



TOUCHING EARTH BODIES

ARTISTS: LINDSAY KATSITSAKATSTE DELARONDE
VALERIE SALEZ

GUEST CURATOR: TOBY LAWRENCE

Touching Earth Bodies offers a dialogue between three bodies of collaborative and individually-produced work by Victoria-based artists Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde and Valerie Salez. The three projects, *In Defiance* (Delaronde), *In the Shadow of our Own Dust* (Salez), and *Touching Earth Bodies* (Delaronde and Salez), explore the power of self-representation, rejuvenation, and healing, through ceremony and connections to the land. The central focus of the exhibition and the referent for the overall title, *Touching Earth Bodies*, addresses interrelationships between the human body and the land, while considering the history and ongoing practices of deforestation across Vancouver Island's rainforest and the resulting environmental and social impact. These works additionally confront issues around representations of women's bodies and sexuality in art and popular culture within the current social and political climate. In dialogue, the three bodies of work establish the depth within Delaronde and Salez's collaboration and provide an opportunity to learn more about the breadth of the individual practices of each artist.

This exhibition developed out of the ongoing dialogue between guest curator Toby Lawrence and Angela Somerset, curator at Comox Valley Art Gallery, focused on collaborative creative practices.

L-R:
Touching Earth Bodies (detail)
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde
and Valerie Salez

In the Shadow of our own Dust
(detail)
Valerie Salez

In Defiance (detail)
Kelly Aguirre
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde

Touching Earth Bodies

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde and Valerie Salez



Touching Earth Bodies, 2017
digital photograph
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde
and Valerie Salez

Touching Earth Bodies is an ongoing collaboration that seeks to engage one's body with the land, simultaneously addressing contemporary environmental and social/political issues with ancient teachings and understandings of Mother Earth. The intention of *Touching Earth Bodies* is to explore the body's connection and/or disconnection to land. Through the process of public calls, the artists invite participants to bravely engage their bodies, minds, and spirits in different landscapes. Ceremonial circles, mindfulness practices, and social/political discussions prepare participants to be able to fully immerse themselves into often physically, and emotionally, charged environments. The images projected at CVAG are the results of a three-day creative workshop in August 2017 in T'Sou-ke and Pacheedaht territories on southern Vancouver Island. This workshop and photographic series focused on the Islands' rainforests and the ongoing deforestation practices and impacts. The group also focused on the similarities of trauma to the land and to women's bodies.

Touching Earth Bodies was produced through the support of Delaronde's appointment as the City of Victoria Indigenous Artist in Residence, 2017 and 2018.

