

Unsettling





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Basil AlZeri

Lori Blondeau

Duorama

Terrance Houle

Lisa Myers

Curated by

Bojana Videkanic

**DORIS
MC CARTHY
GALLERY**



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH



Highland Creek

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(Un)settled Histories

Bojana Videkanic

I am moved by my love for human life;
by the firm conviction that all the world
must stop the butchery, stop the slaughter.

I am moved by my scars, by my own filth
to re-write history with my body
to shed the blood of those who betray themselves

To life, world humanity I ascribe
To my people...my history...I address
my vision.

—Lee Maracle, “War,” Bent Box

To unsettle means to disturb, unnerve, and upset, but could also mean to offer pause for thinking otherwise about an issue or an idea. From May to October 2017, *(Un)settled*, a six-month-long curatorial project, took place at Guild Park and Gardens in south Scarborough, and at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough (where the exhibition was titled *Unsettling*), showcasing the work of Lori Blondeau, Lisa Myers, Duorama, Basil AlZeri, and Terrance Houle. The project was a multi-pronged collaboration between myself, the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo, the Doris McCarthy Gallery, Friends of the Guild, the Waterloo Archives, the 7a*11d International Performance Art Festival’s special project 7a*md8, curated by Golboo Amani and Francisco-Fernando Granados, and the Landmarks Project. As a performance



Aerial view of the Scarborough Guild of the Arts showing the old Guild Inn and Hotel c. 1970. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

artist, curator/organizer of performance art events, and someone committed to politically and socially engaged aesthetic practices, I was interested in reaching wider audiences by asking the participating artists to create site-specific work, responding to Guild Park and Scarborough as a whole.

The idea behind the curatorial work was to create an opportunity for a mini-residency where each artist would spend time on the Guild Park site, understand it better, consider its geography, social and cultural history, and psychogeography, in order to interrupt it. The intent was also to bring broader audiences to a perpetually culturally marginalized Scarborough. Artistic interventions on-site served as a bridge between the history of Guild Park and the site's place and meaning in Scarborough's current socio-political context. The Guild is an important landmark as a park and a public space, a leftover of modernist history in Canada, but also of Scarborough's post-World War II development. Behind Scarborough's settler narratives lies much deeper Indigenous history. Through direct exploration of the site, its landscape, and its politics, the project sutured social practice and land. The exhibition at the Doris McCarthy Gallery, where the work of the participating artists was placed into gallery space, provided a much-needed framework



Aerial view of the Scarborough Guild of the Arts and surrounding area c. 1970. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

for the pieces developed during the residencies to be contextualized in relationship not only to Guild Park, but to the University of Toronto Scarborough as a cultural and educational institution, and Scarborough as a whole.

Grappling with history

Attempting to grapple with the weight of history, Walter Benjamin writes in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” that “history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled with the presence of the now.” If the structure of the site of history is constructed through the now, there is no better moment to address the history of Scarborough—or, for that matter, of Canada—than the now. For Benjamin, the moments of the now, in which our “now”¹ connects to specific points in the past, is not a direct bridge to the past, but rather a collision between that past and the contemporary moment. These moments prompt illuminations about both contemporary and historical time, disrupting the linearity and stillness of history.

Lee Maracle’s poem “War” offers a way into thinking about unsettling the stillness of history. “To re-write history with my body,”² Maracle reminds us, is to offer

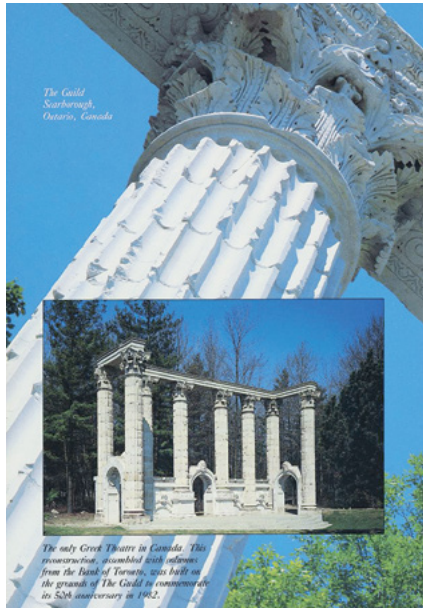


Spencer Clark (far right) with Ontario premier William Grenville Davis (second from the left) and two other guests at the opening of the Exhibition of Outdoor Contemporary Sculpture, August 3, 1982, at the Guild. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

one's embodiment, one's being-in-one's-own-body, as a tool for reconsidering history. In other words, Maracle's very presence, her life, her witnessing-by-living as an Indigenous woman, is a form of rewriting settler-colonial history. The artists in *(Un)settled/Unsettling* offer a similar form of interjection and witnessing by occupying the space of the Doris McCarthy Gallery, of the suburban Scarborough neighbourhood, and, more broadly, of Toronto and Canada, in order to offer, through their bodies and the presence of their work, another story of space and place. They start from an acknowledgement that the space where this exhibition is installed has a particular urban, social, and political Indigenous and non-Indigenous history that carries with it a number of difficult and complex narratives. Such narratives have been written and rewritten many times over, and now exist as deeply buried sediments underneath official language. The artists in the show offer complicated, messy, alternative histories; they are interested in unsettling the linear story of Canada, and the clean, neatly packaged products of the mainstream. Each of the works in *(Un)settled/Unsettling* is a form of excavation of the long-forgotten sediments of cultural and political phenomena around us: Indigenous identity and politics, ghost stories and urban hauntings, cultural hierarchies of oppression, economic inequality, and ecological devastation. These alternative narratives create a space to pause and reflect, to think about their—and our own—embodied existence on this stolen land.

Moreover, *(Un)settled/Unsettling* was also premised on revisiting the notions of modernity and modernism with all their political and aesthetic exigencies. Scarborough is perhaps one of the quintessential sites of North American modernity. In the early twentieth century, Scarborough comprised a mixture of new urban dwellings along Kingston Road (then the major eastward highway)—older, upper-class leisure properties that reflected a Canadian appetite for mimicking the British imperial model. Embedded in the history of Scarborough's modernity is, therefore, a very clear and, more often than not, violent colonial class and racial history. On the other hand, industrial wastelands south of Highway 401 carry with them the stories of post-WWII modernist dreams of large production lines, the automotive industry's dreams of fast cars and highways, and efficient worker housing and spaces of leisure. These utopian dreams have been replaced by cramped suburban McMansions, mid-century social housing, and food deserts of the postmodern era. The palpable tension between these often-opposing currents, as well as Scarborough's situatedness in the new urban sprawl of a megacity preoccupied by its new-found economic and cultural self-importance, is what feeds the unease we find here today. Adding to the various intersecting matrices of suburban modernity is a steady, continuous shift from its mostly white, Anglo-Saxon population to a racially and culturally diverse community that no longer corresponds to the neatly defined cultural and social mores of its beginnings. What Scarborough's more recent history reveals is its ambiguous modernity—an alternative modernity that can be fully understood only by rewriting its history to include the millennia of Indigenous occupation that preceded it.

