



BAMBITCHELL

Depuis 2009, sous l'appellation Bambitchell, Sharlene Bamboat (1984) et Alexis Mitchell (1983) collaborent à la réalisation de projets artistiques fondés sur la recherche qui visent à réimaginer diverses histoires nationalistes par un recyclage souvent ludique de documents d'états et d'archives institutionnelles.

Under the name Bambitchell, Sharlene Bamboat (1984) and Alexis Mitchell (1983) have been collaborating since 2009 on artistic projects based on research that seek to re-imagine nationalist histories by the playful recycling of state documents and institutional archives.



Bambitchell

Entretien / Interview

Transcription de *Special Works School*

***Special Works School* transcript**

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Surveillance Romance (Canadian Art)

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Special Works School

Bambitchell
January 13–February 24, 2018



This exhibition is produced with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council as part of the research-creation project *Surveillant Subjectivities: Youth Cultures, Art, and Affect* directed by Dr. Dina Georgis (University of Toronto) and Dr. Sara Matthews (Wilfrid Laurier University).



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Bambitchell (Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell) and Richy Carey in conversation with Dina Georgis



The titular “Special Works School” of Bambitchell’s exhibition at Gallery TPW was a British military unit of artists tasked with developing camouflage technology during the First World War; one node in the artist duo’s research on the intricately linked histories of state surveillance and artistic practice. Throughout the gallery, Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell have produced sculpture and installation work that stages surveillance as an aesthetic experiment: metal stencils, theatre lighting, and oversized archival images generate new vantage points for imagining how surveillance can be felt in the body. Central to “Special Works School” is a new video made in collaboration with Glasgow-based composer Richy Carey. Narrated by three colours-as-characters—Sand, Cyan, and Purple—this video brings voice to Bambitchell’s expansive research on colour theory, human perception, and the multi-sensory experience of state power. What follows is a conversation between Bamboat, Mitchell, and Carey led by Dina Georgis.

Dina Georgis: “Special Works School” began two years ago when Sara Matthews and I, as co-researchers, invited you to create work that would open up the possibility of understanding the embodied and affective—yet



hard to articulate—experiences of surveillance. It was a challenging and, we hope, exciting provocation. In working with another collaborator, Richy Carey, your research process has allowed you to reach places you didn't expect. Believing that aesthetic methods can create the conditions for new discussions about surveillance, our grant-funded research undertaking, as you know, has grown into a multi-layered project that has involved training youth leaders to facilitate and engage young participants in an experience of your work. Our goal has been to explore how aesthetic interventions can incite unique learnings made from an encounter with creative objects.



Let's begin our discussion with your video installation, which seems to explore the practices and technologies that underlie surveillance. Deconstructing the raw materials of the visual technologies of surveillance, this work also seems to gesture to surveillance's non-visual methods in sensual experiences of touch and sound. Can you please elaborate on this?

Alexis Mitchell & Sharlene Bamboat: This work began with a desire to explore the sensations and embodiments of surveillance. We wanted to see if we could address the way surveillance feels, both to those surveilled and to those who surveil. We chose to address this through the realm of aesthetics, working with philosopher Susan Buck-Morss's definition of that which is "perceptive by feeling": "a sensory experience of perception, that belonging to corporeal, material nature."¹ Given this starting point,



Except where noted, all images Bambitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Courtesy of the artists.

we came at the project from two angles: the material and the sensorial. “Special Works School” looks closely at the material components of surveillance technologies and blends them with a history of surveillance that moves through each of the five senses, broadening an idea of perception from one based solely on sight to one that incorporates the other senses.



The show consists of a video piece, and several sculptures and installation works. The video, created in collaboration with composer Richy Carey, moves through a loose narrative organized around each of the five senses in order to create a corporeal experience. Employing colours as characters—Sand, Cyan, and Purple, along with an accompanying poly-vocal chorus—the piece engages with the ways each of the senses has been employed in the aesthetic research and implementation of surveillance technologies.

The sculpture and installation elements ask the audience to consider some of the material conditions of early surveillance technologies. They reference various experiments created by a group of artists hired by the British military for the invention of camouflage technologies during WWI—a group named by the army as the “Special Works School.”

By honing in on the aesthetic dimensions of surveillance—and its counterpoint, camouflage—we hope to foreground the ways “a sensory experience of perception” is useful

to unearthing the affects embedded in our contemporary surveillance society.



DG: The “aesthetic dimension of surveillance” might seem like a paradox to some. But I think you are giving us a taste of how surveillance is an aesthetically mediated experience. I’m struck and disturbed by the idea that a technology designed to control and manipulate people can play on our senses in compelling ways. Camouflage might be an interesting metaphor for this paradox. It is a defensive technology that works with, not against, our desire to understand what we see before our eyes. With camouflage, intentions are disguised or hidden. There might be no watchful lens of a surveillor. Or maybe the lens is disguised within the given setting. Would you say that in “Special Works School,” sound and music disguise reality in a similar manner?

AM & SB: It’s interesting that you would say that sound works as a disguise of sorts. Our initial intention for employing sound and music so aggressively was to have them work in the opposing manner: for sound to be the *most* apparent element, or at least most felt within the realm of the exhibition. In the video, each character’s vocal specificity reveals aspects of their position in the narrative, and the sound effects occasionally reach cacophonous levels. We did this precisely because we wanted to produce an environment in which what you’re listening to is directly related to what you’re feeling; the sound and music invoke feelings of fear or insecurity at times,





and at other moments feelings of melancholy or sadness. Sound, especially music, is often used to manipulate our emotions, and here we use sound to enliven the prose and theory being spoken, reinforcing the audience's relationship between mind and body as one that is intact yet sometimes in conflict. Perhaps this use of sound is disguising something, or presenting a false front, but what we're trying to get at through the work is that it's all rooted in the body, it plays on us in ways we don't always understand. Surveillance is not only an external approach or perspective; it's within us as well.



It's possible that the use of sound removes us (as the makers of the video) from the realm of perception. The work becomes so much about the audience and not at all about representing bodies that experience surveillance culture with varying degrees of severity. Like the character Sand in the film, who in order to see must become invisible, we too wanted to make ourselves disappear from the realm of perception in order to create something that could truly be housed within the bodies of those experiencing it. This is also why we're focusing on some of the early experiments by camouflage artists, who were concerned with making things disappear in order to amplify the position and power of the British Army's surveillance capabilities.

It also strikes us that so much of surveillance is about playing with or on our desires, even in literal terms. We know our smartphones and devices listen to what we're saying in order to market the appropriate items to us. Since

voice and sound are a primary means through which we are surveilled, you could say that sound sabotages disguise rather than promotes it.



Richy Carey: One of the writers who helps me consider how sound and image meet is the feminist science studies scholar Karen Barad. She makes a point that the apparatus we use for knowing has a material effect (in a quantum sense) upon that which is observed:

*“The point is not merely that knowledge practices have material consequences but that *practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world.*”²*

So, listening to something changes the thing that is listened to. Touching, smelling, tasting, observing has a material consequence not just on the observer but also on the observed, whether it is aware of its observation or not.

I think sound/image relationships, such as in film, really lay bare these sensorial connections that “Special Works School” points to. A film is a material/object twice surveilled, once through the camera/microphone and again through the screen/speakers. So it doesn’t disguise reality, but clarifies the mediation of it.

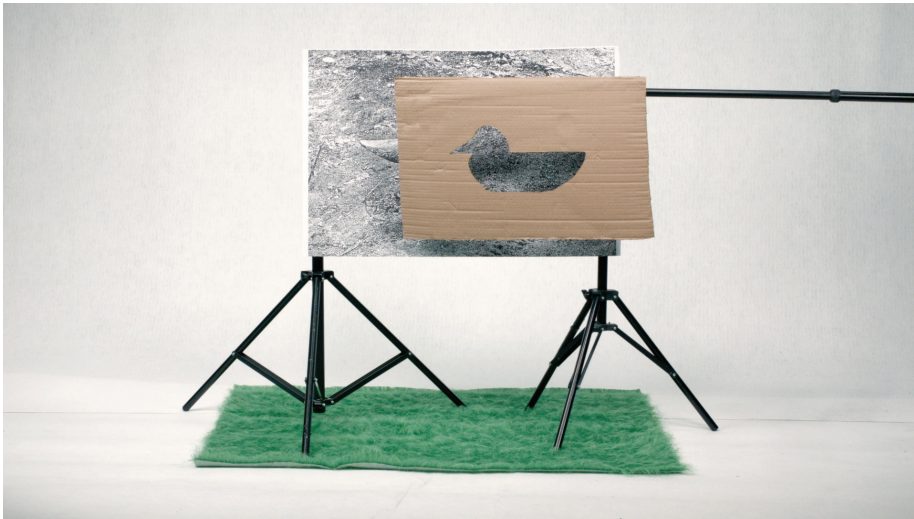
DG: Anyone who has listened to music knows how it can recalibrate your emotional disposition and alter how you might see or experience something. So I hear you when

you give sound and music a privileged status. But you're also suggesting that sound both clarifies and sabotages disguise. I find this a provocative claim. You work with music with a great deal of intention. You want it to play on us. But you also say that our experience of sound is not something we can fully understand. If I'm following you correctly, you're suggesting that sound is an experience that resists both truth and untruth. It challenges what we think we know and does not in turn settle it.



In the video, your research narrative is sung in an operatic style. Can you please explain this interesting choice? Perhaps you can also answer this question by describing the process that brought you to create a sound-focused exhibition. Arriving at sound from a call to create work on the topic of surveillance is curious. It is also fascinating to think about surveillance through the figure of Sand. In staging Sand and giving it a personality, it feels like you want us to attend to something that was exploited and discarded.