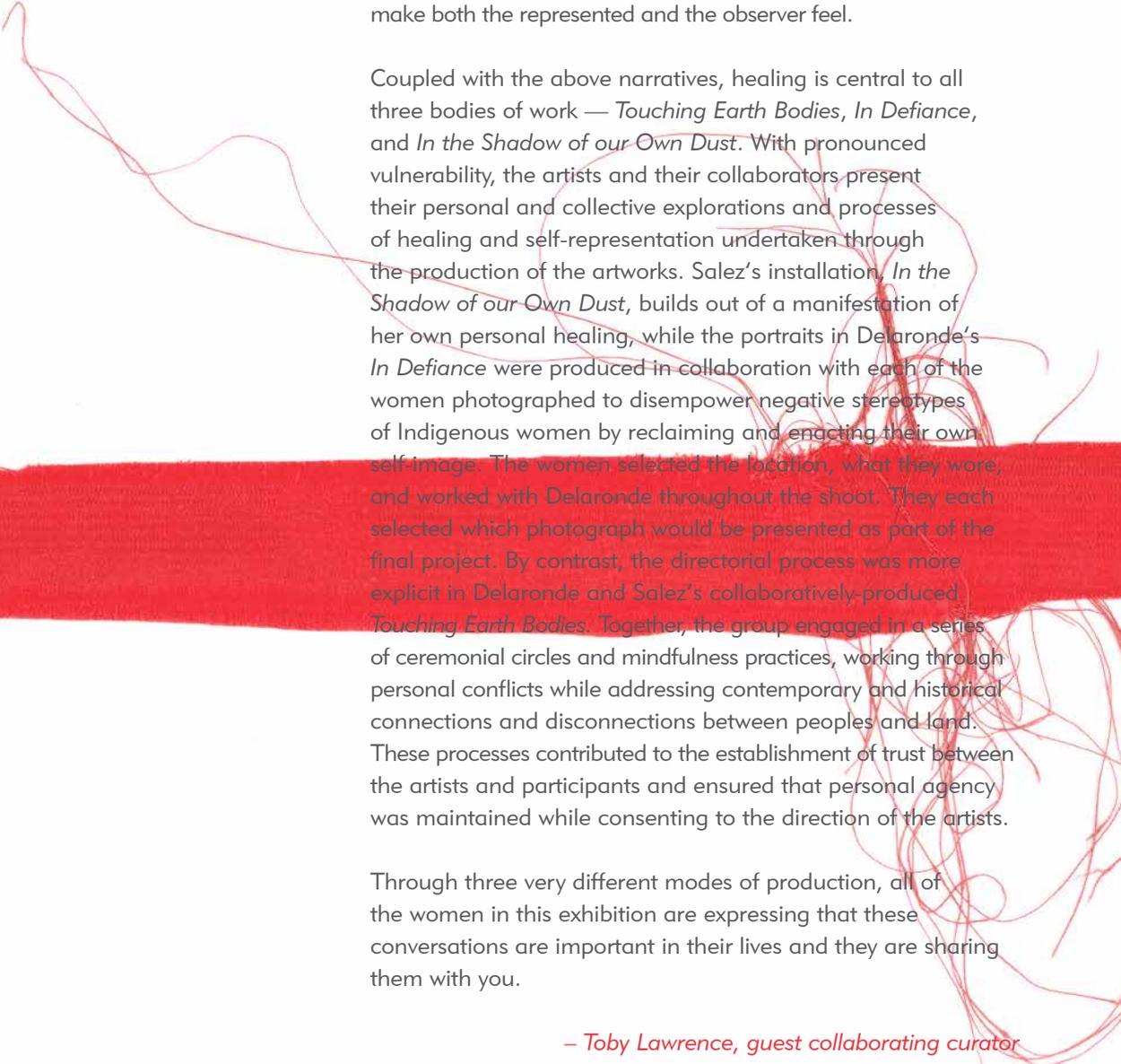


Orientations, part I: positioning

In May 2017, I visited *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The significance of a historical exhibition of over 50 women artists at MoMA cannot be understated. Nor can what it felt like, as a woman, to stand amongst this concentration of works, on a crowded Tuesday afternoon, without the looming frameworks of dismissal.

To fill MoMA's galleries with historical artwork by women is to directly confront [some of] the biases and prejudices of art and exhibition history. Perhaps essentialist in approach, the centralization and concentration of artwork by women is not to forever replace one body with another, but to make visible the sustained imbalance in order to imagine new and equitable modes of exhibition practices. Equally, to fill the Comox Valley Art Gallery with self-determined images of women by women, and significantly Indigenous women, asks us, as audience, to look beyond the sexualization and objectification of women's bodies. To think with deep seriousness about the systemic diminutization of gendered and racialized representation. Gendered and racialized value. Gendered and racialized labour. And to consider further the impact and effects that have shaped perceptions of self-worth, body image, and political/social/economic access and stature, as well as resulting violence against women, LGBTQ2 folks, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour.

For individual and collective healing to take place, space must be made for reclamation and self-representation. Space must be made to acknowledge the responsibilities of consent and the power—and empowerment—of authorship in the representation of Indigenous and women's bodies, specifically speaking here of the participants in the artworks in this exhibition. Shifting into a self-reflexive mode of thinking to identify the location and rationale for our own biases, to "see" differently. Traces of perceived pinup poses and stereotypes throughout the artworks cannot be disassociated from a discussion of consensual and self-actualized representation.



In North American popular culture, certain postures and cosmetic modifications and what they represent are ingrained within the socialization of conventional gender and racialized roles yet complicated by the extensive variation in how such representations make both the represented and the observer feel.

