

October 18 - November 23, 2013

Artists' Talks at Open Studio
Friday, October 18 | 6 pm | Free admission

Opening Reception
Friday, October 18 | 7-9 pm

2013 Scholarship/ Fellowship Exhibitions



Sally Ayre: *Traces*

Meghan Price: *Fabrication*

Heather Smith: *Cut Wood*

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Place, Hyperspace and Sense of Self by Ashley St Pierre

*In light of the intensified mobilisation of bodies, information, images, and commodities on the one hand, and the greater and greater homogenisation and standardisation of places on the other... I continue to wonder about the impact, both positive and negative, of the spatial and temporal experiences that such conditions engender not only in terms of cultural practice but more basically for our psyches, our sense of self, our sense of well-being, our sense of belonging to a place and a culture.*¹

It has been said that the last century has been one of shifting perceptions of time and space and that with these massive shifts came the symptoms of the postmodern condition. Connecting identity with our relationship to places, Miwon Kwon speaks of these shifts as instrumental in "the breakdown of [a] traditional sense of self."² Explaining this, Fredric Jameson notes "we do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace... in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older kind of space... high modernism."³ Thus, we can be thought of as existing in a kind of liminal transitional space. Although initially, the three exhibitions presented appear quite different, the works of Sally Ayre, Meghan Price and Heather Smith all seem to revolve around our relationships to either known places or this new so-called hyperspace, and in so doing they reflect these major spatial-temporal perceptual shifts and the effects they have on our identity, our sense of place, and our ways of understanding the world around us.

Cut Wood

*Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history.*⁴

Inspired by illustrators of golden age children's literature, Heather Smith uses a storybook aesthetic to reimagine our relationship with the natural world. Walking into Cut Wood is as if wandering into a story-room, a room papered with images of tangled spruce branches, woodland creatures, mysteriously suspended pinecones, and the inky deep blackness of an enchanted forest; it is a room filled with whimsy, childhood familiarity, and the seeds of stories and lessons. And yet, despite an aesthetic that desires to present a traditionally idealized depiction of nature, one free from human impact, Smith chooses to include images of oilcans and chainsaws woven through the fabric of the natural world. In *Wallpaper III (Pulpwood)*, she depicts cut logs in subtle, washed hues piled to the gallery ceiling, hard and welcoming like an early winter morning. With personal ties to the logging industry and her personal memories of the landscapes of her childhood home, Smith states: "piles of pulpwood are as much a part of the landscape as piles of pinecones."⁵ In *Wallpaper I*, the tools and leavings of the logging industry are quietly nestled amongst chanterelle mushrooms, spruce trees, blackflies, weasels, rabbits, mosquitos, partridges and violets. The overall effect of the scene imagined is a sense of a home constructed both of wilderness and of labour, a house whose walls are covered by a wild forest—frightening and magnetic, nostalgic and sublime—and by a land of vast resource, a place to be harvested and consumed, a land that offers both its beauty and its materiality, a nature that includes the impact of human beings.

It is curious, then, that despite this, there are no images of actual humans present in Smith's exhibition. This image of an empty house decorated with these two common representations of the natural world brings to mind the dialectics within the so-called "myth of the

wilderness"⁶ that is said to form so much of Canadian national identity. Here, wilderness is understood either as a place of reverence—a spiritual space that we enter into, or as a place to reap—a vast collection of resources to be used and harvested. Interestingly, in either case wilderness is understood as "other" than us, as a place we use to define ourselves in relation to, a social construction that constructs our sense of self both collectively and individually.

Smith's wallpapers conjure the rhythm and whimsy of the margins of illuminated manuscripts and illustrations of enchanted forests. Both may be conceived of as places of liminality, darkness, and mystery, where the profane and the profound are allowed to mingle. In fairy tales, the enchanted forest is also a place of transition and transformation. Golden age children's literature, where Smith draws her stylistic inspiration, made use of the imagery of an enchanted forest as a function of the notion of nostalgia. We find in these stories, images of a constructed and idyllic Eden where both childhood and nature are wiped clean and presented as something pristine, innocent and at one with each other—a utopic idea longed for in adulthood.⁷