AM & SB: We don't want to speak too absolutely. Sound does have the capacity to conceal and reveal simultaneously—and what it reveals, it reveals with such impeccable acuity. Whereas we live in a world in which images don't hold this same power. We are used to re-narrating an image, or camouflaging from sight, but we aren't yet trained to listen or feel for manipulations in sound. The work of Lawrence Abu Hamdan is relevant here. He's an artist and researcher working at the intersection of sound and surveillance, and



he calls himself a “private ear.” He studies the sounds of gunshots in order to decipher the range at which they’ve been shot, or the footsteps in a Syrian prison in order to reconstruct an architecture no prisoner was ever able to witness with their eyes. We aren’t trying to argue for a primacy of one sense over another, but we think that a more expanded notion of surveillance situates it in the body, where it is most felt. Working with Richy has been incredibly instrumental to this process, as we knew we wanted to create physical sensations with the work and thought that foregrounding sound and music would help us do so.



We have often worked with sound and audio throughout our practice, as a way of dealing with the relationship between technologies of the state and the bodies that come in contact with them. *Border Sounds* (2011–15) examined the politics of mobility through the use of dubstep music in a silent disco; *Silent Citizen* (2014) used the form of karaoke to tackle changing Canadian immigration policy. There is something about the ways that sound allows us to forge a relationship to the bodies experiencing the work that we find quite useful when trying to criticize or understand the ways these technologies of the state play on us.

The choral voice is employed in order to unpack the idea that the ultimate position of surveillance is one of invisibility. This notion has troubled us since we started our research: we’ve thought a lot about the psychic effects of making the self invisible, and what role this plays within



In Canada, rights come with responsibilities. These include: obeying the law, taking responsibility for oneself and one's family,

Above and below: Bambitchell, *Silent Citizen*, 2014. Images courtesy of the artists.

surveillance culture more broadly. Having all the voices join together as one is an aural device we use to make any semblance of individuality invisible. This is also why we developed the character Sand. Throughout the script, Sand’s senses disappear one-by-one until the character becomes invisible.



We originally came up with the character of Sand because “desert sand” is the central colour used in certain forms of military camouflage print. The more we began to work on the project, the more fundamental sand became, as it is also a primary material in the making of glass, screens, buildings, and cities—all of which are central to the world of surveillance. We wanted these materials to also have primacy because while they are easily discarded or forgotten, they structure our relationship to the world around us. Working with Richy allowed us to play with what these materials sound like and how those sounds make us feel. We thought that accessing the materials in this manner would allow them to play on the body, to elicit sensations rather than explicit thoughts or ideas about what these materials mean or their specific histories. While there is a lot of research embedded in “Special Works School,” we tried to strip everything down to bare elements, to focus on the materiality of surveillance technologies and to let those materials, colours, and sounds “speak” for themselves.

RC: One of the reasons I was so excited to work with Alexis and Sharlene was to take on the challenge of sounding



the three colours: Sand, Purple, Cyan. My work tends to be based around sounding material sensation, or thinking about *the sound of the thingness of things*.

For example: Purple, while being laden with the semiotic qualities extolled in the script, also performed a specific role in the text, as a kind of omniscient, voice-of-God character. Purple is a non-spectral colour: it cannot be evoked by a single wavelength in the visible spectrum of colour. In colour theory, however, the line of purple is the edge of the chromaticity diagram, between violet and red. I tried to elicit these attributes in the film's sound by underscoring Purple's dialogue with a pure tone of 18 Hz, a frequency just beyond human hearing, but the one which is suggested to be the resonant frequency of the human eye. Often referred to as the ghost frequency, this tone has been purportedly been responsible for ghost sightings because it has a visceral effect on the eyes. This seemed



to make sense in thinking of Purple as a being that sits just at the edge of our apparatuses for knowing, of what we can see and hear.



Cyan seemed to have a kind of conspiratorial agenda. Written in the second person, it felt as though it was touching both Sand and the audience, a conduit between the two. The sight of Cyan on a body however, such as in cyanosis, a blueness at the body's extremities, points to a severe lack of oxygen in the blood supply. As such, it felt appropriate to sound Cyan as somewhere between breathless and whispering.

Sand is different: it is directly tied to a material substance in a way that Purple and Cyan are not. Psychologist Fritz Heider uses sand as an analogy for differentiating between a "medium" and a "thing," in that sand "can serve as a 'carrier' for different traces, but also generate different 'forms'": sand castles, sand jets, and the like.³ I feel there is something similar between sand as a medium/form and the phonemes that constitute the basis for a language. Distinct granules of sound that can come to mediate form, as well as being form themselves.

In sounding Sand I tried to convey this granularity, asking Alexis (who voiced Sand) to phonetically break down the text. At first this effect is used sparingly, but as Sand's senses begin to disappear, these disjunctions become more and more apparent.

There were also long moments of sound effects suggested by Sharlene and Alexis that tried to convey the haptic, and sometimes disorienting, qualities of sound. This evokes the intentional falsehood present in Foley techniques—used to replicate sound effects on screen—like crinkling cellophane that sounds like fire, oil in a frying pan that sounds like rain on a window, and the like.



DG: All this makes me think about how our senses work both for us and against us. By remaining invisible, we might dodge the gaze that surveils. Paradoxically, in the case of sand, its very disappearance—in the production of glass, or smartphones—is necessary for building the elements of surveillance. Similarly, the sound of a gunshot is terrifying and can make someone instantly hyperaware of their visibility and vulnerability in space; but by listening closely to the footsteps of a gun-bearing prison guard, a prisoner might be able to visualize and draw the space they occupy but can't see. I'm summarizing your comments here to say that your work attunes us to the multi-dimensionality of surveillance and gives us an unusual experience of its complexity. At first viewing, your audience might wonder where to identify power in your rendition of surveillance. This is not an obvious concern for you, but I think it's certainly implied.

AM & SB: It's true, we don't identify, name, or situate power within the work, though it's simultaneously present within the viewer as well as within the objects and materials we present. While we understand that these materials can

also potentially be emptied of their meaning until they are used or branded to wield power, something is always lost in the moment of recognition or representation of this power. So, rather than focus our attention on naming the ways these instruments, colours, materials, and sensations might be used to wield or identify power, violence, or control, we wanted to create an atmosphere where an understanding of how this happens relies on a deeply personal and sensorial experience of the work, and the world at large. The political and representational burden of surveillance, both as a tool and as a field of study, is massive. When we started working on this project, this burden was the focus of our attention. We were immediately caught by questions of how to represent this field, for whom, as experienced by whom, and where in the world. We tried to allow those experiencing the work to engage with how these histories, materials, and experiences make them feel. On the one hand, we are providing a materialist perspective on the study of surveillance; on the other, we are ensuring that this perspective is experienced and represented subjectively. Surveillance lives inside of all of us, to varying degrees, and is attached to varying levels of power or violence. But it's there, embedded in everyone, and felt at the level of the body, constantly. ■





¹ Buck-Morss, Susan. "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3-41.

² Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 91.

³ Quoted in Herzogenrath, Bernd, "Media|Matter: An Introduction." In: Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *Media|Matter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 1-16.

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Richy Carey is a sound artist and composer. He's currently doing AHRC-funded PhD research into the relationship between materiality, language, and film sound at Glasgow University. Recent works and collaborations include *Sonorous Objects*, with Lauren Gault and Mark Bleakley (Project Rooms, 2018); *Memo to Spring*, for Sarah Rose (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 2017); *Wondering Soul*, with Alexander Storey Gordon (live-to-air for Radiophreina, Glasgow, 2017); *Forms of Action* for Asunción Motions Gordo (CCA Glasgow, 2017); "You're saying exactly how I feel" with Tom Walker (TAP Gallery, 2016); *There's something happening somewhere*, with Carrie Skinner (Tron Theatre, Glasgow, 2016); and *INCONGRUOUS DIVA* for Cara Tolmie and Will Holder (British Art Show, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, 2016).

Dina Georgis is an Associate Professor at the Women & Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. Her work is situated in the fields of postcolonial studies and queer theory. She draws on psychoanalytic concepts to think through how expressive cultures are responses to the remains of the past. Her book *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (SUNY, 2013) considers the centrality of loss and its affects in the aesthetic representation of political struggle and survival. In collaboration with Dr. Sara Matthews (WLU) and artist duo Bambitchell (Toronto), she is presently working on a project supported by SSHRC Development Research Creation entitled "Surveillant Subjectivities: Youth Cultures, Art, and Affect."



Bambitchell is the artistic collaboration between Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell. Working together since 2009, their projects have been exhibited at festivals and galleries such as Articule (Montreal), The Images Festival (Toronto), and The Art Gallery of Windsor and included in such publications as *C Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and the forthcoming Routledge publication *Contemporary Citizenship, Art, and Visual Culture*. The duo recently completed a residency at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany (2015–17), and have an upcoming fellowship at The MacDowell Colony. “Special Works School” will make its European premiere as part of Forum Expanded, Berlinale 2018. bambitchell.com

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Transcription

SPECIAL WORKS SCHOOL

Une vidéo de Bambitchell



POURPRE

Couleurs triadiques. Trois couleurs réparties uniformément autour du cercle chromatique qui, lorsqu'elles sont reliées par une ligne droite, forment un triangle. Les trois couleurs utilisées dans ce schéma ont tendance à bien s'agencer et peuvent être assez vives et harmonieuses. Tout comme pour le cercle de couleurs analogues, il est recommandé qu'une couleur domine alors que les deux autres peuvent être utilisées pour compléter le dessin.

CHOEUR

Qui se dispute le pouvoir?

POURPRE

Utilisé à la fois pour son effet esthétique et son côté pratique, ce schéma de couleurs réfère généralement à des motifs de couleurs et des dessins comme on peut les voir sur les véhicules militaires.

CHOEUR

Au commencement il y avait le camouflage, l'invisible.