Coupled with the above narratives, healing is central to all three bodies of work — *Touching Earth Bodies*, *In Defiance*, and *In the Shadow of our Own Dust*. With pronounced vulnerability, the artists and their collaborators present their personal and collective explorations and processes of healing and self-representation undertaken through the production of the artworks. Salez's installation, *In the Shadow of our Own Dust*, builds out of a manifestation of her own personal healing, while the portraits in Delaronde's *In Defiance* were produced in collaboration with each of the women photographed to disempower negative stereotypes of Indigenous women by reclaiming and enacting their own self-image. The women selected the location, what they wore, and worked with Delaronde throughout the shoot. They each selected which photograph would be presented as part of the final project. By contrast, the directorial process was more explicit in Delaronde and Salez's collaboratively-produced *Touching Earth Bodies*. Together, the group engaged in a series of ceremonial circles and mindfulness practices, working through personal conflicts while addressing contemporary and historical connections and disconnections between peoples and land. These processes contributed to the establishment of trust between the artists and participants and ensured that personal agency was maintained while consenting to the direction of the artists.

Through three very different modes of production, all of the women in this exhibition are expressing that these conversations are important in their lives and they are sharing them with you.

– Toby Lawrence, guest collaborating curator



In the Shadow of our Own Dust

Valerie Salez



In the Shadow of our own Dust (detail), 2012
installation, burnt wood, textiles, feathers, fur,
horse hair, sheep wool, bone
Valerie Salez

“Perhaps it’s true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that when they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house—the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture—must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for. Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bone of a story.”

– Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

The installation, *In the Shadow of our Own Dust*, represents an interest in burnt wood conjuring a personal, political, global feeling about things coming apart at the seams; things being burnt down to their essence. Like a field burnt to become fallow again, new potential is revealed. This work is about the basics of death and rebirth and plays with perceptions of dark/light and life/death, where the end of something signals the beginning of something else.

In Defiance

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde



In Defiance, 2016
Roseanne Supernault
digital C-print
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde

The sexualization and exploitation in the images of women in mainstream society disregard the rich cultural existence that Indigenous women have maintained through traditional knowledge, social roles, and power. This objectification of women demonstrates that in Western society there is a lack of understanding of, and relationships to, traditional teachings. It is time to push the continuum of these teachings forward to expose vulnerability, to celebrate sensuality and to reclaim eroticism through the matriarchal body.

To this end, I originally conceived of “Squaw,” a series of photographs of Indigenous women in response to the derogatory usage of the word. Each woman was invited to stage a portrait reclaiming her natural sovereign powers of eroticism, sensuality, and vulnerability. Together, these women deconstruct and challenge mainstream ideas around sexuality. Their photographs dismantle negative stereotypes of First Nations women and portray more authentic truths of diversity, power and respect, through this project, each woman has found voice and a safe platform to stand *In Defiance* through the expression of her most private and sensual aspects.

I would like to thank my mentor in photography, Ellie Dion and all the women who bravely took part in the project.

In Defiance was originally organized by and presented at the University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries, October 8, 2016 – January 7, 2017.

TOUCHING EARTH BODIES

- 1 *Touching Earth Bodies*, 2017-ongoing
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde and Valerie Salez
two-channel video projection, digital photographs 2017;
performance, fabric, wood, 2018
- 2 *In Defiance*, 2016
Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde
33 framed digital C-prints
- 3 *In the Shadow of our Own Dust*, 2012
Valerie Salez
installation, burnt wood, textiles, feathers, fur,
horse hair, sheep wool, bone, performance