Within this larger historical narrative of Scarborough's modernity as a space of intersecting Indigenous and settler histories, Guild Park and Gardens stands as a microcosm of the many complexities mentioned above. The Guild was a project of Spencer and Rosa Clark, a well-to-do Toronto couple who used Rosa's family money³ to purchase forty acres of the Bickford estate grounds in 1932.⁴ Inspired by William Morris's vision of a holistic approach to arts and crafts, the site was named "the Guild of All Arts," and contained studio spaces, living quarters, and sales and exhibition galleries for artists who might otherwise have had no other source of income or living arrangements at the height of the Depression era.⁵ Spencer Clark was also interested in shaping the site into a cultural centre to attract tourists. The Clarks hoped that artists who lived and worked on the premises would be inspired by the setting of the sprawling park grounds to continue to use their creative abilities and, in the process, earn a living. The site developed from the 1930s into the early 1980s. Most of the studio production was done in what had been the garage and stables of General Bickford's estate, in the building now known as the Studio. Artists worked in various materials and techniques, producing a variety of design and craft objects, sculptures, household objects, paintings, etc. The setting and the artists' work made the Clarks' initial vision come true—tourists and local visitors came in increasing numbers. Driven by his



(Left) Promotional pamphlet on the Guild from 1982 showing the Greek Theatre. (Right) Rosa and Spencer Clark in front of the old City of Toronto coat of arms, originally at the entrance to the Bank of Toronto on King Street West. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

entrepreneurial ambition, Spencer added dining facilities and guest rooms (the first major expansion of this type was in the early 1940s) to the original Bickford house, and the Guild earned a reputation as a country inn located within a large natural setting surrounded by art studios. The Clarks also purchased surrounding farms to protect their investment and to allow for the expanding recreational needs of the inn. Eventually, the Guild's lands grew to five hundred acres, stretching from Lake Ontario to Kingston Road, and from Livingston Road to Galloway Road. It also included recreational facilities with a pool and a tennis court, a new hotel building (built in 1960s), and even a heliport.⁶

The Clarks' idea to bring together various artists and craftspeople carried clear links to modernist educational institutions existing in Europe and elsewhere (art schools such as the Bauhaus, and the newly established Ontario College of Art, and William Morris's Arts and Crafts workshops). Spencer Clark's ambitions however were larger; interested in heritage and cultural tourism, he decided to collect discarded architectural facades from various buildings in Toronto that had been rapidly demolished after WWII to make room for the new International Style skyscrapers such as Mies van der Rohe's TD Centre.⁷ Various salvaged pieces found



Two pages from Spencer Clark's scrapbook showcasing various architectural pieces in their original setting and as they were installed at the Guild, n.d. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

their way back to the Guild and were used to erect versions of English and French garden follies. These follies, historically used as eye-catching and sometimes extravagant architectural structures, were meant to provide visual spectacle for visitors and artists alike. Seemingly haphazard, these faux ruins usually decorated gardens of villas and country estates, and in the case of the Guild were supposed to provide inspiration for the artists. Such deliberate structuring of the inside and the outside—so that the main Guild Inn building mimicked a stately palace, and its surrounding landscape looked like a country estate with sprawling studio buildings, rustic cabins, a sprawling park with garden follies, a Greek theatre, sculptures, and footpaths—signalled the site's antecedent in the British imperial model. Embedded in the idea of the Guild, therefore, just as in the very structure of suburban Scarborough, was an imposed order of clear colonial settler-class history, which also translated into the nature of the artistic production that took place there. Art, architecture, and craft embodied a hierarchical vision showing clearly how each of these disciplines intersected with economy, money, power, and social order. The Clarks' patronage of the arts and the vision of the Guild were therefore embedded in a much deeper imperial history that was always a part of Western art, its patronage, and, finally, its political contexts.



Opening of the Exhibition of Outdoor Contemporary Sculpture, August 3, 1982, at the Guild. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

Such a vision of aesthetic production reflects a much larger issue at the heart of the Canadian national consciousness, namely its positioning between its persistent settler-colonialism and its liberal dreams of building a national identity outside of its violent histories. The national dream never included a history of how the country came to be: on the one hand via the erasure and forceful forgetting of the Indigenous cultures and histories existing before the so-called “first contact,” and on the other creating the image of “Canada the good.” The unsettling feeling that visiting the Guild produces (as a number of artists and visitors have noted) comes from what is both present and absent on the site—the visible mythologizing of Indigenous cultures and societies, as exemplified in some of the sculptures and the architecture of the Guild—while at the same time concealing those histories. Canadian identity based on the fantasy of land and its ownership was structured over and against the land as it was seen, used, and lived on by the Indigenous peoples. The Guild’s follies, erected as symbols of the colonial-settler identity, aimed to erase and forget the layers of histories of land underneath and around them, and in the process exclude the possibility of looking beneath the settler past. But just like nature itself, which constantly encroaches and disrupts all attempts at confining, manicuring, and taming its powerful processes, the artists in this project were asked to disrupt the narrative of the Guild as it has existed for the past hundred years and more. If history is created and fuelled by its



Opening of the Exhibition of Outdoor Contemporary Sculpture, August 3, 1982, at the Guild. Courtesy of the Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University of Waterloo Library.

contemporary readers, then the impetus is on us, contemporary witnesses to the site, to once more re-engage it, and bring to the surface its multi-layered and problematic trajectory.

Artists’ interventions

During their *(Un)settled* residency and subsequent *Unsettling* exhibition, each artist produced responses to the challenges of the site, and of Scarborough’s history. In her recent photographic series *Asiniy Iskwew* (2016) and *Pakwâci Wâpisk* (2017), Lori Blondeau creates powerful gestures of remembering and sovereignty. Each series consists of four photographs, with the artist following a particular formal and conceptual strategy: she places herself at specific sites, donning a long red velvet dress/robe that gives her performance a regal air. The pose is carefully staged, with the artist’s body standing firmly upright, proud and defiant, as she looks into the distance. In short, the artist performs and embodies power, which is amplified when in dialogue with the site she occupies. In *Asiniy Iskwew* (Rock Woman), Blondeau situated her performance on sites important to Indigenous histories and connected to various rock formations, as well as rock art. For many years, Blondeau has been researching her family’s connections to stories and traditions of healing, ceremonies, and memorializing of events through rocks. The artist has also explored Indigenous oral histories that speak to how various



Lori Blondeau delivering an artist talk at Guild Park and Gardens, May 6, 2017.

Plains peoples have used rocks for healing rituals, or as gathering places or markers. One such example in the series is the Mistaseni Rock (near Qu'Appelle Valley, by the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River), a sacred buffalo rock important to the Cree and Assiniboine peoples, dynamited by the Saskatchewan government in 1966 to make way for the South Saskatchewan River Project. Pieces of the rock still remain, after being reclaimed from Lake Diefenbaker.

On the other hand, *Pakwāci Wāpisk* is situated directly in Guild Park and was produced during Blondeau's stay there as a form of performance-for-the-camera in order to restage the history of the settler architecture, decentering its meaning and placement in Canadian history. Whereas with the rock series, Blondeau was looking for Indigenous sites, the site at Guild Park is deeply and inevitably a settler-colonial one. As already mentioned, the park is the epitome of Canadian modernity, a vestige of the imposed colonial order wanting to tame nature itself. There are several places in the park where we encounter what look like bases for monuments—or architectural fragments taken out of their context and placed randomly in the park. The human figures we expect to find on top are missing, however, and this opens up a space of intervention. Blondeau used this empty seat of colonial power to reverse its potential by placing herself as an Indigenous woman on it (something historically never afforded to Indigenous peoples, women in particular). By claiming the seat of power, by taking it by herself and for



Lori Blondeau, detail, *Pakwāci Wāpisk*, 2017.



Duorama, *Duorama #123*, performance at Guild Park and Gardens, May 13, 2017.



Duorama, *Duorama #124*, performance at Guild Park and Gardens, May 13, 2017.

herself, Blondeau completely reverses the colonial power order. Her monumental, life-sized photographs take the form of alternative memorials that replace sites of colonial power.

Duorama (Paul Couillard and Ed Johnson) often explore tensions between people, within relationships, and in representations of the body, especially the queer body. Their interest in representation and publicness often takes monumental form, seeking to fill in the gap of the missing queer body in the public space. The works in *(Un)settled/Unsettling* interrogate relationships between presence, action, public, and power, questioning how the space of the city, its streets and geographies, gives rise to narratives of normalcy, and investigating the relationship between modernist architecture, urbanism, and marginalization. During their stay at Guild Park, Couillard and Johnson produced a number of images within and against the space of the park. Donning their usual pyjama outfits (signifying the space of domesticity and intimacy) and wearing lion masks, which mimicked the recurring sculptural detail of a man in a lion's mask (in architecture usually representing the Greek hero Hercules), they ventured into the faux ruins of the Guild. In one instance, the two use red mulch to create not only a possibly violent relationship between two men (the two lions rolling across the green grass in the park leave a red trace that could be read as blood), but also a disruption of how the city wants us to navigate and behave in the park. At each place, the two disrupted the usual relationships between nature and human intervention, using natural materials (tree bark, bird feed, mulch, water, etc.) to make us aware of how nature continuously fights human efforts to curb it. One of the most poignant

moments was when the two brought in bird feed and lovingly placed it on an architectural fragment found in the park, to reveal its intricate bas relief design and to invite birds to land on it and eat it.