POURPRE

La couleur est souvent perçue comme trompeuse et authentique à la fois. Qui parmi vous lisant ce texte rêverait même de peindre le mur du salon en rouge ou vert vif, ou d'une couleur autre que le blanc cassé? Alors, sans danger dans ta blancheur, tu peux accrocher au mur une image aux couleurs extravagantes, en sécurité dans son cadre.

POURPRE

Assis de façon ambiguë entre le carmin et le violet.

Le pourpre est souvent, sinon toujours, associé à l'autorité.

Un mélange de rouge et de bleu, souvent

utilisé dans le système judiciaire.

Ou porté par des magistrats chrétiens et des majestés.

CYAN

Si vous appartenez à un groupe linguistique qui ne distingue pas le bleu du vert, alors aucune autre couleur distincte ne peut émerger. Cyan. Un nouveau style de bleuté avec une pincée de vert.

CHOEUR

Ce qui commença par une multiplicité de sens, continua à diminuer en nombre jusqu'à ce qu'il ne reste plus qu'une seule cellule.

SABLE

Sable. Un microorganisme qui continue à se défiler et à se réduire. Apparue en 1920 comme une couleur ressemblant aux parties plates d'un désert, cette teinte de Sable, débute, comme la plupart des narrateurs débutent le récit de leur disparition.

CYAN

La disparition n'est peut-être pas la meilleure façon de débiter ce texte. Ceci est une histoire sur la dévolution de Sable. Sable débute omniscient. Sable débute pansophique. Sable débute préventif.

CHOEUR

Sable débute.

CYAN

Plongeant à des profondeurs de quarante pieds, Sable est dragué par des seaux en métal, tiré, suffocant, à la surface.

CHOEUR

Le fond de la mer bientôt, sera trop profond.

Dazibao

POURPRE

À la fois liquide et solide, le sable possède une douceur et une souplesse qui facilite son transport sur de grandes distances. Noter sa malléabilité, cependant, c'est faire plus qu'une affirmation littérale sur sa composition physique. Le sable est utilisé dans de multiples applications, du rudimentaire au numérique, le sable fin des rivières utilisé dans le béton pour créer une haute ligne d'horizon, liée au bitume par les routes bordant un réseau fébrile de quadrilatères, et comme matériau de base à partir desquels le silicone et des éléments de la terre — les composants clés des téléphones intelligents — sont extraits.

CHOEUR

Partout où il y a du développement, il y a du sable.

POURPRE

Avant le 19e siècle, la vision était souvent associée au toucher, à la texture, à l'odeur, au goût et au son.

La séparation de la vue de ces autres sens permet une manipulation plus facile de l'œil. Un œil modelé par une convergence des luxures du 19e siècle, tels que les formes d'éclairage artificiel, l'utilisation nouvelle des miroirs, l'architecture de verre et d'acier, les chemins de fer, les musées, les jardins, la photographie, la mode, les foules.

CYAN

Sable débute avec une quantité utile de tout, une abondance des sens, jusqu'à ce qu'un sens à la fois succombe à l'inévitable.

POURPRE

Afin de voir, il faut se rendre invisible.

Lorsque la lumière tombe sur un objet tridimensionnel de couleur uniforme telle une sphère, la partie supérieure apparaît plus claire et la partie inférieure plus sombre. Ce motif de lumière et d'ombre donne à l'objet un aspect solide, et donc plus facile à détecter. La forme classique de l'ombre inversée consiste à contrebalancer les effets d'ombrage, en alternant entre le sombre et le clair. Le mimétisme donne l'impression qu'un animal est autre chose, alors que cette

loi nouvellement découverte les font même paraître ne pas exister. Le spectateur semble voir à travers l'espace occupé par un animal opaque.

CYAN

Sable découpe un pochoir de soldat, de navire, de canon ou de toute forme que Sable souhaite dissimuler, et examine ce pochoir du point de vue voulu.

SABLE

Si vous voulez voir clairement quelque chose, regardez-le à travers un pochoir.

CHOEUR

Voir devient un moyen de refaire sa propre relation avec son environnement.

CYAN

Le sable est associé au camouflage car il s'agit du principal moyen par lequel les êtres vivants établissent une relation incarnée avec leur environnement.

Le premier plan se fond dans l'arrière-plan.

CHOEUR

Mimésis productive.

SABLE

Je commence par une invisibilité pansophique.

Cette invisibilité à laquelle je réfère se produit lorsque les yeux que je rencontre ont une disposition particulière. Une question de construction de leurs yeux intérieurs, ces yeux avec lesquels ils regardent la réalité à travers leurs yeux physiques.

CHOEUR

Les yeux derrière les yeux.

CYAN

Le sable se camoufle et observe.
Absorbant.
Réfléchissant la lumière.

—SON—



Dazibao

CHOEUR

Les murs ont des oreilles.
Les murs ont des oreilles.
Les murs ont des oreilles.

POURPRE

Ce diction remonte au 16e siècle alors que la reine française Catherine de Médicis installa des entonnoirs acoustiques dans les murs du Louvre afin d'écouter les conversations de ses conspirateurs.

CHOEUR

Les murs ont des oreilles.

POURPRE

Les effets psychiques de la surveillance comprennent les tensions nerveuses, l'insomnie, la fatigue, les accidents, les étourdissements et un moins grand contrôle des réflexes.

CHOEUR

Regardez les muscles de Sable se relâcher.

POURPRE

Le verre est fragile mais infiniment malléable; il est transparent, chimiquement inerte et durable. Ce n'est pas un hasard si le verre structure notre compréhension de la représentation du monde. Qu'il s'agisse du verre qui compose les écrans des téléviseurs et des ordinateurs, ou le miroir, un verre qui nous permet de comprendre comment nous pourrions apparaître devant les autres, cette substance est endémique à notre compréhension de la représentation et des formes de médiation en général. Il y a souvent, sinon toujours, des éléments de déformation et de projection lorsqu'on travaille avec le verre.

CHOEUR

Nous vivons dans une société trempée de verre.

—ODEUR—

POURPRE

Si le visuel s'installait à une distance raisonnable entre des sujets et des objets fermés, cette distanciation s'annulait par

la perception nasale, de telle sorte que les odeurs se bousculaient les unes contre les autres autant que sur l'Autre, comme chez le chien, le meilleur ami de l'homme, très fidèle, jamais plus heureux que lorsqu'il sent le derrière de l'Autre.

SABLE

Mes oreilles ont été les premières à échouer. Ensuite est venu le moment où je ne pouvais pas détecter l'odeur de mon ennemi. Ce moment de détection s'est perdu alors que mes narines ont commencé à s'enfoncer dans mes cavités nasales.

CHOEUR

Il a un faible pour les odeurs.

POURPRE

Le ministère de la Sécurité d'État de l'Allemagne de l'Est (alias Stasi) ferait comparaître un «suspect» pour interrogation, et le siège en vinyle sur lequel ils s'étaient assis serait ensuite essuyé avec un chiffon. Les morceaux de vêtements volés, ou le chiffon, seraient ensuite placés dans un bocal scellé ressemblant à des bocaux d'embouteillage. Une étiquette se lirait comme suit:
Nom: Herr Rott. Heure: 21h00. Objet: Sous-vêtement de travail.
Nom: Madame Franzen. Heure: 01h00 heures.
Objet: Chaussettes de travail.

SABLE

J'ai déjà parlé de mon gout pour les odeurs, les odeurs fortes de la terre, de latrines, d'entrailles.

CYAN

Se fondre au premier plan et à l'arrière-plan, incapable de détecter les odeurs dont Sable se délecte.

—GOUT—

POURPRE

Lorsque rien ne subsiste d'un passé lointain, après la mort des gens, après que les choses se soient brisées et dispersées, toujours, seul, plus fragile, mais avec plus de vitalité, moins substantiel, plus persistant,





plus fidèle, l'odeur et le goût des choses demeurent suspendues longtemps, comme des âmes, prêtes à nous rappeler, attendant et espérant leur moment, parmi les ruines de tout le reste; et supporter sans faille, dans la goutte minuscule et presque impalpable de leur essence, la vaste structure du souvenir.

CYAN

Sans surprise pour nous, le prochain sens de Sable à disparaître est celui du goût. Ne goûtant plus les rations compactes qui garnissaient ce sac militaire et ses poches, Sable a profité de cette lacune pour maintenir un flux d'énergie constant tout en étant incapable de stimuler des réflexes nauséeux.

SABLE

Le goût de ma salive dans ma bouche n'est qu'une couche fade par-dessus la suivante.

CHOEUR

Tout devient texture.
Le soi texturé dans la peau texturée.
Les doigts se touchent et se frottent les uns contre les autres.

—TOUCHER—

POURPRE

La perte du toucher en tant que composante conceptuelle de la vision signifiait le relâchement de l'œil du réseau de référentialité incarné dans la tactilité et sa relation subjective à l'espace perçu. Une redéfinition industrielle du corps.

SABLE

L'élimination de mon ombre est l'essence de mon invisibilité. Peau et pellicule fonctionnent comme des interfaces et des zones de frontière entre les organismes et leurs environnements.

J'étire ma peau en l'enroulant autour du périscope et de mon œil.

CYAN

Bientôt, cela aussi échouera Sable.

POURPRE

Au cours de la période d'expérimentation des technologies de camouflage, les oiseaux devaient être déplumés immédiatement après leur collecte. Les assistants étaient initiés à l'art délicat d'agrandir suffisamment le rectum d'un oiseau pour que sa peau se détache doucement de sa carcasse. L'assistant coupe ensuite le crâne et les ailes de la carcasse, met des gants de caoutchouc, frotte la peau avec de l'arsenic en poudre, remet la peau en place et bourre le corps de coton.

CHOEUR

Alors que Sable tente de ne pas être vu, un spectacle est créé.