According to Alison Mitcham, the Canadian wilderness "represents a vast and pure, though at the same time a terrible and cold, reservoir of enchantment, where the disenfranchised individual can hope to escape from the false utopia in which he feels trapped,"⁸ a place that is viewed in stark contrast with modern industrialized space. Our national longing for wilderness, then, can be seen in the light of nostalgia, as a longing for something that never truly existed, but which represents a desire for a utopic place in response to changing social conditions and the sense of homelessness associated with the intensified mobilisation, homogenisation and standardisation referenced by Kwon.⁹

It is fitting then, that Smith appropriates the golden age illustrative style to depict a wilderness, a notion of home, a place of her own childhood, and the Canadian myth of the idyllic wild North. But, in Smith's rendering, this myth is reinvented, infused with the imagery of its destruction: industry, labour, civilization, and the objects and remnants of that destruction: chain saws, cut logs, tracking tape, hard hats. By bringing the dialectical components of the myth together—as a place of both profound spiritual experience and profane use of resources—Smith confounds our Canadian sense of self. This approach exposes the myth and reveals the nostalgia allowing us the opportunity to reconstruct our identities.

Fabrication

Changing, it rests. Heraclitus

Using textile construction techniques, Meghan Price explores the mapping of patterns of motion as well as the compression and reforming of linear perspectival space to create new patterns that describe their own processes of fabrication. Pattern here may be understood as a way of understanding the world. Pattern is either constructed or discovered, and used as a

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EDITING & TYPESETTING Sara Kelly

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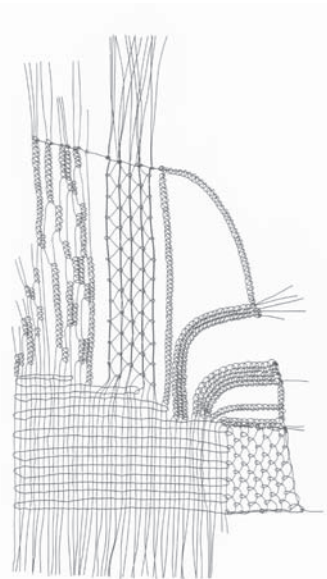
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method of knowing objective reality, but in either case, pattern relies upon subjective experience; it is a human construct. Patterns, then, can be said to contain human narratives about that which they seek to explain. Indeed, textiles have a rich history in telling stories and passing on histories. It is the charting and creating of patterns via both rationally organized and intuitively improvised processes that Price seems to be most interested in: a kind of mapping of human space, of the fluidity of our comings and goings, of our ever-changing scientific paradigms, and of our malleable epistemology.

In *Fabrications*, these “poetic diagrams,” as Price understands them, are divided into two series and take the forms of either intuitive embellishments upon found aeronautic diagrams, or reductions of the mappings of the cube into new 2-dimensional forms. The astronautics works derive their titles and underlying structures from diagrams in a book that Price found entitled *Design Data For Aeronautics and Astronautics: A Compilation of Existing Data* edited by Richard B. Morrison in 1962. This book presents diagrams—visual representations—of flight as it is understood through scientific data, yet “reproduced in dimensionless form.”¹⁰ “Looping wire around a constellation of pins placed in points throughout the found diagrams,”¹¹ a technique derived from lace-making practices, Price creates wire drawings that seem to give new visual form to the movements that informed the original diagrams. The sweeping lines in *Particle Speed*, enable a beautiful and rhythmic bursting of movement out from the grid-like structure of its corresponding diagram. The delicacy and intricacy of this wire sculpture also reveals the movements of Price’s own hand. It is a record of the movements of particle, time, and body conflated in one unified gesture.



The process of lace making involves the use of pins stuck into a provided pattern that become the bones around which threads of silk, cotton, or in this case wire, are wound. In constructing her wire drawings, Price uses a similar process, leaving behind pinpricks in the found diagrams. As a permutation of her poetic renderings of these diagrams, Price uses these pinpricked images to create screenprints that not only record her process and presence, but also indicate where light has passed through. Resembling constellations and layered with gloss prints of the original diagrams, these new visualizations of flight and process offer an inventory of Price’s own intuitive movements, a “kind of internal, unknowable ‘galaxy’ to be explored.”¹¹

