is an important thing to show and to talk about, because it involves something that is beyond myself and beyond my potential life span.³⁴

The making of the film coincided with the inception of Linklater's Wood Land School project, and the focus on collaboration and "creating space for one another" that is present in both — as well as his close friendship with Jungen — has endured since that time. As demonstrated above, the artist has frequently undertaken projects with family and friends, centered the work of other Indigenous artists, and created objects or structured relationships that thematize care and entanglement. Practices like hunting and, in a different way, discursive gatherings on contested lands anchor these vectors of community identity to place and reaffirm a relation to land as social, rather than abstract, space.

Poetic Fragments, Quotation, and Simultaneity

The ambiguous intersections of alienated and social space, and the different systems of labor and value associated with each, are brought to the fore in a series of assemblages Linklater made in 2014 using rolling commercial garment racks and animal pelts. Pelts traditionally were used as currency in Cree culture — as a medium of exchange — but were desired as fashion commodities by settlers. The artist's use of them in sculptural work was inspired by numerous visits to Fur Harvesters Auction, a long-standing operation in North Bay where, he learned, his grandparents had long ago sold furs and where he obtained materials for his sculptures. It is now one of the last such auctions in North America and remains a destination for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous trappers, including some members of Linklater's extended family.

First shown together under the poetic exhibition title *But the sun is up and you're going?*, Linklater's spare arrangements bring these references and market contexts together while imbuing the material with a sense of memory and affection. He has

spoken of his belief that furs retain a residue of their spirit and agency, and indeed his titles and juxtapositions amplify a sense of kinship — in some cases with direct reference to people in his life. Two downy fox furs nestle against each other in *Kiss* (2014) (pp. 68–69), for instance, while in *My brother in law, my sister* (2014) (pp. 70–71), there is a humorous discrepancy between a fox and the faded black T-shirt at its side. *The place I seek to go* (2014) (pp. 72–73) pairs a lone coyote pelt with a video on a monitor depicting the artist’s hand moving through a series of gestures reminiscent of dancer and choreographer Yvonne Rainer’s *Hand Movie* (1966) (fig. 20), which she made from her bed while recovering from an injury. Linklater’s video likewise centers on making do with a wound but accentuates bodily memory, composing a simple yet affecting choreography from the ways that, as a youth, he habitually held his hand to conceal a damaged finger.



Fig. 20. Yvonne Rainer. *Hand Movie* (still), 1966. 8mm film transferred to video (black and white, silent); 8 min. Cameraman: William Davis

A portrait of the artist’s hand also makes an appearance in the digitally printed, eight-panel linen banner *boys don’t cry* (2017) (pp. 86–87), where it is the only original element among appropriated images, insignia, and text. Three of the central panels refer to the Cure’s 1980 album from which Linklater borrowed his title, reiterating the font and iconic silhouetted image of front man Robert Smith that appeared on promotional posters, stickers, and T-shirts. The other panels picture Jesse Ed Davis, an Indigenous guitarist who played with the band Taj Mahal, among other acts; the logo of the American Indian Movement (AIM), dyed pink; a photograph of graffiti from Alcatraz Island, where AIM activists famously protested for nineteen months between 1969 and 1971; and, sewn in sideways, George Caleb Bingham’s 1845 painting *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These images all have personal resonance for Linklater and “activate” particular times in his life. As an amalgam, they reflect on processes of identity formation and the construction of Indigenous masculinity, cohering loosely and temporarily in the artist’s words, as “points that come together and then maybe fall away later” in a “shifting constellation” of identifications.³⁵

