

Tanya Lukin Linklater

← p. 112 *Held in the air I never fell (spring lightning sweetgrass song)*, 2022
Kohkom scarf sculptures (kohkom scarves, thread, hide, hardware), performance platform (ash, paint, copper, hardware)
Dimensions variable,
with 305 cm diameter platform

← p. 359 *Sensation is a circuit of experience, a circuit of the felt traveling in and adjacent to the body*, 2022
4-channel video installation

In August 2021 and continuing to December 2021, the artist Tanya Lukin Linklater began a process of collaborative choreography—albeit one that was geographically dispersed—with four dancers over ten weeks: Ivanie Aubin-Malo and Hanako Hoshimi-Caines from Montréal and Ceinwen Gobert and Emily Law, based in Toronto. Tanya initially composed and sent concise texts and instructions (which can be understood as scores) to prompt the dancers' physical investigations. The dancers in turn produced short works for the camera with recorders provided by the artist. The work takes place where each performer lives: in Toronto and in Montreal. Formed in response to the pandemic moment, Tanya describes the process as one intended to be sustainable and a means to support collective well-being despite the alienation of distance. Of the collaborative process, she says:

... relationships built over time ... are tended to in a process of communication and reciprocity. I consider collaboration an anticolonial approach in that I work to eliminate violence within the process; to do no harm (Paul Cormiere, an Anishnaabe scholar in Ontario, recently spoke about this). Beyond the elimination of violence within the process, I attempt to embody and transmit Indigenous ethics in these relationships.

Central to the work are two sculptural elements installed at 72 Perth. One is a round performance platform clad in wood with its sides painted in copper, a nod to the role of copper in Indigenous communities as a signifier of both inherited and communal wealth. The other is a suspended sculpture created from the fabric used to make what are called kohkom scarves, worn by Indigenous women and increasingly as a sign of Indigenous solidarity. Kohkom is Cree for grandmother,

and for Tanya, the scarves are a way to evoke "women's intergenerational, embodied, experiential (and sometimes land-based) knowledge."

Tanya's work also intervenes in the usual hierarchies that exist in museum and gallery spaces by generating a sense of community through her collaborators, including the land itself. She explains:

Hierarchies of value and power exist in performance and museum systems, but I attempt to work against that. In performance, a kind of community is made with the people you're working alongside. The institution is not built for people; it is built for objects. All of the conversations I have in advance, in the proposal (paying dancers a living wage), the ways in which we orient ourselves to the space and inhabit it for a short duration, our way of being with one another—these are ways I work against the ongoing violence of [institutional] systems.

Monitors on the wall play the short-form choreographies by each of the dancers, some of which take place on land, others in relation to water. For Tanya, location is important as it is tethered to how direction is embedded within Indigenous ideologies as a means to orient oneself and the basis of systems of belief.

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