—VUE—

POURPRE

La blancheur doit être brisée pour créer des ombres masquant la luminosité. Des ombres sombres centrales peuvent être obscurcies en appliquant des matériaux réfléchissants sur tous les côtés.

Il est donc inévitable que le sens humain de la vue s'accroisse à la place particulière jadis occupée par le toucher; le plus abstrait des sens, et le plus facilement trompé, la vue est naturellement la plus facilement adaptable à l'abstraction généralisée de la société actuelle.

SABLE

Le médecin pensait qu'il détectait des lésions dans ma rétine — les pupilles dilatées grâce à la belladone — la torche les éclairait d'une lumière aveuglante terrible.

POURPRE

Lorsque la vision s'est située dans l'immédiateté empirique du corps de l'observateur, elle appartenait au temps, au flux, à la mort.

CYAN

C'est à ce moment très particulier que les yeux de Sable ont cédé. Cela commence souvent par une tache par ici, une tache par là.





SABLE

(parlant frénétiquement)

Regarder à gauche
Baisser les yeux
Lever les yeux
Regarder à droite
Le flash de la caméra
Luminosité atomique
Photos
Le CMV
Une lune verte puis le monde devient magenta
Ma rétine est une planète lointaine
Une Mars rouge de la bande dessinée d'un garçon
Avec une infection jaune qui pullule dans le coin
J'ai dit: «Cela ressemble à une planète».
Le docteur dit: «Oh, je pense que cela
ressemble à une pizza...»

POURPRE

L'aveuglement logé dans l'aversion de l'œil
crée-t-il un aperçu qui se manifeste par une
sorte de magnification ou d'intensification
de l'objet — comme si la mémoire en tant
qu'affect, et l'affect qui forge une mémoire
déformée ou intensifiée, bondissant l'un
sur l'autre, chacun multipliant la force de
l'autre? Je pense que ce genre de cécité créée
de la musique.

SABLE

Tout a commencé à se succéder. Mes
sens, autrefois intacts et appartenant
à l'omniscience, cèdent la place à
l'hallucination du regard. Effacer et cacher.
Se fondre si bien dans mon environnement que
donner un sens à ce que je regarde commence à
s'estomper avec qui je suis.

CHEUR

L'hallucination de se voir en dehors de soi
est nommée conscience camouflée.

CYAN

Pour essayer de se consoler, Sable tente de
concevoir une sorte de bonheur dans lequel
rien ne serait séduisant. Un champ pur,
désolé, un champ d'azur ou de sable,
un champ magnétique muet, sec, où rien de
doux, ni couleur ni son, ne resterait.

CRÉDITS

Rédigé par — Bambitchell
(Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell)

Conception sonore et composition musicale —
Richy Carey

Cinématographie — Rita Macedo

Assistante à la production — Vika Kirchenbauer

After Effects — Martin Sulzer

Colorisation — Tricia Hagoriles

Pourpre — Mason Leaver-Yap

Cyan — Richy Carey

Sable — Alexis Mitchell

Cheur — Richy Carey

Textes —

Ralph Ellison — *Invisible Man* (1952)

Anirban-Gupta-Nigam — “Black Infrastructure:
Media and the Trap of Visibility”, in *Media
Fields Journal*, no. 11 (2016)

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Surveillance of Blackness* (2015)

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Charmaine Chua — “Sunny Island set in the
Sea: Singapore's Land Reclamation as Colonial
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Derek Jarman — *Blue* (1993, film)





Transcript

SPECIAL WORKS SCHOOL

A video by Bambitchell



PURPLE

Triadic Colours. Three colours spaced evenly around the colour wheel, when linked by a straight line, form a triangle. The three colours used in this scheme tend to sit well together and can be quite lively and harmonious. As with the Analogous colour scheme, it is recommended that one colour govern the design while using the other two colours to complement it.

CHORUS

Who is vying for power?

PURPLE

Used for a mix of aesthetic effect and practicality, this colour scheme most typically refers to colour patterns and designs as seen on military vehicles.

CHORUS

In the beginning there was camouflage, the invisible.

PURPLE

Colour is often seen as deceitful and authentic simultaneously. Who of you reading this text would even dream of painting the living room wall bright red or green, or any colour other than off-white? Then, safe in your whiteness, you can hang a wildly coloured picture on the wall, secure in its framed being.

PURPLE

Ambiguously sitting between crimson and violet.
Purple is often, if not always, associated with authority.
A mix of red and blue, often used in the judiciary.
Or adorned by Christian Magistrates and

majesties.

CYAN

If you belong to a linguistic group that does not distinguish blue from green, then other distinct colours do not emerge. Cyan. A new look for blue-ish with a sprinkle of green.

CHORUS

What started off as a multiplicity of senses, kept reducing in number until all that was left was a singular cell.

SAND

Sand. A micro-organism that continues to unravel and lessen itself. Originating in 1920 as a colour resembling the flat parts of a desert, this hue, Sand, begins as most narrators begin when telling a story about their demise.

CYAN

Perhaps demise is not the best way to begin this text.
This is a story about Sand's devolution.
Sand began omniscient.
Sand began pansophical.
Sand began preemptive.

CHORUS

Sand began.

CYAN

Diving to the depths of 40 feet, Sand is dredged up with metal buckets, gasping, pulled to the surface.

CHORUS

The bottom of the sea, soon, will be too deep.



PURPLE

Both liquid and solid, sand possesses a softness and scalability that allows for its easy transportation across great distances. To note its malleability, however, is to make more than a literal statement about its physical composition. Sand is used in multiple applications from the rudimentary to the digital, in the fine river sand used in concrete for the creation of a soaring skyline, bound with bitumen in the roads that line the feverish grid of city blocks, and as the base material from which silicon and rare earth elements—the key components in smart phones—are mined.

CHORUS

Anywhere there is development, there is sand.

PURPLE

Prior to the nineteenth century, vision was often attached to touch, texture, scent, taste and sound.

The separation of sight from these other senses allows for an easier manipulation of the eye. An eye shaped by a convergence of nineteenth century luxuries such as forms of artificial lighting, new use of mirrors, glass and steel architecture, railroads, museums, gardens, photography, fashion, crowds.

CYAN

Sand begins with an employable amount of it all, an overwhelming of the senses, until one sense at a time, succumbs to the inevitable.

PURPLE

In order to see, one must render themselves invisible.

When light falls from above on a uniformly coloured three-dimensional object such as a sphere, it makes the upper side appear lighter and the underside darker. This pattern of light and shade makes the object appear solid, and therefore easier to detect. The classical form of countershading works by counterbalancing the effects of self-shadowing, with grading from dark to light. Mimicry makes an animal appear to be some other thing, whereas this newly discovered law makes them cease to appear to exist at

all. The spectator seems to see through the space occupied by an opaque animal.

CYAN

Sand cuts out a stencil of the soldier, ship, cannon or whatever figure Sand wishes to conceal, and looks through this stencil from the viewpoint under consideration.

SAND

If you want to see something clearly, look at it through a stencil.

CHORUS

Seeing becomes a way of remaking one's own relationship to one's environment.

CYAN

Sand is wedded to camouflage as it is the primary means through which living beings take up an embodied relation to their surroundings.

Foreground blending into background.

CHORUS

Productive mimesis.

SAND

I begin with a pansophical invisibility.

That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.

CHORUS

The eyes behind the eyes.

CYAN

Sand stands in camouflage, observing.
Absorbing.
Reflecting Light.

—SOUND—

CHORUS

The walls have ears.
The walls have ears.





The walls have ears.

PURPLE

This dictum goes back to the sixteenth century French queen Catherine de Medici, who installed acoustical funnels into the walls of the Louvre in order to listen to the conversations of her conspirators.

CHORUS

The walls have ears.

PURPLE

The embodied psychic effects of surveillance include nervous tensions, insomnia, fatigue, accidents, lightheadedness, and less control over reflexes.

CHORUS

Watch as Sand's muscles disband.

PURPLE

Glass is brittle yet infinitely malleable; it is transparent, chemically inert, and durable. It is not coincidental that glass structures our understanding of the representational world. Whether it is the glass that makes up the screens of TVs and computers, or the mirror, a looking glass that allows us to understand how we might appear to others, this substance is endemic to our understanding of representation and to forms of mediation more generally. There are often, if not always, elements of distortion and projection when working with glass.

CHORUS

We live in a glass-soaked society.

—SCENT—

PURPLE

If the visual settled in with a nice sense of distance between self-enclosed subjects and other-enclosed objects, this distancing was annulled by nasal perception, such that the scents ran riotously into one another as much as into the Other, as with the dog, man's best friend, loyal to a fault, never happier than when its nose is up the Other's rear end.

SAND

My ears were the first of my unravels. The next was the moment I couldn't detect the scent of my enemy. As my nostrils began to stick into my nasal cavity, that moment of detection was lost.

CHORUS

He has a fondness for odours.

PURPLE

The East German State Security Service (aka Stasi) would bring in a "suspect" for questioning and the vinyl seat they had sat on would be wiped afterward with a cloth. The pieces of stolen clothing, or the cloth, would then be placed in a sealed jar resembling jam-bottling jars. A label might read as the following:
Name: Herr Rott. Time: 21:00 hours. Object: Worker's underpants.
Name: Frau Franzen. Time: 01:00 Hours.
Object: Worker's socks.

SAND

I have already spoken of my fondness for odours, the strong odours of the earth, of latrines, of loins.

CYAN

Blending into the foreground and background, unable to detect the odours Sand so relishes.

—TASTE—

PURPLE

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

CYAN

Unsurprising to us, the next of Sand's senses





to disappear is that of taste. No longer tasting the compacted rations that lined that military pack and pockets, Sand used this lack as an advantage to keep up a steady stream of energy while being unable to enact gag reflexes.