This acknowledgment of the ways in which individual identity adheres around public images, ideas, figures, songs, and objects complicates notions of autonomy, recalling both Rifkin’s “overlapping networks of affective connection” and Forbes’s invocation of interrelation. Of course, the use of appropriated images — effectively removing the artist’s “hand” — also has bearing on the idea of

creative authorship: with its eight panels joined into a fifteen-foot-wide wall hanging, *boys don't cry* functions in the idiom of modern painting, but its citational structure denies the mythos of unique expression and self-referentiality associated with the medium. While “the ultimate subject of contemporary paintings is always the centralized author,” Benjamin Buchloh asserts, the “authorial subject negates and constitutes itself simultaneously in the act of quotation.” When quotations are left fully intact, he says, “the viewer encounters a decentralized text that completes itself through his or her reading and comparison of the original and subsequent layers of meaning that the text/image has acquired.”³⁶ While this method of dislocating meaning has been used since the 1970s by artists such as Sherrie Levine and Sturtevant — who were influential for Linklater in terms of “opening art history up for excavation, disclosing that you’re borrowing” — it has the added appeal of confounding projections of authenticity, mysticism, and outsider status that threaten to overdetermine or eclipse the works of Indigenous artists.

Linklater had been making digital prints on linen for several years before *boys don't cry* — recall the UMFA Navajo textile prints of 2015, for instance — but joining smaller panels into a large-scale composition opened up new possibilities, leading him to the tepee-cover format he adopted in 2018 (fig. 21) with printed imagery based on precontact geometric patterns. Functional covers, which in Cree tradition are only sometimes painted, would typically be made of animal skins or a much sturdier canvas; the use of linen ties Linklater’s pieces into the history of European painting and is also practical, given that the fabric is finer than cotton duck and easier to feed through a forty-four-inch printer. The artist and his studio



Fig. 21. Duane Linklater. 3 tipi covers for unknown future horizons, 2018. Digital prints on hand-dyed linen, sumac, cedar, charcoal, nails. Each approximately 110 × 210 in. Installation view, *Unexplained Parade*, Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver, 2019

assistant Andrew Williamson work with local seamstress and boutique owner Katie Bevan, who joins and hems the printed panels into the characteristic semicircular shape, complete with stake loops, central smoke flaps, and, in most cases, oblong door cutouts. Ojibwe artist Anong Beam, who makes a line of paints formulated with locally sourced minerals and pigments, introduced the artist to many of his dyeing materials, including sumac (a common flowering plant), ochre (a clay-earth pigment), and iron red (from iron oxide). Linklater makes his own charcoal and experiments with rubbing and dyeing materials that are at hand in his home, like store-bought blueberries, but in many ways his process is more relational than that of a typical studio painting practice.

Whether Linklater's tepee covers *are* paintings is open to debate: while he does not shirk the designation, he makes the pieces in series and hangs them in spatialized arrangements, blurring the line between painting and sculptural installation. As in Sam Gilliam's drape paintings (fig. 22) and Vivian Suter's densely layered and stacked presentations of unstretched canvases, *can the circle be unbroken* (pp. 90–97), with folded, draped, and adjacent elements that deny full or immediate perception, ruptures the strict frontality of painting and the “presentness and instantaneousness” of the medium prized by the likes of Michael Fried.³⁷ In *winter in america_no door_âkamenimok* (pp. 116–21), the artist has incorporated time-based variation that further confounds finality, calling in preparators to remove some of the stake loops from the nails



Fig. 22. Sam Gilliam. *10/27/69*, 1969. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. 140 x 185 in. Museum of Modern Art, Sam A. Lewisohn Bequest, 3.2014



Fig. 23. Photograph of still, the “Village” scene from the movie *The Daughter of Dawn*, ca. 1920. Museum of the Western Prairie Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division

at various junctures in the exhibition cycle and thereby progressively altering the appearance of one or more of the three components. At the same time, Linklater’s use of the tepee shape — which, as discussed, is both a significant personal and cultural form and a freighted symbol of “Indianness” — functions as a quotation, dislodging meaning from within the “frame” and troubling passive contemplation.