Duorama's intervention at the Doris McCarthy Gallery pursued many of these ideas as their installation, *Labyrinth* (2017), encouraged us to see the suburb of Scarborough from a different perspective. While in the two videos included in the exhibition space, Duorama presented a human perspective of city life (enacted via their bodies), in the installation the viewer is given a bird's-eye perspective, almost godlike, from which we are invited to remake the city to our liking. Referencing both the Google Map tool but also older tools, such as the maquettes used in architecture, the military, or urbanism, Duorama make the viewers into decision makers, asking us to reconfigure the roofs of the houses into imaginary forms of suburbia. Of course, it is an ironic gesture, one that speaks to the impossibility of building a home in contemporary Toronto, where more and more people are left outside of the modern dream of the single-family home. As the prices of real estate and rental properties keep rising, as poor are displaced to make room for the super-rich who want to live in the downtown core, as people are forced to move farther and farther into distant suburban neighbourhoods without proper public transit or infrastructure, the truth of the failure of modern urbanism becomes inescapable. Duorama embody these narratives in this seemingly simple interactive installation.

Lisa Myers's multidisciplinary practice includes printmaking, performance, participatory practice, stop-motion animation, video, and photography. For her work during the Guild Park residency, Myers collaborated with her students to form the Shored Up Collective, which functioned as an interdisciplinary group project. This largely involved living and working/making on-site and engaging with the site's living and hidden histories. Their interventions included walks, fabric dyeing, cooking, and performances. Each intervention, with its thoughtful and careful engagement, sought to make visitors and the group itself aware of how Indigenous histories interact with natural histories, with urban development, and order imposed on the park by city bureaucracy and policy. While subtle and open, their interventions were also deeply disruptive to the life of the Guild. For example, on the final day in the park, this large group set up in the middle of the most visible and traversed place in the park, offering blueberries, wild rice, and tea to the passersby. They made maps of the site and talked about their experiences of nature at the Scarborough Bluffs, and their encounters with the new lessees of the park space (a large corporation that entered into a partnership with the city to offer a 7,000-square-foot wedding venue on-site), who were less than welcoming. As the collective sat and chatted with visitors, several wedding parties passed by to take photos inside the park's famous architectural ruins. Shored Up Collective was in their way, subtly but no less potently disturbing the goings-on, reminding us of



Lisa Myers and Shored Up Collective, *Strain to Absorb Pigment Workshop*, part of *Unsettling* exhibition programming at the University of Toronto Scarborough, October 19) 2017.

the political and social complexities of public space, of nature's continued presence despite human negation of it, and, of course, of the Indigenous history of the site (especially via food such as wild rice and blueberries) that has been covered up by colonial architecture.

In the two related series of works entitled *Strain* (2015) and *straining and absorbing* (2015), exhibited at the Doris McCarthy Gallery, Myers again offered subtle and powerful symbols of Indigenous history that continuously intervenes into settler spaces. Myers works with anthocyanin pigment from blueberries to create prints and videos. The three videos in the main gallery space are, in essence, a trio of performances in which we witness the artist making prints with blueberry ink. The videos are simple: they show a close-up of Myers's hands moving up and down as she prepares the ink and pours it onto the silkscreen. These gestures repeat in all three videos, yet each features its own small shifts and differences. At one point, before we see the artist, we are not sure if we are looking at an abstract painting or something else—a short moment in the video that echoes Josef Albers's canvases. And yet, when Myers pours the blueberries, that illusion is broken and another image takes its place. Mesmerizing, the images lure us in with sound, vivid colours, and stunning contrasts, but they also carry a more oblique, less visible, but no less potent undercurrent. Myers uses blueberries to invoke her own Indigenous heritage and the stories of her family's survival and resistance, in which blueberries played a significant role. Taking this further, the blueberries function as a form of transgression of both traditional printing techniques and also of modernist abstract art, which in her case is not removed from the political, the social, and the personal, but imbued with all those, indigenizing and transgressing both the aesthetic form and content. The blueberries used to make the prints are, in a way, still alive, because once printed, they keep changing colour (due to chemical reactions between the blueberry ink and the paper), thus making our experience of looking at the prints also a form of performance. The natural dye is not stable: it cannot be contained but rather keeps shifting. In this subtle yet powerful aesthetic truth (a dye that will not stay stable) also lies the truth of the undercurrent of Myers's print series—the ways in which Indigenous stories and narratives are always present, alive, and growing over time.

In his practice, Basil AlZeri often mines his personal experience of working as an educator and community organizer to get at a truth of broader social and political contexts and, in effect, translate the personal into the political. AlZeri's interactive works strive to erase the artist-audience dichotomy and create a new kind of artistic engagement. His constant probing of questions of power, hierarchy, everyday survival, and necessity reflects elements of the ways his aesthetic practice unfolds. For *(Un)settled*, AlZeri created several interrelated performances and installations. During his residency at Guild Park, he spent his time strolling the grounds to get a sense of their history and everyday use. In the end, he chose to



Basil AlZeri, *(Un)Settled Tour*, performance at Guild Park and Gardens, May 13, 2017.



Bazil AlZeri, (Un)Settled Tour

create a guided tour, mimicking tours offered by Friends of the Guild and other heritage associations and groups. While a typical heritage tour consists of a guide talking about the Guild and its history, its architecture and art, AlZeri completely reversed this by creating a tour in which he, as the guide, attempted to (somewhat unsuccessfully but still powerfully) hide the architecture and gardens by using a large green screen, and instead talked about the disruptions to the site. For example, on the first stop of his tour he covered a large classical Doric column with the green screen, revealing only a piece of its pedestal, where a small patch of moss grew. The artist then proceeded to talk about moss, its history and use in everyday life, its importance in the natural order. As he continued the tour, he repeated a similar gesture of hiding the hierarchical narrative of heritage, of what is deemed important to be preserved and what is not, and at the same time continuing to make us aware of the invisible histories of land and political struggle.

In a similar vein, AlZeri created an intervention in the Doris McCarthy Gallery. For *Crooked Homes, Towers and Structures* (2017), he used his own collection of pedestals alongside those from the gallery's own collection. Exhibition pedestals are curious objects, existing within museum and gallery institutions as a form of shorthand for the physical, textual, and semantic separation from the everyday and the ordinary. They also, however, designate a lack of power, as the objects displayed on a pedestal are often separated from the context of their everyday use.



Bazil AlZeri, (Un)Settled Tour

This tension between power and powerlessness, deeply embedded in the Western museological history, is partly what AlZeri questions in his installation. Another part of his work reflects an interest in modernist, minimalist aesthetic, with its quasi-disinterested, apolitical stance that celebrates the cerebral, architectural, and monumental. Indeed, visitors entering the gallery stumble upon AlZeri's work almost by accident. And while the pedestals are many, and curiously arranged in a corner of the space, what perhaps strikes us most is the installation's resemblance to the downtown core of a North American city, a "nowhere place." The towers in this case are not gleaming but, in fact, in need of repair and cleaning. In this one gesture, the artist manages to touch upon multiple trajectories of meaning: referencing modernist architecture and minimalist art, and alluding to the work of urban planning and development. And, most of all, a sense of irreverence is clearly embodied in the leaning towers and unflattering placement of these tall, curious objects. This gesture continues as the artist invites visitors to sit on the piece, walk around it, touch it. The food and drinks at the opening reception were served to people who sat on the installation, chatting and drinking. Art, for AlZeri, is a movable target that one ends up sitting on.

Finally, Terrance Houle's performance, photographic, and audio-video series *GHOST DAYS* (2014/2017) offers complex narratives that mine the personal and fictional histories of Indigenous ghosts. Houle has been working on this project



Terrance Houle and Matt Walker, *GHOST DAYS*

for a few years, and through it he traces not only the ghosts of his ancestors, but also histories and ghosts of the colonial past through the oral traditions of his own family, and through the oral tradition of the land. During the residency at Guild Park, Houle collaborated with artist Matt Walker on a multi-day interdisciplinary series of audio-video live performances for which the two artists recorded sounds of nature, then edited and fed them back into their performances. They also visited Taber Hill, an ancient Wyandot (Huron) burial mound situated in today's neighbourhood of Bellamy Road and Lawrence Avenue. This important yet awkwardly preserved site is a reminder of the rich, lively Indigenous history of Scarborough. However, as with all Indigenous history in Toronto, it is not properly marked and interpreted. Houle and Walker visited the hill and recorded its soundscape, which was then incorporated into a live performance in Guild Park at the edge of Scarborough Bluffs. An enormous sound amplifier/sculpture built by Walker projected the music played by Houle. The intersection of the live sounds of Houle's Theremin, his mother's prayer for the land, and the recorded nature sounds (especially birds) created an eerie, haunting homage to nature's hidden histories, as well as to Indigenous stories that exist in the land.