In the second series of work, *2D/3D*, Price has constructed a wire cube and then flattened the structure, rendering it a 2-dimensional distortion. Using this new form as plates, Price then created embossed monoprints—subtle and quiet traces of the once solid cubes. The cube as a symbolic form has held significance throughout art history. In the time of the Renaissance the cube represented the perfect geometry and order of the universe; it signified that the world was stable, ordered, and of divine origins. Ancient Greek philosophers used the cube

and other rare “regular” solids to hypothesize that the universe could be broken down into perfect units. In *Timaeus*, Plato describes what are now known as the Platonic solids, solids composed of *regular* polygons, structures that, for Plato, “formed the building blocks of matter”¹² and “the elements of physical space.”¹³ But, these unique solids were also connected to Euclidean space and Renaissance perspectival systems. Thus, flattening and allowing for distortion of the cube speaks of new ways of conceiving of how we perceive space. As art historian Erwin Panofsky argued, “perspectival construction is not an objective way of seeing the world...but a conventional cultural symbol.”¹⁴ Indeed, Price’s cubes bring to mind Einstein’s notions of bending space-time and Fredric Jameson’s experience of postmodern hyperspace; both suggest major shifts in understanding space and time.

Traces

*Most often place applies to our own “local”—entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke.*¹⁵

Revolving around collections of family letters, botanical drawings, and the artist’s scanned objects and photographs, Sally Ayre seeks to “examin[e]...her Newfoundland roots and the landscapes and objects that trigger, layer and construct [her] memory of place.”¹⁶ *Traces #1* entails copies of family letters written during wartime and printed on the backside of translucent Japanese paper, the front side of which is printed with images that together form a kind of seascape. Composed of 26 prints, the piece contains remnants of past and present, of

Ayre’s own collection of scanned and photographed “souvenirs” from her childhood home landscape, and of images of Newfoundland’s cultural past. Collectively, the imagery makes up triggers of memory for Ayre. Mounted to the wall in such a way as to enable the air currents created by passersby to lift and flutter the prints, the piece offers a fluidity of movement that echoes the fluidity of the water depicted and the fluidity of the cursive writing shown in the letters—a land, a technology, and a cultural practice all fast becoming extinct.



Fragile and ethereal, *Traces #1* speaks of the transitory nature of memory, a changing natural landscape, and the passing of time in a particular place. Additionally, Ayre’s use of various perspectives within one large scene simultaneously situates and displaces the viewer. We are brought to a particular place in the mind and history of the artist, and yet kept from it via this dream-like depiction. The horizontal, bird’s eye view of the water is brought to a vertical wall, and while the botanicals are depicted from the perspective of looking down at our feet in the water, fish are simultaneously represented as if viewed from the side. This has the effect of slightly disorienting the viewer, and reveals that the scene is not of a real place, so to speak, but rather the fictional space of memory.

Traces #2 uses similar techniques. Somewhere between photograms, x-rays, and photographs in botanical guides, Ayres’s 48 prints of scanned flower heads offer just enough detail to identify them. Layered over the same consistent background, the flowers lose their context and so become objects of another kind—objects categorized, filed and altered in the mind. They, too, are allowed to flutter in the breeze, causing these works to be received as something between haptic and optical images: they are both seen and felt by the eyes. But, their surfaces are rendered surreal.

The six botanical prints are a conflation of time and of author, as part of the images were drawn by Ayre’s grandmother, amateur botanist Agnes Marion Ayre, and the other part were taken from Ayre’s own collection of scanned botanicals. Both images originate from Newfoundland, and each print depicts the same documented plant, but the images are separated by time. Here, Ayre poetically brings these two personal experiences of a landscape, from two different yet overlapping times, into one image. Layered, fragile, and ephemeral, these botanical prints are suggestive of the personal, cultural and historical attachments that get layered onto a landscape.

Traces exemplifies both the desire for place and the contracting of space and time that is common to our contemporary experience. Lucy Lippard writes that the lure of the local “is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation.”¹⁷ According to Svetlana Boym, this desire is indicative that there exists “a new understanding of time and space that made the division into ‘local’ and ‘universal’ possible.”¹⁸ For Boym, “[t]he nostalgic creature has internalized this division, but instead of aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearns for the particular.” Thus, the desire for a sense of place can be seen as a response to changing times. Boym was referring to shifts occurring during the early 20th century, but the description could just as easily apply to current conditions. As Boym and Kwon both point out, the oppositions of place and hyperspace (or local and universal) might be better viewed as dialectical. For Ayre, it seems, nostalgia for a place or a time can be quite comfortably rendered alongside the conflation of space and time and within the same piece of artwork.

¹Kwon, Miwon. “The Wrong Place.” *Art Journal* 59.1 (2000): 33.