In his most recent shaped canvas piece *canoe by night* (2020) (pp. 106–9), Linklater quotes a form closer to his individual narrative, presenting a pink, cochineal-dyed replica of a winter work jacket he wore as a teenager. Instead of the rotating medley of hand-painted elements and band patches he had used to adorn the real jacket — a manifestation of the “shifting constellation” of identity referred to earlier — the reproduction includes two silk-screened images in blue, one on the front and one on the back. Both contain distorted, rephotographed frames from *The Daughter of Dawn* (fig. 23), a 1920s silent film directed by Norbert Myles and shot in Oklahoma with an all-Indigenous cast of more than three hundred Kiowa and Comanche. The story line is generic and self-consciously archetypal, centering on an instantiation of the “eternal triangle” in which two suitors vie for the hand of a Kiowa chief’s daughter. Nonetheless, the film is in many ways an extraordinary document, featuring the actors’ own tipis, horses, canoes, and beautifully embellished clothing. Linklater was drawn to these genuine details within and despite the stereotypical pretext of the

film and to the expressive subtleties of the performances, which rely on gesture and physicality. The prototypical jacket of his youth has thus resurfaced to articulate and circulate what the artist is into now; theoretically it could function as a palimpsest, with new emblems joining and overtaking *The Daughter of Dawn* in time.

The quotation of an old-timey film in the space of a punk jacket can't help but seem a little playful, too, and the incongruity is amplified in *what grief conjures* (2020) (pp. 112–15), in which the misregistered silk-screen image of a canoer appears again on an oversize pink hoodie worn by a plastic neoclassical statue. Enclosed within a full-size tepee structure, the statue sits atop a 1970s-era avocado-green refrigerator, which is ratchet-strapped to a hand truck sitting on a pallet. The artist chose the refrigerator for its period specificity and personal resonance while connecting the use of appliance-as-pedestal to Jungen's 2011 exhibition *Tomorrow, Repeated* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (fig. 24), which made a big impression on Linklater when he was in graduate school. In the exhibition, Jungen's assemblages of car parts and stretched animal hides were displayed on top of white chest freezers — which, according to the artist, are frequently seen outside homes on First Nations reserves — and interspersed with works by British sculptor Henry Moore on permanent display at the gallery.

The knockoff Greco-Roman sculpture from Wayfair, meanwhile, suggests a kitschy collapse of distinctions between “high” and “low” culture in ideologically loaded hierarchies that have also distinguished, for example, between tribal and modern art. Julia Bryan-Wilson points out that “one point of origin in many of these hierarchies is the misunderstanding that ancient Greek sculpture — which has been heroized as if it were the pinnacle of all cultures — was uniformly white” when in fact it was brightly painted.³⁸ Fascists such as Mussolini and Hitler adored the stuff, and of course classical architecture remains the preferred style of white supremacist authoritarianism: witness the “Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture” executive order that Donald Trump signed in December 2020. Linklater situates a populist version of such a figure atop a movable base within

Fig. 24. Installation view, Brian Jungen: *Tomorrow, Repeated*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, May 5–August 7, 2011



a provisional form of Indigenous architecture, thereby rendering a complex anti-monument — significantly, at a moment when public monuments to colonizers and slave traders are being torn down around the world. These wider circles of implication meet references to home and community within the tepee structure, which was prepared on land the artist owns outside North Bay and comprises sapling poles harvested and debranched by friends affiliated with the nearby Dokis First Nation. The structure appears in its original context in the Super-8-to-video triptych *primaryuse* (2020) (pp. 110–11), in which Linklater’s family members are seen walking through and around it in dappled sunlight to a score composed by the artist and his son, Tobias, who create music together under the name eagles with eyes closed.

These intimate, intergenerational connections are expanded in *action at a distance* (2020) (fig. 26 and pp. 102–5), which can be displayed either leaning against a wall or as a tepee in the round. Here the poles become scaffolding for twelve images in mismatched frames, melding references to some of the artist’s interests and influences with a display format from his childhood home, where his mother hung reproductions she liked in little thrift shop frames. The work also recollects Pauline Linklater’s penchant for keeping an abundance of houseplants, which appear as a field of palms, ivies, and philodendrons on the floor in front of the poles. Within this deconstructed domestic setting, details from Spanish painter



Fig. 25. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. *El buitre carnívoro*, from *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (*The Carnivorous Vulture*, from *The Disasters of War*), Plate 76, ca. 1810–15. Etching, drypoint, burin, and burnisher. 6⅞ × 8½ in. British Museum, 1975,1025.421.78