All the artists who participated in *(Un)settled/Unsettling* chose to work with tensions and hostilities that emerge over sites of history, sites in which nature and human intervention clash, and sites of memorialization and public memory.



Terrance Houle and Matt Walker, *GHOST DAYS*,
performance at Guild Park and Gardens, May 13, 2017.

Whether in the park or the gallery space, memory and history are questioned. Ultimately, the artists ask who decides what we remember. In his now-classic study of monuments, Michael Taussig argues that as much as every monument speaks to the prevalent ideological narrative that made it, it also contains the seeds of its own destruction.⁸ “The ‘law of the base’ [the base of any monument] at the heart of religion and things sacred” points to its fissure. “Like Flaubert’s concept of the act of writing,” Taussig continues, “to erect a statue is to take revenge on reality.”⁹ Rather than thinking of monuments as sites where truths might reappear, what is at work in the mechanism of monumental representation is the fact that all monuments are always already toppling. The artists in *(Un)settled/Unsettling* took those seeds of destruction and used them to reveal alternative histories—or deep histories, if you will—of the lands that are currently called Scarborough and Canada. This deep history is Indigenous history, a history from the bottom, of those who are often forgotten—immigrants, the poor, those who are marginalized, racialized, queer, and placed outside monuments, architecture, or history books. And yet Indigenous histories, and the histories of those who are marginalized, still continue, and stand unabated by official history’s violence, unsettling its dominant narratives. This project was conceptually and formally structured around the idea of the “law of the base,” or the notion that ultimately memory, especially its dominant forms, will topple and artists will point to its cracks.

- 1 Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).
- 2 Lee Maracle, “War,” *Bent Box* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2000).
- 3 Rosa Breithaupt Hewetson Clark came from the prominent Breithaupt family, from the Kitchener-Waterloo region. This wealthy German-Canadian (and American) family owned large tanneries, and leather and shoe manufacturing businesses, in Buffalo, NY, later on in the mid-nineteenth century moving to Kitchener, Ontario. By the time Rosa Breithaupt Hewetson met Spencer Clark, she was a widow of considerable means. She was well educated and interested in art and culture, which is why she was immediately drawn to Clark’s ideas around cultural tourism. It was Rosa’s money, her education, and social and political connections among the wealthy Southwestern Ontario elites that made the Guild possible. For more, see: Anita Lerek, “A History of the Guild, 1932–1988” (manuscript deposited in the University of Waterloo Archives); Carole Lidgold, *The History of the Guild Inn*, Toronto: Brookridge, 2000; Theodor Breithaupt and Spencer H. Clark, *Chronicle of the Breithaupt family in biographies*, Canada: s.n. n.d.
- 4 The original house and its surrounding property, which Rosa and Spencer Clark purchased in 1932, was known as Ranelagh Park or Bickford Estate. The house was built in 1914 by Brigadier General Harold Child Bickford. Its architecture was based on William Morris’s Arts and Craft aesthetic, and the Clarks were immediately drawn to it because of its design. Spencer Clark was well acquainted with Arts and Crafts movement, and at one point visited William Morris’s grave in Kelmscott, UK. The Bickford family eventually went bankrupt and had to sell their property, which is when the Clarks bought it. (Carole Lidgold, *The History of the Guild Inn*, 23.)
- 5 Carole Lidgold, *The History of the Guild Inn*, 25.
- 6 Anita Lerek, “A History of the Guild, 1932–1988,” 20.
- 7 Carole Lidgold, *The History of the Guild Inn*, 80.
- 8 Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 21.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 21.

Nourishment as Resistance

Elwood Jimmy

I encountered the work of Lisa Myers during my first year in Toronto. At the time, the Art Gallery of Ontario was hosting an artist series called *Toronto Now* that featured *Noise Cooking*, a performance and sound collaboration between Myers and Autumn Chacon. In this durational performance, the two artists prepared food for those who gathered, and the cooking utensils had contact microphones attached to them, amplifying the process of food-making into an aural experience as well as a communal, generative, and nourishing one. This initial encounter with Myers's practice has stayed with me as it gestured toward a sensibility that straddled many different contexts, world views, narratives, and ways of being.

As Indigenous people living in the place now called Canada, we find that our relationship to food/sustenance under the colonial project has been an experience of rupture, of malnourishment. It is safe to say that at the root of Indigenous world views throughout Turtle Island—and beyond—is a profound relationship to land, to water, to sky: the life forces we rely upon for sustenance. With waves of colonization came the rapid displacement of Indigenous people from access to land and water. The late Secwepemc leader Arthur Manuel referred to this as the “0.2 percent economy,” with that figure representing the total land mass allotted to over six hundred First Nations communities throughout what we now know as Canada. Still, that 0.2 percent is claimed to be “owned” by Canada (the federal government also claims to “own” the other 99.8 per cent).

For millennia, working in collaboration and reverence with place—cultivating languages and spiritual, cultural, life-sustaining practices derived from a profound relationship with place—was a cornerstone for Indigenous governance and ways of being that had existed here pre-contact. There was an important acknowledgement that we did not have dominion over non-human beings, but that we were part of a greater ecology, a vaster metabolism that we could not fully realize but nonetheless honoured. During my time working with Indigenous knowledge keepers and elders, I often heard them refer to this as our first treaty—our obligations to the natural world.

One can find and read many texts documenting the ruptures to land, to food, to sustenance that Indigenous people in the place now referred to as Canada experience through aggressive government legislation and insatiable accumulation, that destabilizes the wellness of Indigenous communities and their access to everything from safe drinking water to historical and customary diets. Concurrently, the Canadian government suffers from a very different form of malnourishment that comes with the disconnection and disregard of place and other beings. Unfettered accumulation will never be the balm, the salve, the medicine that cures that particular lack of wellness, that malnourishment.

With the inclusion of food in any practice, there is power. Lisa Myers employs food as a source of community-building and restoration, as document, as map, as a space holder for inquiries around value, sensibilities, world views, ways of being, ways of collaborating, and ways of bridging, and in this exhibition, she incorporates it as a material of production as well. On a recent trip abroad, colleagues of mine asserted a notion around the idea that no one should ever have to eat alone if they did not want to. In presencing oneself with Myers's work, one realizes they are not experiencing the work alone. They are sitting with a multiplicity of experiences, narratives, responses, subversions, reclamations, and many different relationships to temporalities and spaces.

A different experience of temporality and space is a part of the conversation between the work of Lisa Myers and that of Lori Blondeau. In this text, I assert nourishment as a form of resistance, of unsettling, and I would be remiss in not disclosing the nourishing and nurturing acts I received from Blondeau early on in my career. We met at the end of the last century. A few years prior to our first encounter, there was a moment—a movement—where three Indigenous artist-run centres in the Plains region of Turtle Island—Tribe in Saskatoon, Urban Shaman in Winnipeg, and Sâkêwêwak in Regina—were all founded within a year of one another. When we met, Lori, while maintaining a performance practice, was the executive director of Tribe. Within a year or so of our meeting, my first experience of professionally presenting my work happened through Beyond Tonto, an Indigenous media arts festival (one of the first in the country) initiated and

organized by Tribe. I hold eternal gratitude for the investment by Lori, by Lynn Acoose, and by the late Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, not just in my career, but in my life at that time, and in the present.

We share a lot. Apart from sharing a blood/cultural lineage of Cree/Saulteaux/Métis, we share histories, we share stories, we share our truths (both individual and collective), and we share our lived experiences that could happen only in our ancestral lands, in the land now called Saskatchewan. Apart from exhilarating and breathtaking and loving moments, there are also moments of rupture and violence rooted in anti-Indigenous racism asserted by the settler state and its citizens.