SAND

The taste of my saliva in my mouth is just one layer of bland atop the next.

CHORUS

It all becomes texture.
The textured self in the textured skin.
Fingers touching and rubbing up against each other.

—TOUCH—

PURPLE

The loss of touch as a conceptual component of vision meant the unloosening of the eye from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility and its subjective relation to perceived space. An industrial remapping of the body.

SAND

The elimination of my shadow is the essence of my invisibility. Skin and film function as interfaces and border zones between organisms and their environments.

I stretch my skin, wrapping it around the periscope and my eye.

CYAN

Soon that will also fail Sand.

PURPLE

During the experimentation period for camouflage technologies, birds had to be skinned immediately after collection. The assistants were instructed in the delicate art of enlarging a bird's rectum sufficiently to roll its skin tenderly back from its carcass. The assistant then cut the carcass away from the skull and wings, put on rubber gloves, rubbed the hide with powdered arsenic, rolled the skin back in place and stuffed the body with cotton.

CHORUS

While Sand tries not to be seen, a spectacle is created.

—SIGHT—

PURPLE

Whiteness must be broken up, creating shadows to mask the brightness. Central dark shadows might be obscured by applying reflecting materials on all sides.

It is thus inevitable that it should elevate the human sense of sight to the special place once occupied by touch; the most abstract of the senses, and the most easily deceived, sight is naturally the most readily adaptable to present-day society's generalized abstraction.

SAND

The doctor thought he could detect lesions in my retina—the pupils dilated with belladonna—the torch shone into them with a terrible blinding light.

PURPLE

Once vision became located in the empirical immediacy of the observer's body, it belonged to time, to flux, to death.

CYAN

It's at this very particular moment that Sand's eyes are giving way. It often begins with a spot here, a spot there.

SAND

(speaking frantically)

Look left
Look down
Look up
Look right
The camera flash
Atomic bright
Photos
The CMV
A green moon, then the world turns magenta
My retina is a distant planet
A red Mars from a boy's own comic
With yellow infection bubbling at the corner
I said, "this looks like a planet"
The doctor says, "Oh, I think it looks like a





pizza..."

PURPLE

Does the blindness held in the aversion of the eye create an insight that is manifest as a kind of magnification or intensification of the object—as if memory as affect, and the affect that forges distorted or intensified memory, cascade off one another, each multiplying the other's forces? I think this kind of blindness makes music.

SAND

It all started to unfold. My senses, once pristine and belonging to omniscience, give way to the psychosis of watching. Of obliterating and concealing. Of blending so well into my surroundings that making sense of what I am watching begins to blur with who I am.

CHORUS

The psychosis of seeing oneself outside of oneself is referred to as camouflage consciousness.

CYAN

As a way to self-console, Sand tries to conceive a kind of happiness, in which nothing would be winsome. A pure, deserted, desolate field, a field of azure or sand, a dumb, dry, magnetic field, where nothing sweet, no colour or sound, would remain.

CREDITS

Written by — Bambitchell

(Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell)

Sound Design and Musical Composition — Richy Carey

Cinematography — Rita Macedo

Production Assistant — Vika Kirchenbauer

After Effects — Martin Sulzer

Colour Correction — Tricia Hagoriles

Purple — Mason Leaver-Yap

Cyan — Richy Carey

Sand — Alexis Mitchell

Chorus — Richy Carey

Texts —

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Anirban-Gupta-Nigam — "Black Infrastructure: Media and the Trap of Visibility", in *Media Fields Journal*, no. 11 (2016)

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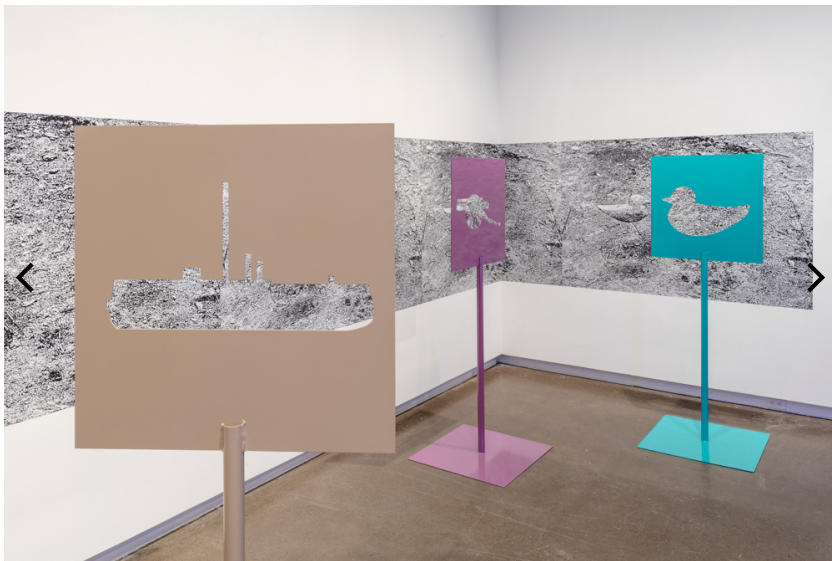




REVIEWS / FEBRUARY 14, 2018

Surveillance Romance

In their first major solo exhibition—and on the verge of a Berlinale spotlight—artist duo Bambitchell studies the aesthetics of camouflage



Bambitchell, "Special Works School," 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

by **Aaditya Aggarwal**

Dazibao

Maggie Nelson speculates on a peculiar ache (and the ability to inflict it) in *Bluets*, her lyrical book documenting a personal relationship with the colour blue. In it, she quotes Goethe: “Every decided colour does a certain violence to the eye, and forces the organ to opposition.” Nelson recounts the days she would work tirelessly at a restaurant where the interiors were “incredibly orange,” only to then return home, fatigued, to dream of her room “in pale blue”—a Goetheian response to orange, “blue’s spectral opposite.”



She writes later, awed, “the eye is simply a recorder, with or without will.” That is: The eye is weak, and its terms of looking are inherently violent. If looking at a colour, constantly, enacts a “violence” on the eye, when a writer sights, registers and describes it by way of language, the aesthetic damage is rebirthed. Ideologically, the act of looking seems akin to an alluring, tiresome confrontation.



Bamitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

But sighting colour is also a crime committed by senses that don’t see—or rather, those that smell, taste, hear and touch (distinctly, slyly). “Prior to the nineteenth century, vision was often attached to touch, taste and sound,” announces the stern voice of Purple, one of the characters and narrators of Bamitchell’s *Special*

Dazibao

Works School—a film that is currently part of their first major solo exhibition at Gallery TPW in Toronto, and is soon to go on view at the Berlinale.

The Gallery TPW show, also titled “Special Works School,” borrows its name from a secret unit of artists created by the British military to conceive and build camouflage technologies during the First World War. This most recent show finds Bambitchell, a collaboration between artists Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell, curiously studying the aesthete’s capacity for violence—which is to say, the state’s preoccupation with aesthetics to facilitate surveillance.



Bambitchell, “Special Works School,” 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

Elements of this exhibition include the video and an installation of sterile tools: three metal stencil stands in shapes of a ship, a cannon and a duck; photographs of two model ducks by late American artist and camouflagist Abbott Thayer; a fake grass carpet; and a glass box filled with sand.

Special Works School, the video, recalls, for me, Nelson’s speculative, melancholic affair with colour in *Bluets*. The video is narrated by three colours—Sand, Cyan and Purple—who are the protagonists of the narrative, accompanied by a polyvocal chorus that parodies operatic recitative (musical commentary that veers between song and speech). If one were to ascribe genre to the film, the form of epic would adequately address its overarching plotline: the birth, the rise to maturity, then the downfall (to eventual fatality) of Sand.

Dazibao

Sand (swift, warm, coarse, malleable, granular) self-narrates: “[It] begins as most narrators begin, when telling a story about their demise.” The character begins as most narrators begin, nervously, in this case imaging a sun-beaten desert dune. During the course of the film, Sand wets and coagulates; the earthy tint of these images, shot by Portuguese filmmaker Rita Macedo, often gains a mauve temper. An aerial shot of sand trucks is, in one instance, hued in violet, with vehicles laboriously stabbing ground and lifting crumbling mounds of it—moist, raw material to be tossed into glass factories.



Bambitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

Sand’s “demise” is mirrored in the character’s loss of senses, which decline “until all that (is) left [is] a singular cell.” In Bambitchell’s January 17 artist talk moderated by Toronto artist and composer Christopher Willes, Bamboat revealed the duo’s deliberate choice to have, during the span of the 27-minute narrative, Sand’s voice “electronically disintegrate” and finally become “robotic” in order to mirror the self-effacing, tremulous texture of this substance. For this reason, unlikely pauses and a decaying modulation befriend Sand’s pitch, as inflected by Scottish sound artist and composer Richy Carey, guiding the character from vitality to disposal.

Imprinted as it is with productivity, waste and frailty, Sand is also “omniscient, pansophical, preemptive,” as the character of Cyan (sometimes-green, sometimes-blue, turquoise in the day, oceanic-cerulean by night) remarks. “Sand stands in camouflage, observing. Absorbing. Reflecting light.”



Bambitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

Tones of sand are ubiquitous in industries that rely on hiding. From desert dune to dark mahogany, its shades have historically been entrusted with camouflage. Developed and implemented between 1997 to the mid 2000s by the Canadian government’s Clothe the Soldier Project, the Canadian Disruptive Pattern Arid Regions camouflage, used in clothing for personnel deployed in desert regions like Afghanistan, embraced sand’s warm tonality.

“A light terracotta colour,” on the other hand, as researcher Keith D. Smith writes in *Liberalism, Surveillance and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada 1877–1927*, was a shade that Indigenous agents, who were hired to closely monitor Indigenous reserve residents in regions of British Columbia during the 1880s and 1890s, were required to “paint all their farm implements” with. “Light terracotta” marries coloration of earth and blood. Sand is a participant here, too.