Amanda Donnan, 'The Circle Unbroken: Duane Linklater's *mymothersside*', *mymothersside*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, 2021

and printmaker Francisco de Goya's *The Disasters of War* etchings (fig. 25) — created between 1810 and 1820 but published in 1863, thirty-five years after his death — are juxtaposed with stills from the films of European art-house auteurs Chantal Akerman and Chris Marker, an image from misused Warhol superstar Edie Sedgwick's screen test, and a portrait of Ojibwe artist and “grandfather of Indigenous Canadian contemporary art” Norval Morrisseau.

These quotations, which Linklater has digitally drawn over with brightly colored lines and shapes, including voice bubbles, are tied to formative moments in his development; some are, among other things, ciphers for ways of being an artist in uneasy relation with the establishment. Goya, for instance, was a court painter who privately ruminated on the horrors of the Peninsular War (1808–14) and its aftermath, creating scathing allegories of the Inquisition, judicial torture, and other abuses inflicted by the monarchy and the Catholic Church. He is often cited as one of the first artists to reflect directly on contemporaneous events and to produce protest art, frequently using animals as anthropomorphized symbols to great effect. Morrisseau, a founder of the Woodlands “school” of painting, the namesake of Linklater's pedagogical project, notably resisted instrumentalization and censorship while opening contemporary art to Anishinaabe cultural sources. Akerman, the child of Holocaust survivors, often addressed generational trauma in her work, using long shots that attest to the significance of small gestures and intimacies. The inclusion of a still from her 1975 film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* is both an homage to her influence and a nod to the invisible labor and sacrifices of motherhood articulated in the film. Linklater gives these wide-ranging influences a place within the circle of the tepee — an adaptive and portable yet perpetual home that may offer the best possible shelter against alienation. They appear to speak to one another but ultimately convey to the viewer an open-ended story about the complexities and contradictions of (one particular) contemporary Indigenous subjectivity.

Opposite: Fig. 26. Duane Linklater. *action at a distance*, 2020. Painted tepee poles, nylon rope, plants, ceramics, sandbags, twelve framed digital prints, framed mirror. 233 × 102 × 66 in. Installation view, *primaryuse*, Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver, 2020

Notes

Epigraph: Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism*, rev. ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), quoted in la paper-son, "Settler Colonialism Is a Set of Technologies," in *A Third University Is Possible* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), accessed through Creative Commons, <https://manifold.umn.edu/read/a-third-university-is-possible/section/e33f977a-532b-4b87-b108-f106337d9e53#ch01>.

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2. Jimmie Durham, "American Indian Culture: Traditionalism and Spiritualism in a Revolutionary Struggle" (circulated as a study paper by the American Indian Movement, 1974), quoted in Jessica Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth: The American Indian Movement Generation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 25.
3. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 27–29.
4. Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 46.
5. Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 32.
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16. Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 137.
17. Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," in *Hito Steyerl: The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: e-flux journal/Sternberg Press, 2012), 32.
18. Whitney Tassie, *Salt 11: Duane Linklater*, exhibition brochure (Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 2015), 2.
19. As is appropriate to this particular project, this is a broad-strokes summary of the information available on Wikipedia. Wikipedia contributors, "Beothuk," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Beothuk&oldid=1008405045>.
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22. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 47–62.
23. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 15. It is worth noting here that "silent," or not outwardly declared, does not mean nonviolent, as there is no doubt that Indigenous people are overrepresented in national murder, victimization, and incarceration rates. For example, while representing an estimated 4.9 percent of the Canadian population, Indigenous people

accounted for 24 percent of all homicide victims in 2017—a rate six times higher than that of the non-Indigenous population. They were ten times more likely to be shot and killed by the police the same year. See Government of Canada, Department of Justice, “Indigenous Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System,” last modified September 11, 2019, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2019/may01.html>.

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34. “What Then Remainz?: Duane Linklater in Conversation with Kitty Scott,” *Mousse Magazine* 59 (Summer 2017): 258.

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