In immersing oneself in the body of work of Lori Blondeau, one will find a path, a road, an intention, a rigour invested into recentring Indigenous women within our communities and within the structures that govern us. In stark contrast to one-dimensional representations of Indigenous women in popular culture, Blondeau's robust, heart-filled, community-minded representations of Indigenous womanhood reveal narratives that blend and bend different temporalities, places, and spaces. Her personas reveal Indigenous women who have cultivated lives and practices that tap into, connect, and transmit a larger world view, one informed by ongoing resistance of predictable and conventional relationships to time, space, knowledge, and the natural world.

In her photo series *Asiniy Iskwew* (2016) and *Pakwâci Wâpisk* (2017), Blondeau centres Indigenous presence within sites of architectural representations of colonialism, and within the concurrent natural landscape—of land, of water, of sky. This centring of Indigenous womanhood within both worlds/structures/contexts creates visual markers, representations of what needs to happen if there is ever to be a restoration of balance and wellness to land, to water, to sky, marked by ongoing colonial and racialized violence and trauma. This presencing and centring of Indigenous women is both necessary and nourishing for the collective well-being of the Earth, ourselves, and the multitude of beings and spirits with whom we share this world, this time, this space.

Sub/urban/altern Cosmopolitanism: Unsettling Scarborough's Cartographic Imaginary

Ranu Basu

Our experience of *open cities* or *cities of refuge* then will not only be that which cannot wait, but something which calls for an urgent response, a just response, more just in any case than the existing law. An immediate response to crime, to violence, and to persecution... If it has (indeed) arrived...then, one has perhaps not yet recognised it. —Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, p. 23

In her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), one of the fundamental challenges that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises is on the question of *representing* the subaltern. She argues that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous. A closely related query would link to its potential *spatial expression*: the spaces and places involved in the production of colonial and postcolonial discourses, identities, and relations of power. For instance, what would constitute the “City of Refuge” that Derrida alludes to? To the elusiveness of subaltern cosmopolitan cities—that in their form, function, and everyday practice defy all logics of conformity? What is its epistemological basis? Who defines it, who experiences it, who lives it, and how is it enacted? The emergence of an active and creative “subaltern cosmopolitanism” (Gidwani, 2006) and the corresponding spaces that are claimed and negotiated in a neo-liberal city are often very complex, dynamic, and ephemeral in their various forms and practices (Basu et al., 2013). In previous work I have argued that understanding how these spaces work in order to host increasing numbers of migrants is important, given the scale of displacement and geopolitical strife across the globe. However, this process is in constant flux as the city is made and remade within the discursive logics of neo-liberal urbanism—where hierarchies of space are entangled closely with the hierarchies

of racialized, exiled, and class divides—and hence any city-building movement needs a contested mode of analysis.

This text briefly reflects (over a period of time I was both resident and researcher) on how place-making practices, of *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitanism*—an alternative concept that recentres the alienated—have evolved slowly in the fringes of the postwar industrial suburban landscape of Scarborough, Ontario, that constantly work in tension, disrupting and challenging the more normative neo-liberal-cosmopolitan ideations of the city. The paradoxical relation between dystopian representations and planning anxieties work alongside the lived *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitan* realities. These are often evident through the cultural landscapes of resistance in Scarborough and its various metaphorical expressions that lay bare in the process what Jenny Robinson (2003) defines as any “politics of erasure.”

I use *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitanism* to critically and conceptually combine interdependencies of suburbanity with the subaltern. In other words, the particular political subjectivities that emerge through subaltern-cosmopolitanism highlight emergent counter-spatialities. *Sub/urban/altern cosmopolitanism* further alludes to a transgressive form of heterogeneity and resistance that is spatially produced within the subaltern cultural and political relations of exclusion. It constitutes both a *passive resistance*, where the mundane, lived materialities of everyday spaces are claimed with pride and creativity, as well as a more *fluid and active resistance*, where social relations are transformed by plurality and dissent. This stands in sharp contrast to the normative and static understandings of cosmopolitanism defined as more upwardly mobile, international, and neo-liberal in origin.

In this brief and reflexive essay, I argue that the power of *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitanism*, as is evident in many parts of Scarborough—a particular ontological space—through the common ground of its collective humiliation and pain, memories and energy, stubbornly and persistently strives for and is often able to map out its own city of joy. I posit that the rhythms of its everyday life *also* exist independent of (or parallel to) prevailing and populist knowledge within a heterogeneous community of coexistence, codependence, respect, and dignity.

The following section explores the two representational realities that are evident in Scarborough. First, a *Dystopian Scarborough*, as often portrayed in the media through popularized maps and discourse of planning anxieties linked to the project of modernity. Discourses accompanied by narratives and images that become normalized and that make certain power relations and spatial hierarchies seem inevitable—hence, depicting spaces that need to be “fixed and rationalized.” Second, and in sharp contrast, the lived and imaginary realities of *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitan* spaces are presented, drawing on a previous study as well as ethnographic reflections based on my own residency there for over two decades (Basu



et al., 2015). This latter vision explores the various metaphorical expressions of the migrant residents themselves—an emancipatory spatial expression that is often unnoticed, overlooked, or simply not deemed useful enough in understanding how cities provide deep insight into the heterogeneity of civil society. The conclusion summarizes these counter-visions of the city.

Scarborough and Representational Realities

Scarborough embodies the typical postwar suburb of post-industrial cities. With a present-day population of over 630,000, Scarborough and five other municipalities were amalgamated into the City of Toronto in 1998. The population also grew from 2001 to 2006 by 2.4 percent compared to 0.8 percent for the rest of the city (City of Toronto, 2009¹). In 2006–11 it grew by another 3 percent.² In 2006, 33 percent of Scarborough dwellings were high-rise apartments and 39 percent were single detached homes, while 66 percent of dwellings were owned and 34 percent rented. By 2011, 33 percent of households lived in high-rise apartments while 51 percent lived in houses. Located in the eastern fringes of the city, dispersed in patches of high-density pockets, Scarborough serves as home to many in the underpaid and marginal subaltern working class. In 2006, 57 percent of the total





population were immigrants and 12 percent were recent immigrants who had arrived in Canada in the previous five years. In 2011, 7.2 percent of the population had no knowledge of either English or French compared to 5.3 percent for the City of Toronto. Two-thirds of the population are classified as visible minorities, compared to 40 percent for the rest of the city—the racialized distinctiveness is well-embedded in its identity. The top three languages aside from English include Chinese (6.4 percent), Cantonese (6.3 percent), and Tamil (5.9 percent). In 2007, there were 186,300 jobs in Scarborough, 14 percent of the city's total employment (City of Toronto, 2009). According to a social planning discussion, 30,000 newcomer families may be among the hidden homeless in Toronto, many of them living in this part of the city (Basu et al., 2013).

Dystopian Scarborough: Media, Cartographic, and Planning Anxieties

Similar to the French *banlieues*, Scarborough is characterized by high unemployment levels, inadequate social service provision, and poor housing, and is home to a predominantly multi-ethnic, racialized, refugee, and working-class population that has often catered to a *representation* that lends itself to a particular kind of *alienation*. This is evident through the “designation of names, categorizations, definitions, designations and mappings”—a representation that allows

for particular kinds of *spatial ordering* and articulation to consolidate neo-liberal urban policy interventions (Dikeç, 2007, p. 21).

Previous work (Basu et al., 2013) noted that a trend emerged in media discourse from 1980 to 1991, as Scarborough over time became a racialized site of discussion and gradually far more attention was paid to incidents of interpersonal violence and criminality. Whereas in the early 1980s, Scarborough was often spoken of as a quiet, mostly uneventful suburb, the increasing frequency of articles naming certain migrant and refugee populations as constitutive of the area's population coincided with a focus on Scarborough as a place of potential violence and random criminal acts. Descriptions of murder, robbery, domestic violence, and other violent crime went from isolated acts to endemic conditions brought on by the area's residents. Often represented with an unpalatable reputation and frequently perceived by media commentators as a “distasteful, aesthetically bleak, bland and dangerous landscape,” Scarborough came to be seen as a failure of modernist planning (*Toronto Star*, 2008, 2009). It is often ridiculed with nicknames such as Scarberia, Scarlem, and ScarBlackistan, and described as a “zit” and an “urban blandness verging on blight” (DiManno, *Toronto Life*, 2007). A study conducted by a prominent business school and publicized by the media pathologizes the city as a neurotic landscape via mapped discourse, where spaces of “anxiety, depression and vulnerability” appeared most vividly over the spaces in Scarborough (*Toronto Star*, 2009). Blunt and McEwan (2002) allude to such characterizations as “*colonizing geographies*” to convey the idea that “geography, empire and post-coloniality work into one another in myriad ways” to the present day. The process of alienation is accentuated through the production of a dystopian reality that needs to be fixed, decriminalized, and politically educated, rather than confronting the underlying infrastructural deficiencies and structural inequities of neo-liberal urbanist realities.