In Bambitchell's video, when Sand is nearing death, they declare: "The elimination of my shadow is the essence of my invisibility."



Bambitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

"Colour is often seen as deceitful and authentic, simultaneously," narrates Purple, their aural command stoic and Siri-like. I'm reminded of Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which Blanche DuBois, the tragic Southern belle, speaks of camouflage coquettishly. In moments when she is seen, lit unflatteringly, she panics, retreating: "Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this merciless glare!"

In *Streetcar*, DuBois fears revealing her age, and relies on an earthy, tender colour texture to offer her lookers a palatable femininity. My first viewing of *Special Works School* feels punctuated by such moments of desperation, of seeking beauty while nearing the edge.



Bambitchell, *Special Works School*, 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

In one such instance, a wineglass (chiselled and crystalline, a product of labour and grain) is shot—in the aesthetic of a surround-sound system commercial or an LED flatscreen television screensaver—in close-up and in slow motion. It tumbles to the ground, gradually shattering. “I’m not sure whether the sound comes first or the visual does,” Bamboat tells me over Skype, referring to that instance in the film. I feel more certain; the sound comes first. Its primacy prepares the viewer to assume the role of an eyewitness.

Surveillance incites a particular erotics of self: “Don’t look at me,” the opening line written by Linda Perry for Christina Aguilera’s “Beautiful,” feels ridiculously apt here. For a pop anthem centering a liberal politic of body positivity for women and girls, this line could also contain a desire for camouflage: to remain hidden while also being seen.



Bambitchell, "Special Works School," 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

The surveilled, however, are often denied their terms of being looked at; they are accessed, either "by right or by force," as Sydette Harry writes in her essay "Everyone Watches, Nobody Sees: How Black Women Disrupt Surveillance Theory." Surveilled subjects, Harry continues, "either won't say no, or they can't."

Sand, as witnessed by a hushed, spectral Cyan, wants to be seen but not fully regarded. At one point in my viewing, the operatic chorus, evoking the gaiety and musicality of John Greyson's urgent, rhapsodic 2009 film Fig Trees, attunes and orchestrates: "While Sand tries not to be seen, a spectacle is created."

When Sand is no more, their overseer, Purple, illustrates this spectacle of death. Towards the end of the film, when the projection leaks a saturating violet onto the walls of the room, I see other viewers' foreheads, vulgarly lit, the walls drained and complete in a clinical disco tinge. Two white foam mattresses are stationed on the ground before the projection. The foam appears to rise from the ground as Purple bleeds onto us.



Bambitchell, "Special Works School," 2018. Installation view at Gallery TPW. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

It turns out all shades of divine Purple reverberate and plagiarize one another. Voiced by Glasgow's Mason Leaver-Yap in a BBC documentarian's Anglo-lilt, this character speaks in 18 Hertz, also known as a "ghost frequency" due to its capacity to induce anxiety in humans. This spillage evokes the desire to both see and mourn—overwhelmingly, erotically, beyond corporeal means—a hue that repeats itself in unexpected, godly ways. It marks the aesthete's sad, sordid romance.

"But what kind of love is it, really?" Nelson asks herself of the colour blue. She seems to classify it as Bambitchell does Sand: "It calms me to think of blue as the colour of death."

Bambitchell's exhibition "Special Works School" is on view until February 24 at Gallery TPW in Toronto. And Bambitchell's film of the same title will screen at the Berlinale as part of Forum Expanded from February 15 to 25.

Aaditya Aggarwal is a writer, editor and film programmer based in Toronto. He was the 2016 Online Editorial Intern at Canadian Art.

Revisiting Abbott Thayer: non-scientific reflections about camouflage in art, war and zoology

Roy R. Behrens*

Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0362, USA

This paper reviews the achievements of Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849–1921), an American painter and naturalist whose pioneering writings on animal camouflage addressed shared concerns among artists, zoologists and military tacticians. It discusses his beliefs about camouflage (both natural and military) in the context of his training as an artist, with particular emphasis on three of his major ideas: countershading, raptive (or disruptive) coloration and background picturing.

Keywords: Abbott H. Thayer; camouflage; countershading; disruptive coloration; background picturing

1. THAYER'S INFLUENCE

Among my most valued possessions are four letters from Sir Alister Hardy, the eminent British marine biologist, the first one written in 1976 and the last one 5 years later. As a young professor of art, I was researching camouflage, and having read Hardy's remarkable book, *The Living Stream* (Hardy 1965), I had written to him, asking about his experiences as a military camouflage officer.

In 1914, it had been Hardy's intention to enter Oxford University but he chose instead to volunteer for the British Army. In time, he was assigned to serve as a camouflage officer, or what was called a 'camoufleur'. His father was an architect, so, as he explained to me, throughout his life, he had been

equally drawn to science and art, and if the truth be known, I must confess that it is the latter that has the greater appeal. I am lucky in not having been torn between the two; I have managed to combine them (Hardy's letter of 1976, p. 1).

He also conveyed the elation he felt as a young artist–scientist when (a few years before World War I) he read an influential book by American artist Abbott Handerson Thayer (produced in collaboration with his son Gerald, the book's author of record), titled *Concealing Colouration in the Animal Kingdom* (Thayer 1909). 'Perhaps more than anyone else', Hardy wrote, it was the Thayers who 'drew the attention of naturalists to the importance of artistic principles in the understanding of animal and military camouflage...' But he added this qualification,

In parts of the book they let their imagination carry them away into some absurdities as when they think the colours of flamingos help to make them inconspicuous against a sunset!... But it is a great book (Hardy's letter of 1976, p. 1; see also Gould 1991).

*behrens@uni.edu

One contribution of 15 to a Theme Issue 'Animal camouflage: current issues and new perspectives'.

There is no way to know for sure how many aspiring artists and zoologists—as Hardy—were motivated by that book. Early in World War I, the elder Thayer (according to his biographer) 'was greatly disturbed when he heard that some of his theories had fallen into the hands of the Germans and were being used against the Allies, but he also knew that the French as well as the English had his book and were using it' (White 1951, p. 134). More than 30 years later, in a letter to the daughter of Louis A. Fuertes (an American bird illustrator and Thayer's former student), British naturalist and artist Peter Scott, who had designed ship camouflage during World War II, nostalgically remembered that

As a boy of twelve, I spent a good deal of time studying Thayer's great illustrated book on camouflage and was much influenced by it. Later on, I became a keen duck hunter and used a duck punt that was camouflaged in accordance with Thayer's principles of negative shading,

(White 1951, p. 137).

or what is now widely referred to as countershading—or 'Thayer's law'.

2. HIS DISCOVERY OF COUNTERSHADING

It is not known precisely when Abbott Thayer first realized the survival function of countershading, but we can be reasonably certain about when he began to promote the idea. Initially, he did so through informal show-and-tell—using hand-carved wooden duck decoys—and then, in April 1896, by formally writing a paper on 'The Law Which Underlies Protective Colouration' (in *The Auk*, the American Journal of Ornithology), an effect that its author described with: 'Animals are painted by nature, darkest on those parts that tend to be the most lighted by the sky's light, and vice versa' (Thayer 1896a, p. 125), with the result that the animal's body looks flat and insubstantial (figure 1). Decades later, the journal's editor, Frank M. Chapman, recalled the day on which he witnessed Thayer's first demonstration of countershading:

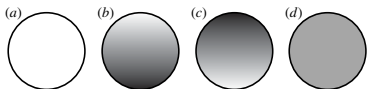


Figure 1. Four stages in a demonstration of countershading, from left to right: (a) a flat expanse of paper; (b) the artistic tradition of shading (or top-down lighting), by which a flat surface takes on the appearance of volume; (c) countershading, by which the undersides of animals are lighter than the surfaces that have greater exposure to sunlight; and (d) the flat expanse of tone that comes from shading being cancelled out by countershading. Author's diagram.

One rainy day in the spring of 1896, wearing an old suit and rubber boots, Thayer came into my office [at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where Chapman was associate curator] and said, 'Come out in the square, I've something to show you'. Approaching through the mud, the contractor's house of a new museum wing then under construction he pointed to the ground near its base and said, 'How many decoys do you see?' We were then approximately 20 feet from the house. 'Two', I replied, and described them as brownish, approximately six inches long and elliptical in shape. We advanced a few feet. 'How many do you see now?' he asked. 'No more', I said, and it was not until we had reached them that I discovered there were in fact four decoys. All were of the same size, all were coloured Earth brown, exactly alike on the upper half, but the two nearly invisible ones were painted pure white on the lower half, whereas the conspicuous decoys were of the same colour throughout. Thus the comparative invisibility that constitutes protective coloration was produced not alone by colouring the decoys to resemble their surrounding (by background matching) but also by painting out the shadow that made their lower half much darker than their surroundings (Chapman 1933, p. 78).

Chapman was greatly persuaded by this—'One had only to see it', he continued, 'to become convinced of its truth and application to the colouration of animals'—so much so that he published Thayer's first paper on countershading (with photographs and a drawing) in the very next issue of the journal, followed by Thayer's 'Further Remarks' in the October issue (Thayer 1896*b*). Thayer was also invited to speak at the annual gathering of the American Ornithologists' Union, held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on November 9–12. According to the minutes, Thayer demonstrated countershading to that group just as he had for Chapman, but this time using sweet potatoes instead of wooden duck decoys. The meeting's attendees were highly receptive: 'The experiments were an overwhelming success', the minutes reported, and 'The effect was almost magical' (Boynton 1952, p. 544).