²*Ibid.*

³Jameson, Fredric. “Postmodernism and Consumer Society.” *Modernism/Postmodernism*. Ed. Peter Brooker. New York: Longman, 1992. 171-72.

⁴Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. 8.

⁵Smith, Heather. “Statements - Heather Gabriel Smith.” <<http://www.heathergabrielsmith.com/>>.

⁶Hemmings, Robert. “A Taste of Nostalgia: Children’s Books from the Golden Age – Carroll, Graham, and Milne.” *Children’s Literature* 35 (2007): 54-79.

⁷Mitcham, Allison. “Northern Utopia.” *Canadian Literature* 63 (1975): 35.

⁸Kwon, *op. cit.*, 33.

⁹Morrison, Richard B., ed. *Design Data For Aeronautics and Astronautics: A Compilation of Existing Data*. New York: Wiley, 1962. 1.

¹⁰Price, Meghan. *Artist Statement*. June 2013.

¹¹Price, Meghan. *Personal communication with the author*, September 2013.

¹²Skinner, Stephen. *Sacred Geometry: Deciphering the Code*. New York: Sterling, 2009. 54.

¹³Emmer, Michele. “Art and Mathematics: The Platonic Solids.” *Leonardo* 15.4 (1982): 277. See also: Zeyl, Donald, “Plato’s Timaeus,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/plato-timaeus/>>.

¹⁴Hatt, Michael, and Charlotte Klönk. *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006. 103.

¹⁵Lippard, Lucy R. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: New Press, 1997. 7.

¹⁶Ayre, Sally. *Artist Statement*, July 2013.

¹⁷Lippard, *op. cit.*, 7.

¹⁸Boym, *op. cit.*, 11.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Artists' Biographies

Sally Ayre (Nick Novak Fellowship) is a photo-based artist born in Newfoundland, now living in Toronto. A graduate of OCAD (1990), she has exhibited her work nationally and internationally. Her most recent exhibitions include *Boundless and Borderless* (Station Gallery, Whitby, ON and Sydney Printmakers, Sydney, Australia) and *Jumelage*, (John B. Aird Gallery, Toronto, ON and Engramme, Quebec City, QC). She is also an educator specializing in historical photo processes and has received several grants and awards. Sally would like to thank Gaye Jackson, Tobi Asmoucha, John Ide, The Japanese Paper Place and the staff of Open Studio for their help and support.

Meghan Price (Donald O’Born Family Scholarship) is an artist and educator born in Montreal and now living in Toronto. She holds a degree in Textile Construction from The Montreal Centre for Contemporary Textiles (2003) and an MFA from Concordia University (2009). Her work has been exhibited in Canada and the U.S., Turkey, Ukraine, Italy, Cuba, Sweden, Argentina and Australia. Price has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants. Meghan would like to acknowledge the staff of Open Studio and the Donald O’Born family for their support.

Heather Smith (Don Phillips Scholarship) graduated from the Fine Arts program at Queen’s University. She is from Antigonish County, Nova Scotia, and primarily uses this area for her source imagery, which she translates into a graphic and illustrative style. Heather is returning to Nova Scotia this fall to study cartography and is excited for how this scientific graphic representation of place will integrate into her artistic practice.

Writer's Biography

Ashley St Pierre is an artist, writer and musician living in St Catharines, Ontario. She studied art, art history, and philosophy at the University of Toronto, Sheridan College and OCAD. While studying in the Art & Art History program at U of T and Sheridan, St Pierre participated in an exchange which enabled her to study in France. Prior to pursuing her recent degree, St Pierre began a career in jazz voice and composition by completing the 3-year Applied Music program at Mohawk College in Hamilton. She then went on to spend four years working as a performing jazz vocalist, composer, arranger and private vocal teacher primarily located in Toronto and the GTA. St Pierre has participated in several group and solo exhibitions within the GTA and Niagara region and won the Best Jazz album of the year award at the Ontario Independent Music Awards in 2008.

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Cover: Intaglio and relief printing area at Open Studio. Photo: Kate Tarini.

p. 2: Heather Smith, *Wallpaper I*, hand-coloured woodcut, 39” x 43”, 2013.

p. 3: Meghan Price, *Geopotential*, wire drawing, 5” x 12”, 2013.

p. 4: Sally Ayre, *Traces #1, Cod Stamp* (installation detail), screenprint on Ikenora, installation size 120” x 40”, 2013.