Sub/urban/altern Cosmopolitan Imaginaries

Yet the everydayness of the particularly dismissed places in Scarborough—its social, cultural, economic, and emotional spaces—suggests a more complex and unfiltered *lived space* that is not easily discernible to intermittent and voyeuristic studies or partial views from afar. What is explicitly evident through ethnographic landscape analysis over two decades (and experience as a resident of Scarborough) is that the lived reality is quite different. Scarborough has, over the years, evolved into what Foucault would define as a heterotopic space—“places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability.” This inherent heterogeneity is cosmopolitan in its form and practice. However, different from a neo-liberalized understanding of cosmopolitanism as a mobile elite and entrepreneurial creative class possessing an abundance of fluid cultural capital, the *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitan* identity is counter-hegemonic in creating a social,

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cultural, and political base in the affordable margins of the suburbs. In earlier work, I have argued that as a result of such complex spaces of encounter, civic engagement, and grounded experiences, Scarborough is framed by migrants in multiple and metaphorical ways: from a *City of Refuge and Peace*; *City of Memory, Desire, and Imagination*; *City of Multifariousness*; to a *City of Civic Engagement and Fluid Resistance* (Basu et al., 2013). Each of these is an expression of the city—inhabiting Scarborough through the lived and embodied place-making practices allows a counter-hegemonic experience of the city and contests a normative-based planning discourse and aesthetic. Scarborough, through these heterogeneous place-making practices, forms a *City of Integrative Multiplicity* (Basu, 2011; Basu and Fiedler, 2017). How and when such voices are co-opted by a hegemonic system poses further challenges.

In view of the significant growth of refugee and asylum seekers during the past decade, the question of how cities foster and create opportunities for migrant groups to settle and “integrate” (itself a contested term) is crucial. Socio-economic integration and the overall well-being of migrant populations rely on a sense of belonging and hubs of support in a “multicultural” and Sanctuary City such as Toronto. Despite the inherited infrastructural limitations resulting from postwar

modernist planning of suburbs, the material limitations in Scarborough are countered by other multifarious emancipatory practices. Migrant and racialized working-class communities have formed networks of associational linkages that work in tandem to create *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitan* cities that stretch afar. For example, temples, mosques, gurudwaras, retail stores, clubs and community centres, cuisine and street markets all blend seamlessly and effortlessly through new imaginative landscapes (see images) to create zones of diverse public spaces. Yet these social and cultural hubs of activity are not devoid of civic and political action. Transnational modes of activism from diasporic linkages alongside local action feed into broader struggles of resistance and broader solidarity movements within and beyond the city region.

To conclude: framing Scarborough through the voices and poetics of displaced migrants themselves and their vision of city-building, a number of alternative variants emerge. As a *City of Refuge and Peace*, Scarborough has been home to countless asylum seekers, refugees, and working-class migrants who have fled war-torn regions and violence across the world. As a *City of Memory, Desire, and Imagination*, it has allowed for the flexibility of place-making and the creation of venues replicating homes left behind. The old abandoned factories and warehouses provide the space necessary for new creative endeavours to flourish and for communities to once again thrive, facing minimum contestation of what constitutes normalized aesthetics. The *City of Multifariousness* provides the intersectional spaces of heterogeneity where transient groups from different parts of the world—but with a similar understanding of oppression and marginalization—share a common language and an ethics of care. Finally, the *City of Engagement and Fluid Resistance* provides a subaltern mode of resistance and solidarity across groups both locally and transnationally. The counter-hegemonic framing of Scarborough as a city of *sub/urban/altern cosmopolitanism* provides one novel way for us to envision the city-building process.

- 1 www.toronto.ca/committees/council_profiles/pdf/scarb_demographic_page.pdf (downloaded October 2009).
- 2 www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/8e5e-CCA_ESC-Census-Profile-2011.pdf (downloaded March 2018).

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Scarborough Cannot Be Boxed In Shawn Micallef

On Tuesday, June 30, 1959, Queen Elizabeth II, having left Prince Philip downtown to preside over a Canadian Medical Association meeting at the Royal York Hotel, made her way through the city via meandering motorcade, eventually arriving in Scarborough. That name was certainly familiar to her, as what was then a township on the eastern edge of Toronto was named after an English town in North Yorkshire on the North Sea. The Scarborough the Queen saw that day looked much different though—it was not a holiday town like its namesake. It was, however, located atop bluffs that had reminded Elizabeth Simcoe, the wife of Upper Canada's first lieutenant governor, John Graves Simcoe, of the English Scarborough, and she referred to the area as such in a [1793 diary entry](#). The name stuck, but the story unfolded in a radically different way: it was the beginning of a most complicated, confounding, and endlessly interesting place that somehow has a reputation that denies all of that.

Naming things after places in the British Isles was already an Ontario tradition, but in 1959 the Queen did not bother stopping at the bluffs or any of the vestiges of early colonial settlement here. Instead, [her motorcade](#) made its way east along Eglinton Avenue, travelling at a royal thirty miles per hour, until it reached the Golden Mile Plaza, where she climbed onto a platform in the parking lot and opened a new Loblaws supermarket. The Queen opening a strip mall in a provincial outpost of her once-mighty empire is many things: a big deal (there's a plaque there today marking the occasion), a late-colonial transition from empire to commonwealth, but also a high-camp affair. The juxtaposition of modern suburban life, complete with quotidian strip mall, and the world's most famous monarch is a wonderful absurdity.



Queen Elizabeth at Golden Mile Plaza (with Metropolitan Toronto Council chair Fred Gardiner and Scarborough reeve Ab Campbell), June 30, 1959. Photo courtesy of the Scarborough Archives.

On the platform next to the Queen was the formidable presence of Frederick “Big Daddy” Gardiner, another figure of great period camp of a particular political kind, and the man who presided over the then-five-year-old Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, the upper tier of government that brought largely rural Scarborough into the family of municipalities that today are simply known as Toronto. Under Gardiner, freeways were built, sewers extended out into farmland, and subways dug, setting the stage for the expansive Toronto of today. The speed at which postwar Scarborough went from rural to urban during the period just before the Queen’s visit and the decades after is staggering. A glance at the earliest available aerial photographs in the City of Toronto Archives shows a patchwork landscape of cultivated farmland. The fields are relatively small, suggesting individual farmsteads. Modern development is visible only in a few places, creeping in from East York between Dawes Road and Victoria Park, and along Kingston Road, the main route in and out of Toronto until Highway 401 was opened. Often the new subdivisions are only partially constructed, with lots that look freshly bulldozed in preparation for building. Flipping quickly through the photos that span various years is like watching Scarborough being invented.

In the early photos, the villages scattered across the farmland have names like West Hill, Agincourt, Wexford, and Bendale, names that live on today as neighbourhoods. Some were not much more than small clusters of houses and a post office at a dusty intersection. The patches of development leapfrogged over each other, sometimes leaving farm fields in between the new subdivisions whose roads often ended abruptly at the edges, anticipating future connections as if a puzzle would eventually come together. All of it moved in a general northeast direction. Passing through Scarborough today in either of those general directions, one observes the changing topography of housing, and a keen eye can roughly date



Aerial view of the Eglinton/Warden area, 1947. Courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives.

when the area was developed. The first wave of subdivision-style houses near Victoria Park Avenue and Birchmount Road include wartime housing built for returning veterans, funded by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and neighbourhoods of worker-built houses in a variety of styles that have undergone decades of adaptations and idiosyncratic additions. These streets alternate between uniformity and wild variation.