RECEPTION /
ENTRANCE

CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

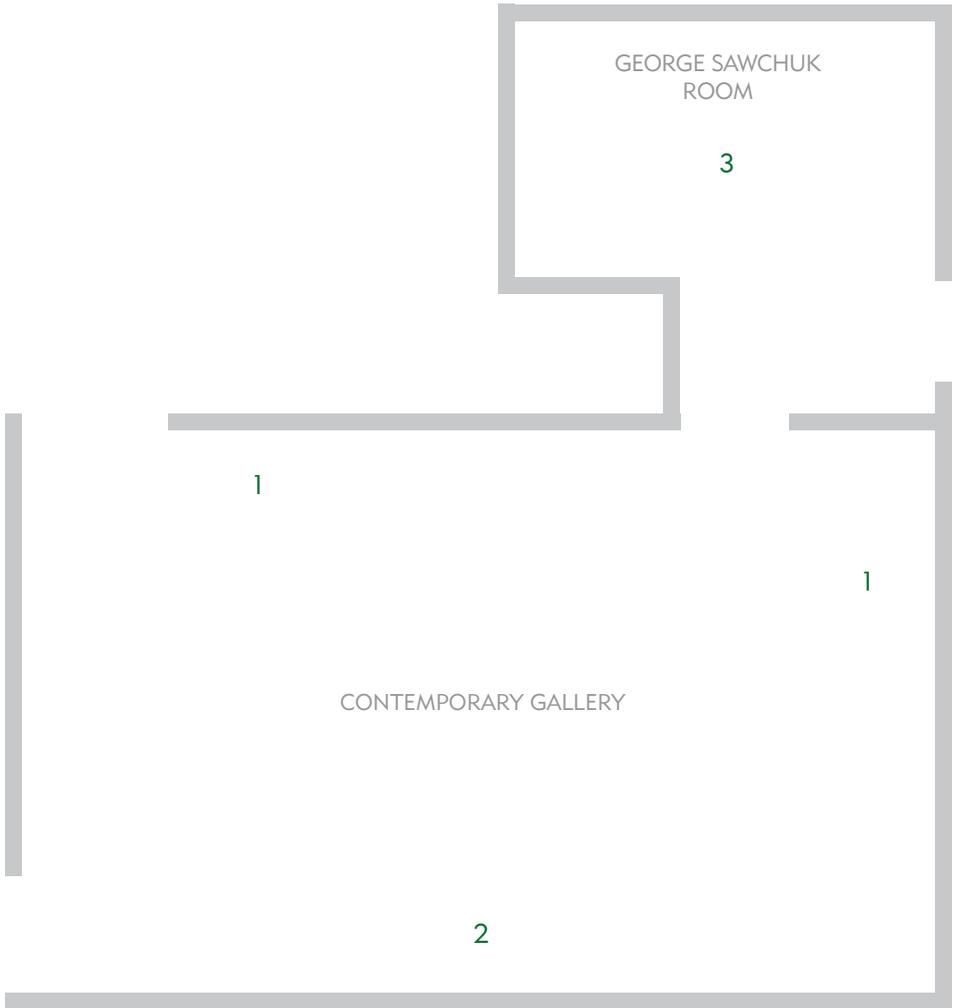
GEORGE SAWCHUK
ROOM

1

1

2

3



TOUCHING EARTH BODIES

ARTISTS: LINDSAY KATSITSAKATSTE DELARONDE
VALERIE SALEZ

GUEST CURATOR: TOBY LAWRENCE

18 MAY – 29 JUNE 2018
18 MAY / 7pm
02 JUNE / 5 – 9pm
02 JUNE / 7:15pm

EXHIBITION
ART OPENING / ARTIST TALK
Make Art Project: CORNHUSK DOLLS
PERFORMANCE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In May the artists and guest curator are participating in CVAG's Creative Residency – 2018 Program. The McLoughlin Gardens Society is our community partner for the Residency Program.

CVAG gratefully acknowledges the support of Canada Council for the Arts Engage and Sustain program + New Chapter program, BC Arts Council, Government of Canada, Province of BC, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Comox Valley Regional District, BC Gaming, City of Victoria, UVic Legacy Art Gallery, McLoughlin Gardens Society, Sure Copy, SD71 Printshop, ABC Printing & Signs, and Hitec Printing. We especially thank all of our volunteers, donors, and members.

As the artists and guest curator, we would like to express our gratitude and acknowledge that we are located on unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.

We would like to acknowledge all of the women that participated in *In Defiance* and *Touching Earth Bodies*, and the T'Sou-ke and Pacheedaht First Nations on whose land the work was created.

This exhibition is dedicated to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, and the land, that have experienced trauma, loss, and grief in hope that this can be a platform for dialogue and healing for all.

– Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde, Valerie Salez, Toby Lawrence



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2017 and Beyond



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COURTENAY