3. ART, SCIENCE AND SLEIGHT OF HAND

It may not be undue to say that Thayer's demonstrations really were 'almost magical', in the sense that to observe them was probably equivalent to witnessing sleight of hand magic at close range: standing by in disbelief as tangible, physical things vanish into thin air



Figure 2. A photographic record of one of Abbott Thayer's demonstrations of countershading, using two wooden duck decoys. The one on the left (which is visible) is the same colour as the surrounding Earth, but has not been countershaded, while the one on the right (which is all but invisible) has been carefully countershaded. Photograph from Thayer (1908).

(or, in Thayer's case, do not appear, although present) in the span of ones unhampered vision.

This pertains to Thayer and countershading because, for many years, while I myself had read of countershading (fairly extensively), I had only seen printed examples in books (drawings, paintings or photographs, often retouched or adjusted) or in films on nature. It was easy enough to grasp the principle of countershading, but my own most persuasive experience occurred in the early 1990s, shortly after buying a farm. One late summer day, as my wife and I were looking at the partly eaten leaves on plum and cherry bushes on our property, we suddenly realized that there were dozens of hawk or sphinx moth larvae suspended on the bushes, within easy reach. Not only had we not noted them initially, they continued to be all but invisible as, repeatedly, we searched the plants to find them. At last, we resorted to locating them not by looking for the larvae but for their droppings on the leaves, and then looking up from there. Throughout all this (which went on for some time), we were both fully aware of and delighting in the fact that we were in the presence of a 'demonstration' of countershading, more masterful even than Thayer's.

We have not witnessed this again (although we have hoped they might return), as it was an atypical season. The nearest convincing reminder I have is a photograph from one of Thayer's countershading demonstrations, using duck decoys on wires (figure 2). It was first published in a paper by Gerald Thayer (Thayer 1908) in the year before their book came out. It is an astonishing photograph, with a caption which states that the picture contains two bird-shaped models (each mounted on a wire approximately 6 inches off the ground) of the same size and shape, but painted differently. The duck decoy on the left (which is clearly visible in the photograph) has been coloured uniformly while that on the right has been artfully 'obliteratively shaded' or countershaded. The photograph is astonishing because the duck on the right is entirely invisible, with the possible exception of an upright portion of the wire. In reading the caption while looking at the

photograph, one cannot help but wonder if the text and the photograph have been inadvertently mismatched—maybe this is the wrong photograph!

When this first appeared in print in *Century Magazine*, some readers may have voiced their doubts. As a result, in the following year, when the Thayers' book came out, it contained not only that same photograph but also this clarification:

The reader will have to take it on faith that this is a genuine photograph, and that there is a right-hand model of the same size as the other, unless he can detect its position by its faint visibility...

(Thayer 1909, p. 24).

And then, as if to provoke any sceptics, the Thayers introduced a new, second photograph, all but identical to the first, in which the model is even less detectable because (in their words) it 'is still better 'obliterated'.

In 1898, 2 years after Thayer spoke to the American Ornithologists' Union, he travelled to Europe (on a ship that was transporting cattle), where he appeared before various gatherings of naturalists at the South Kensington Museum in London, at the Natural History Museums at Oxford and Cambridge, and in Bergen, Norway and Florence, Italy, installing in each of those places 'permanent apparatus demonstrating the invisibility of a countershaded object' (White 1951, p. 254). Among those in the audience at his European talks were the British entomologist Edward P. Poulton, who was greatly pleased by the presentation, and the biologist Alfred Russel Wallace, who, while apparently less enthused, included Thayer and his 'discovery' of countershading in the 1901 edition of his book *Darwinism* (Kingsland 1978).

4. ARTISTS VERSUS ZOOLOGISTS

I have emphasized the word *discovery* because, as is frequently noted, it was *not* Thayer who first discovered countershading. As has been determined, as early as 1886, Poulton had published his own observations about countershading, although he did not call it that. When Thayer learned of this (he had not been aware of these findings), he graciously conceded that Poulton had originated the idea, whereupon Poulton responded—even more graciously—that his had been only a 'partial discovery', and that the bulk of the credit belonged to Thayer (Poulton 1902). Subsequently, not only did Poulton speak openly in support of Thayer's promotion of countershading ('No discovery in the wide field of animal coloration has been received with greater interest', he said; Poulton 1902, p. 596), he also wrote the narrative for an explanatory panel that was displayed beside the models that Thayer installed at museums.

As said, there is a second, subtler sense in which Thayer did *not* discover countershading: he did not discover it in the early 1890s because he already knew it and had known it nearly all his life. He knew it owing to his training as an artist. He was a master at shading or top-down lighting (by which flat surfaces take on the appearance of volume), and countershading is simply upside-down or inverse shading (or 'negative shading', as Peter Scott put it). Thayer himself said as

much—albeit far too often and in a tone that is widely agreed to have been intemperate, even vitriolic. He stated it most emphatically (and, no doubt, most offensively too) in his introduction to *Concealing Colouration*, in which he disdainfully said of zoologists that they are incapable of grasping how animal coloration functions, because, in his words, it

can be interpreted only by painters. For it deals wholly in optical illusion, and this is the very gist of a painter's life. He is born with a sense of it; and, from his cradle to his grave, his eyes, wherever they turn, are unceasingly at work on it,—and his pictures live by it. What wonder then, if it was for him alone to discover that the very art he practices is at full—beyond the most delicate precision of human powers—on almost all animals?

(Thayer 1909, p. 3).

So, it was not so much countershading that Thayer discovered, but more importantly, he realized the far-reaching manner in which it and other artistic practices had evolved to contribute so critically to the survival of animals.

5. HIS EFFORTS BEYOND COUNTERSHADING

Having published his findings on countershading, Thayer might then have discreetly backed off from his trespass on zoology. But he was anything but ingratiating—the term 'quixotic' comes to mind—so instead of retreating, he chose to push on. He did so initially by inventing uses of countershading that might at least be practical, even profitable. Thus, when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, he quickly teamed up with his neighbour, American painter George de Forest Brush, in devising a way of countershading naval vessels (Bowditch 1970). But that war ended quickly, and while Thayer and Brush's son (the sculptor Gerome Brush) continued to negotiate with the US Navy for a decade, the only immediate consequence was US Patent No. 715 013, filed on 2 December 1902, titled 'Process of Treating the Outsidess of Ships, etc. for Making Them Less Visible' (Behrens 2002).

Thayer's second strategy for going beyond countershading was to look at other artistic practices, 'the ABC of painter craft', in his words (Thayer 1918), that might also have survival value. What else did visual artists know (as 'sight-specialists') that might have direct parallels in the coloration of animals? I think it was this larger notion (which most likely neither came about logically, nor as a crystalline insight) that prompted his identification of two other important components in animal coloration: *ruptive* (or *disruptive*) coloration and *background picturing*. In fact, he was already thinking of these as corollaries to countershading when he published his first paper in 1896.

In that paper, he describes disruptive coloration (although he does not use that term) as 'the employment of strong arbitrary patterns of colour that tend to conceal the wearer by destroying his apparent continuity of surface' (Thayer 1896a, p. 127). Beyond that he says very little, except that it works in concurrence with countershading. But 22 years later, in a paper contending that khaki field service uniforms provide

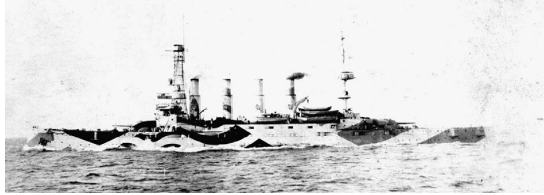


Figure 3. In part through Thayer's influence, disruptive coloration was widely used for military camouflage during World War I, especially for merchant ships (it was called 'dazle painting') because it made it harder for German submarine (U-boat) gunners to accurately aim their torpedoes. Shown here is an American dazle-painted ship, c. 1918. Author's collection.



Figure 4. A watercolour painting by Gerald Thayer of a ruffed grouse, by which he hoped to demonstrate 'background picturing', the resemblance between the animal's surface patterns and its customary forest setting. First reproduced in black and white in Thayer (1908), it also appears in colour in Thayer (1909).

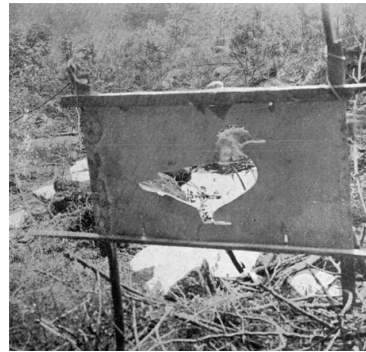


Figure 5. A photograph of the Thayers' demonstration of how to use a cut-out silhouette to arrive at an appropriate camouflage pattern for any figure. First reproduced in Thayer (1918).

insufficient camouflage, he implies that he was well aware of objects 'cut to pieces' long before 1896, simply owing to his training in art. He writes: 'As all painters know, two or more patterns on *one* thing tend to pass for so many separate things. All art schools will tell you that it takes a far-advanced pupil to be able to represent the *patterns* on any decorated object so true in degree of light and darkness as not to 'cut to pieces the object itself, and destroy its reality', (Thayer 1918, p. 492). In art, at least in Thayer's time, it was fundamental to uphold the continuity of the object that one was portraying—while in protective coloration and military camouflage, the desired effect is discontinuity or disruption (figure 3).

It is equally fundamental in art to strive for a formal coherence among all the various aspects of a composition. A painting, Gully Jimson says in Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*, is 'hundreds of little differences all fitting in together' (Cary 1965, p. 145), and in this, his first paper, Thayer contends for the first time that this is exactly what happens in protective coloration. The markings on an animal are functionally comparable to

painted shapes on a canvas, while the creature's epitomized setting is the remainder of the painting (figure 4). In Thayer's words, the patterns on the animal are 'a picture of such background as one might see, if the animal were transparent' (Thayer 1896a, p. 128; an unfortunate choice of terms, because he does not mean a literal 'picture', but, as his son later clarified, 'a pattern that *pictures*, or imitates, the pattern of the object's background' (Thayer 1923, p. 159)). He called this phenomenon 'background picturing', and, by World War I, he had arrived at yet another way to make practical use of his theories. Anyone could create appropriate, functional camouflage by employing the following method:

[A person] has only to cut out a stencil of the soldier, ship, cannon or whatever figure he wishes to conceal, and look through this stencil from the viewpoint under consideration, to learn just what costume from that viewpoint would most tend to conceal this figure (Thayer 1918, p. 494; figure 5).