Farther east they give way to sharper mid-century styles with carports, expressive rooflines, and Brady Bunch optimism in central Scarborough. North of the 401 and east toward the Rouge River, the last waves of housing built in the 1980s, 1990s, and even the new millennium took on traditional styles again, some with a more deft postmodern touch than others, and some even embracing a return to urban values with a “new urbanism” design. Scattered throughout are rental-apartment towers, most built between the late 1950s and the 1980s. Though the market for such things may not be here just yet, one day there will be historic tours of these postwar styles similar to the tours of Victorian and Edwardian neighbourhoods that are popular now. Tourism requires things either be very new (the Queen was perhaps the Golden Mile’s first tourist) or old enough to acquire some retro panache. In the 1950s, when Toronto was tearing down Victorian buildings because they were finicky, old, and out of style, few would have thought they would be so beloved today. Fashion is fickle, but with architecture it’s at least a predictable pattern.

When the Queen rode along Eglinton in 1959, it was a brand-new, wide, paved suburban arterial road that had not too long before been a dirt concession road. Those concessions formed a grid across Scarborough (and Southern Ontario as well) that all subsequent development had to contend with. It’s the grid’s right angles that can give the impression of uniformity to those who don’t venture any deeper than a quick drive-by, generating a sense that it’s just an endless *Scarberia* of nowhere-ness, or that’s it’s boring. “Subdivisions,” the 1982 hit by Toronto rock band Rush, captured this view of suburbia with lyrics like “conform or be cast out” and “but the suburbs have no charms to soothe the restless dreams of youth.” The video, shot on Scarborough streets and at L’Amoreaux Collegiate Institute near the intersection of Warden and Finch Avenues, depicts a high school with a then largely white demographic: the first wave of modern Scarborough settlers. However, matching the velocity with which Scarborough went from rural to urban, the school’s demographics have radically changed over three and a half decades, and today embody the multiculturalism Toronto is famous for. If Rush wrote the song today, could they film the same video in the same place or would the school’s heterogeneous nature defy the lyrics?

This kind of nonconformity to Scarborough’s reputation manifests in a multiplicity of ways. This is a complicated place, with topography, both corporeal and

not, that can reveal considerable dimensions for those who care to look. Indeed, inside that colonial grid that so much of Ontario is built upon, Scarborough provides much variety. As postwar development began, residential streets generally followed the grid, with straight lines and right angles. However, as the decades progressed and ideas of urban planning evolved, the streets inside each concession box formed by the grid went decidedly off-grid. Curves, cul-de-sacs, and crescents all conspire to throw off one’s sense of direction when traversing them, much like a medieval city with its sinuously bewildering streets. In hindsight, this has led to an urban form that requires cars for getting around, and with low densities spread into hard-to-reach corners—providing frequent public transit close to where people live is difficult. Still, there is whimsy to be found, especially in an area known as the “Ben Jungle.” Part of the Bendale neighbourhood and near the Lawrence Avenue and McCowan Road intersection, the Jungle is a series of streets with names like Benroyal, Benleigh, Benorama, Benhur, and Benfrisco.

Running diagonally along the northern edge of the Ben Jungle is the Gatineau Hydro Corridor, an open swath of land where high-tension power lines run. In aerial views, it looks as if somebody took an eraser and dragged it across Scarborough, clearing away houses and buildings. Within Scarborough, the corridor stretches from the Golden Mile, past the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, and continues into Rouge Park. At times it’s a wild place with tall grass and even a butterfly meadow near Victoria Park Road. In other places it contains playgrounds, sports fields, utility yards, and, along much of it, a paved multi-use path that looks like the bike superhighways common in Europe. While the corridor defies the grid with its diagonal direction, travelling on it reveals the Don River, Highland Creek, and Rouge River watersheds. North of Highway 401, the Finch Hydro Corridor provides a similar, revealing view of the topography across the top of much of the city. These waterways and their tributaries ramble across Scarborough, paying no heed to the grid, creating open spaces and allowing for dense forests that are sometimes vast, other times narrow, in between the subdivisions and industrial areas. Rouge Park is even Canada’s first “urban national park” and the defining element of the eastern end of Scarborough.

The hydro corridors were not levelled by bulldozers the way subdivisions were in preparation for development, so the land’s topography is visible, though it still was a manipulated agricultural landscape in a previous life. Here, as in much of Toronto, even places that seem “wild” or “original” are regrowth, and traces of agricultural land management can still be seen: old, rusting wire fences with decaying posts; a straight line of trees side by side in a forest, possibly indicating an old farm lane; a half-century-old rusted-out truck deep in the Rouge Valley near the back of the zoo in a patch of trees too thick to admit a large vehicle today. Though the tracks have long since been removed, it’s also possible to trace the course of the former Canadian Northern Railway line from just south of the

Golden Mile as it curved northeast through Scarborough and headed deeper into Ontario, north of the Toronto Zoo. It left its mark so indelibly on Scarborough that subdivisions and other developments were shaped by its presence, as if it were a natural landform or fault line. Even deep in the ravines near those creeks, when it's possible to be seduced into the idea that this is what it was like before human intervention, utility covers and concrete foundations are visible, an indication of trunk sewers installed below during Big Daddy Gardiner's era or later. The very landscape here is untrustworthy: is it natural or altered by humans? With 13,000 years of human history here, chances are the latter is more likely.

Despite those many thousands of years of pre-settler activity, and a sizable Indigenous population residing in Scarborough today, their presence and history isn't immediately visible, eclipsed by both colonial development and mythology. However, perhaps the most conspicuous site of the long Indigenous history here in all of Toronto is near the intersection of Lawrence Avenue and Bellamy Road in Scarborough, where Taber Hill rises above bungalows in the Bendale neighbourhood. As Scarborough's development marched on in the mid-1950s, a bulldozer disturbed the hill, revealing that it was an ossuary, with the remains of over five hundred people buried here. Today a plaque at the top of the mound tells the story, though there are other sites in Scarborough, some along the creek and river valleys, with ossuaries; they are unmarked, both out of neglect and to preserve them from grave robbers who would disturb the remains for nefarious reasons.

The built form of Scarborough also hides some of the growing inequity that Toronto at large has been able to ignore because it's been hidden inside that grid at the end of a cul-de-sac or in an apartment tower on the side of a ravine. As the University of Toronto's J. David Hulchanski has shown in his revealing report, "The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970–2005," the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, while the middle class—the very people Scarborough was created for—is shrinking. The report's maps show much of Scarborough has had declining income, correlating almost directly with where support for populist mayor Rob Ford was found. Regardless of whether or not he had the solutions to these problems, Ford's message that the people in Scarborough had been left out resonated in 2010, and a similar message could again, as income trends have not reversed.

And yet Scarborough is rich with culture. It's along the concessional grid itself where the multicultural nature of the district is on full view. While the Golden Mile the Queen opened has transformed to a largely big-box area of chain stores, other strip malls of slightly later vintage in Scarborough have remained intact, with parking lots out front and shops with one or two floors of apartments above. What has changed since the Queen's visit is those shops themselves: though some would be familiar to a time traveller from 1959, so many others represent

the population they serve today. As well, save for a few chain coffee shops, banks, payday lenders, and the like, most of the stores are of the independent, mom-and-pop variety. Because the retail rent is lower than downtown, it's possible to start a business with less overhead here, so the independent nature of the businesses thrive, and walking from one mall to another is an utterly urban experience—if you ignore the parking lots—as each presents unexpected surprises. There's a sense of Scarborough's deep layers here.

The vitality of the strip malls today inadvertently embodies the promise of Scarborough that the Queen christened with her presence in 1959, and the malls represent the rich cultural place Scarborough has become. There's little quotidian about this place, but the unsettling trouble is the unchecked inequity that continues to grow in Scarborough and elsewhere in Toronto, threatening to overwhelm the widespread prosperity the Queen and Big Daddy thought they were welcoming.