It is interesting that this method was later adopted, during World War II, by British-born Australian zoologist and camoufleur William Dakin (Elias 2008).

6. AN IRONIC CONCLUSION

Thayer outlived World War I, and died in 1921. Impaired by bipolar disorder, or in his words, ‘the Abbott pendulum’, that swung between the two extremes of ‘allwellity’ and ‘sick disgust’ (Meryman 1999), at the end he had grown suicidal. It was not reward enough to know that countershading was generally accepted, or that he had contributed to military camouflage, in part because some of his students had served as camoufleurs in France (Behrens 2002). What he lacked was the stated approval of zoologists and naturalists of such aspects of his theories as disruptive coloration, background picturing and his dismissal of the functions of nuptial and warning coloration—not to mention such absurd contrivances as a flamingo that matches the sunset.

At the close of the nineteenth century, Abbott Thayer had been a leading American artist, whose paintings were widely known and greatly admired, as is shown by the major collections, public and private, in which his work can be readily found. During his lifetime, he would have needed ‘no introduction’ among serious artists and collectors, yet now, he is all but excluded from books on art and art history, and is largely unknown among artists, art students and the American public. It is an odd turn of events that his achievements are far more familiar today among zoologists, who are riding a surge of new interest in empirical studies of disruptive coloration, countershading and other aspects of camouflage that Thayer is frequently credited with (Merilaita 1998; Cuthill *et al.* 2005; Stevens *et al.* 2007).

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RECENT PROJECTS

Bugs and Beasts Before the Law / 2019 / Film & Video Installation
Special Works School / 2018 / Video, Sculpture, Installation
The People vs. the Cock of Basel / 2016 / Video-performance
Sashay Away / 2015 / site-specific installation for The Campbell House
Empire Symbol, Or A Man and his Mule / 2015 / video & installation
Not an Hour, Not a Day / 2014 / sound & video installation
Silent Citizen / 2014 / audio-video participatory installation
An Objective Odyssey / 2014 / participatory installation
Where the Trees Stood in Water / 2013 / cyanotype prints
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts / 2011-2012 / 5:00 / video
Border Sounds / 2011 - 2015 / mixed media installation
Inextricable / 2009 / 5 channel film and video installation

SELECTED SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS**2019**

RIDM Festival // Bugs and Beasts // *Montreal, QC, November*
Dazibao // Special Works School (Solo Exhibition) // *Montreal, QC, November – December*
Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival // Bugs and Beasts // *Northumberland, UK, September*
Mercer Union // Bugs and Beasts Before the Law (Solo Exhibition) // *Toronto, ON, Sept - Nov*

2018

Istanbul International Experimental Film Festival // Special Works School // *November*
BFI London Film Festival // Special Works School // *London, UK, October*
Videomedija // Special Works School // *Novi Sad, Serbia, August*
Special Works School // Union Docs // *Brooklyn, New York, May*
Silent Citizen (solo exhibition) // AKA Gallery // *Saskatoon, Canada, March*
Special Works School // Berlinale - Forum Expanded // *Berlin, DE, February*
Special Works School (solo exhibition) // Gallery TPW // *Toronto, Canada, January*

2017



Border Sounds // Im-Mobilities (group show) // Gallerie KUB // Leipzig, Germany, June
The People v. The Cock of Basel // NORD Festival // Stuttgart, Germany, June
The People v. The Cock of Basel // Rhubarb Festival // Toronto, Canada, February

2016

Empire Symbol and The Atomic Ark (Lecture Performance) // Modern Fuel Gallery // Kingston, On, November
The People vs. The Cock of Basel // Akademie Schloss Solitude // Stuttgart, DE, June
The Atomic Ark (lecture performance) // Biographies and the Production of Space // Akademie Schloss Solitude // Stuttgart, DE, May
Empire Symbol & The Atomic Ark (lecture performance) // Les Complices // Screening and Performance // Zurich, CH, May
The Atomic Ark (Work in Progress) // Immigration Pop-Up Show, Santa Fe Art Institute // Santa Fe, NM, February

2015

Empire Symbol // Art Gallery of Ontario, First Thursday // Toronto, Canada
Silent Citizen // Article // Montreal
Empire Symbol // Gallery44 // Toronto
Sashay Away & Where the Trees // *Memories of the Future* // Toronto
Empire Symbol, Or A Man and His Mule // Wilfrid Laurier University // Waterloo, Canada
Border Sounds // Art Gallery of Windsor // Windsor, Canada

2014

Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // Museo de la Ciudad // Guadalajara, Mexico
Not an Hour, Not a Day // Long Winter // Toronto, Canada
Not an Hour, Not a Day // Word on the Street Festival // Toronto
Silent Citizen // The Images Festival Off-Screen // Toronto
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // Bristol Radical Film Festival // Bristol, U.K.
An Objective Odyssey // Ice Follies // North Bay, Canada

2013

Where the Trees Stood in Water // Soho Lobby Gallery // Toronto
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // Queeristan // Amsterdam, Netherlands
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // Rebels with a Cause Film Festival // Toronto, Canada
Citizen Kenney // Under New Management // Access Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Inextricable & Citizen Kenney // That's So Gay // Toronto, Canada
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // The Politics of Play // Toronto, Canada

2012

Inextricable // International Media Art Festival // Yangon, Myanmar
Citizen Kenney: A Love Letter in 3 Parts // Video Fag // Toronto, Canada





Queen of Canada // Parkdale Film Festival // Toronto, Canada
Inextricable // Decent Exposure // Living Arts Centre // Mississauga, Canada
Inextricable // Hidden and Forbidden Identities, International Art Expo // Venice, Italy
Border Sounds // Catalyst Arts // Belfast, Northern Ireland



2011

Border Sounds // Nuit Blanche // Toronto, Canada
Inextricable // The Propeller Gallery // Toronto, Canada

SELECTED ARTIST TALKS & PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Artist Talk // CCA Glasgow // Glasgow, SCT, April 2019
Artist Talk // Gallery TPW // Toronto, Canada // January 2018
Artist Talk // Modern Fuel Gallery // Kingston, On, November 2016
Panel // Akademie Schloss Solitude // Biographies & the Production of Space
// Stuttgart, DE, May 2016
Artist Talk // VMK - Zurich University of the Arts // Zurich, CH, May 2016
Artist Talk // Articule Gallery // Silent Citizen // Montreal, October 2015
Artist Talk // The Campbell House // Memories of the Future // Toronto, October 2015
Artist Talk // Gallery 44 // Empire Symbol // Toronto, October 2015
Panel Discussion // Mapping Violence, Projecting Desire, Seeing Futures // American
Studies Association // Toronto, Oct 2015
Artist Talk // Memories of the Future // The Campbell House // Toronto, August 2015
Panel Discussion // Visible Evidence Documentary Conference // Toronto, August 2015
Artist Talk // The Oncoming Corner // New York, USA, February 2015
Panel Discussion // Making and Being Made: Visual Representations and/of Citizenship
// College of Art Conference // New York, NY // February 2015
Artist Talk // Collaborative Practices // YYZ Artist Outlet // August 2014
Artist Talk // Images Festival // Toronto, Canada // April, 2014
Panel Discussion // The Sound of Affect: Thinking Feeling Conference // Ryerson University
// Toronto, Canada // March 2014
Panel Discussion // Homework II: Long Forms Short Utopias // Windsor, Canada //
November, 2013
Artist Talk // Video for Artists // Ontario College of Art & Design University //
Toronto, Canada // November 2012

COLLECTIONS

McGill University
Deborah Cowen Private Collection
University of British Columbia
University of Toronto
Ryerson University
Ontario College of Art & Design University
Seneca College Media Collection



AWARDS AND GRANTS

Canada Council for the Arts / Media Arts Production Grant / 2016
Doc Circuit Montreal Talent Lab at RIDM Festival / Montreal, Canada / November 2016
Oberhausen International Short Film Festival Seminar Participants / Oberhausen, Germany
/ May 2016
Steam Whistle Homebrew Award / Images Festival / 2014
Ontario Arts Council / Exhibition Assistance Grant / 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017
Canada Council for the Arts / Travel Grant / 2012
Nuit Blanche / Project Grant / 2011

SELECTED RESIDENCIES

Darling Foundry / Montreal, QC / 2019
MacDowell Artist Colony / New Hampshire, USA / 2018
Akademie Schloss Solitude Fellowship / Stuttgart, Germany / 2016-2017
Santa Fe Art Institute / Santa Fe, New Mexico / 2016
Nes Artist Residency / Skagastrond, Iceland / 2012

PUBLICATIONS

Surveillance is Meta: Bambitchell Special Works School // *The Senses and Society Journal*
14:1 // by Erica Cristobal, 2019
Contemporary Citizenship, Art and Visual Culture, Routledge, *January 2018*
Los Angeles Review of Books, *March 2016*
Undercurrents: *Journal of Critical Environment Studies*, *March 2016*
Mobile Desires: *The Erotics and Politics of Mobility Justice*, Palgrave Pivot, *October 2015*
Kapsula Magazine: *Bad History* 1/3, *January 2014*
No More Potlucks, November - December, 2013, *Queer Cartographies: Reprinting*
Toronto's Harbour, Interview with Deborah Cowen