Lori Blondeau



Michael Farnan in collaboration with Lori Blondeau and Adrian Stimson, video still, *Pilgrims of the Wild*, 2016

Lori Blondeau, detail, *Pakwāci Wāpisk*, 2017







Lisa Myers





Basil AlZeri



Basil AlZeri, *Crooked Homes, Towers and Structures*, 2017



Duorama





Duorama, Duorama #51, 2002



Duorama, Duorama #55, 2003
 Duorama, Labyrinth, 2017
 Lisa Myers, straining and absorbing, 2015

Terrance Houle





All works courtesy of the artist(s).

Basil AlZeri
*Crooked Homes, Towers
 and Structures*, 2017
 Interactive installation
 Variable dimensions

Lori Blondeau
Pakwâci Wâpisk, 2017
 Digital photographs
 168 × 111 cm each

Lori Blondeau
Asiniy Iskwew, 2016
 Digital photographs
 168 × 111 cm each

Michael Farnan in collaboration with
 Lori Blondeau and Adrian Stimson
Pilgrims of the Wild, 2016
 Video, 40:00
 Cinematography: Clark Ferguson
 Audio: Jordan Poniatowski

Duorama
Labyrinth, 2017
 Interactive installation
 274 × 366 × 18 cm

Duorama
Duorama #51, 2002
 Video documentation, 05:09

Duorama
Duorama #55, 2003
 Video documentation, 57:01

Terrance Houle
GHOST DAYS #01-#04, 2014/2016
 Digital photographs
 68.6 × 91.4 cm each

Lisa Myers
Strain 4, 3 & 5, 2015
 Serigraphs with blueberry pigment on
 paper
 56 × 76 cm each

Lisa Myers
straining and absorbing 2, 2015
 Video, 06:36

Lisa Myers
straining and absorbing 3, 2015
 Video, 11:41

Lisa Myers
straining and absorbing 4, 2015
 Video, 10:58



Taber Hill

Biographies

Artists

Basil AlZeri is a visual artist living and working in Toronto. AlZeri's practice involves the intersection of art, education, and food, and takes multiple forms, such as performance, intervention, and gallery and public installation. AlZeri's work examines the socio-political dynamics of the family and its intersection with cultural practices, drawing on the necessities of everyday life and the visibility of labour as sites of exploration. His work aims to facilitate a space for empathy through gestures of inclusivity and generosity. AlZeri has attended residencies and presented his work in Amman, Dubai, Halifax, Mexico City, Montreal, New York, Ottawa, Regina, Rome, Santiago, Tartu, and Toronto.

As a Cree/Saulteaux/Métis artist, **Lori Blondeau** explores the influence of popular media and culture (contemporary and historical) on Aboriginal self-identity, self-image, and self-definition. Blondeau has been culturally producing as an artist, instructor, and curator for twenty years. She is currently exploring the impact of the colonization of traditional and contemporary roles and lifestyles of Aboriginal women by strategically deconstructing the popular images of the Indian Princess and the Squaw. Blondeau uses humour as a performative storytelling strategy to reconstruct these stereotypes, reveal their absurdity, and reinsert them into the mainstream. The performance personas she creates, like Belle Sauvage, refer to the damage of colonialism and to the ironic pleasures of displacement and resistance.

For eighteen years, **Paul Couillard** and **Ed Johnson** have worked together on **Duorama**, a series of performance art works that explore notions of relationship—to each other, to the surrounding environment, and to audiences. Responding to site and examining cultural attitudes toward male intimacy are key elements of their process. Recurring themes revolve around queering spaces, surfacing hidden histories, imagining new hybridities, and exploring shifting interpretations of what is political and what is personal. Many of the works can be read in terms of the current social and political climate surrounding gay culture, offering askance references to issues such as marriage, HIV status, and masculinity. Playful, beguiling, and often minimalist, these pieces draw on the collaborative and competitive tensions that underlie partnerships. To date, 128 Duorama performances have been presented at galleries, festivals, and various events in Canada, France, Poland, Croatia, Ukraine, Belarus, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, USA, Singapore, Ireland, UK, and Argentina.

Terrance Houle is an internationally recognized interdisciplinary media artist and a member of the Blood Tribe. Involved with Aboriginal communities all his life, he has travelled to reservations throughout North America, participating in pow-wow dancing along with his native ceremonies. Houle utilizes at his discretion

performance, photography, video/film, music, and painting. Likewise, his practice includes tools of mass dissemination such as billboards and vinyl bus signage. A graduate of the Alberta College of Art and Design, Houle received his BFA in 2003. He lives in Calgary, where he maintains his practice.

Lisa Myers is an independent curator and artist with a keen interest in interdisciplinary collaboration. Myers has a Master of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University. Her recent work involves printmaking, stop-motion animation, and performance. Since 2010 she has worked with anthocyanin pigment from blueberries in printmaking, and in her stop-motion animation. Her participatory performances involve sharing berries and other food items in social gatherings, reflecting on the value found in place and displacement, straining and absorbing. She has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions in venues including Urban Shaman (Winnipeg), Art Gallery of Peterborough, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Her writing has been published in a number of exhibition publications in addition to the journal *Senses and Society*, *C Magazine*, and *FUSE Magazine*. She is currently an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. Myers is a member of Beausoleil First Nation and is based in Port Severn and Toronto.

Writers

Ranu Basu is Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at York University. Her research and teaching interests relate to the geographies of marginality, diversity, and social justice in cities; power, space, and activism; critical geographies of education; and spatial methodologies including critical GIS. Her projects have explored the impacts of the neo-liberalization of educational restructuring in Ontario; multiculturalism in schools through questions of “integration”; social sustainability and the meaning of public space as it relates to migrants; and the provision of infrastructure for marginal groups in suburban regions. Her current work has expanded to Cuba and India. In 2008, she was a John A. Sproul Fellow at the Center for Canadian Studies, and a visiting scholar at the Center for Cities and Schools at the Institute for Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley. She served for many years on the executive board of the Centre for Refugee Studies, the York Centre for Education and Community, and CITY Institute, and serves on the executive committee of the York Centre for Asian Research. Most recently she has embarked on a SSHRC-funded project entitled *Subalterity, education and welfare cities* that historically traces the geopolitical impacts on cities and schools through questions of conflict and displacement in Havana, Toronto, and Kolkata.

Elwood Jimmy is an avid learner, listener, collaborator, facilitator, writer, artist, cultural worker, and gardener based in Toronto. He is originally from the Thunderchild First Nation, a Nêhiyaw community in the global north that was forcibly displaced by the Canadian government to its current site. For many years, he has played a leadership role in several art projects, collectives, and organizations nationally and abroad. Through his many practices, he strives to co-design collaborative spaces and temporalities increasingly rooted in trauma-informed principles and methodologies, working to liquefy barriers to accessing art, community, learning, language, and the natural world.

Shawn Micallef is the author of *Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto* (2010), *Full Frontal TO: Exploring Toronto's Architectural Vernacular* (2012), *The Trouble with Brunch: Work, Class and the Pursuit of Leisure* (2014), and *Frontier City: Toronto on the Verge of Greatness* (2017). He's a weekly columnist at the *Toronto Star*, and a senior editor and co-owner of *Spacing* magazine. Micallef teaches civics at the University of Toronto and was a 2011–12 Canadian Journalism Fellow at Massey College. In 2002, while a resident at the Canadian Film Centre's Media Lab, he co-founded [murmur], a location-based mobile-phone documentary project that spread to over twenty-five cities globally. In 2016, he hosted and co-wrote *Accidental Parkland*, a documentary on Toronto's ravines.

Writer & Curator

Bojana Videkanic is a Yugoslav-born performance artist, curator, and art historian/theorist. After becoming a stateless person, Videkanic came to Canada, where she now resides. She is an Assistant Professor in Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and has curated exhibitions and festivals. Her academic research examines the history of modern art in socialist Yugoslavia, and her book manuscript *Nonaligned Modernism: Socialist Postcolonial Aesthetics in Yugoslavia 1945–1990* is under consideration with McGill-Queen's University Press. Her most recent article, “Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojic and Feminism in Transition,” was published in the spring of 2018. Videkanic is a recipient of a SSHRC Insight Development Grant for her curatorial research project *(Un)settled*, a SSHRC Connection Grant for *This Could Be the Place*, co-curated with Ivan Jurakic, as well as artist travel and visual arts project grants from the Canada Council for the Arts.



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Acknowledgements

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Bojana Videkanic

Credits

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