

**Marlene Creates: Works from Blast Hole Pond Road,  
Newfoundland 2002–2021**

**Œuvres réalisées au chemin Blast Hole Pond,  
Terre-Neuve 2002–2021**



**My artwork is where the inside (my thoughts) and the outside (my surroundings) meet. In the patch of boreal forest where I live and work, both my daily activities and my artistic endeavours are profoundly physical and involve all my senses. Everything in the cosmos and everything on Earth—every leaf, every stone, every drop of water, and every creature—is the result of the 14-billion-year history of the constantly changing universe, from which we’re borrowing the atoms in our sensing bodies. – Marlene Creates**



**Water Flowing to the Sea Captured at the Speed of Light,  
Blast Hole Pond River, Newfoundland 2002–2003**

4 pairs of chromogenic photographic prints.  
Spring 2003, excerpt from the series.

My past work almost always had its source in travel, and it emerged from the perspective of the visitor, who pauses to observe and then moves on. This work is the reverse: instead of moving across the land, I am staying in one place, and the living world in my immediate surroundings is flowing past me. I started photographing a small waterfall in the Blast Hole Pond River—these photographs are the result of the one-way gaze of the onlooker.

Then one day I thought: What if the other looks back—at the photographer? So the same day I photographed the waterfall, I took photographs with an underwater camera that I held under the flowing stream and turned towards myself. The water moving directly over the camera lens blurred and distorted my image, at times even obscured it completely. These serendipitous wavering effects express my sense of temporality, evanescence, and mortality. (key #5)



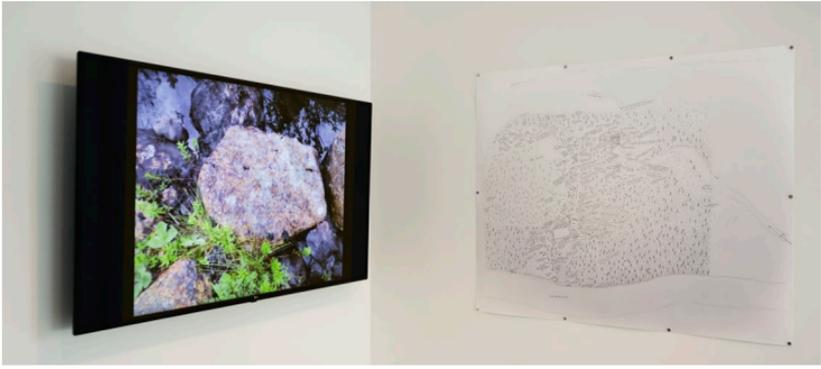
**Larch, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Hand, Blast Hole Pond Road,  
Newfoundland 2007–ongoing**

18 excerpts from the series: 9 black and white photographs,  
silver prints, and 9 colour digital prints.  
2007 & 2018, excerpts from the series.

My greatest aspirations are presently constituted by the six acres of boreal forest that I inhabit, and I'm slowly tuning my body and my reflexes to its details. I'm coming to know this habitat by engaging with it in various ways: corporally, emotionally, intellectually, instinctively, linguistically, and in astonishment.

I'm interested in the particularity of each tree and the circumstances that bring me to discern certain trees amongst the thousands in this forest. Even when I'm being my most attentive, there are still many trees I have not yet noticed enough to remember as individuals. Each year I continued the series of photographs with about nine trees that came to my attention. But what I should say is my attention has come to them.

In 2018, I started re-photographing my hand (in colour) on the same trees after an eleven-year interval. In three cases (so far), the trees on which I originally photographed my hand have been blown down in wind storms and hurricanes. In those instances, I photograph my hand in the empty spaces. (key #4)



**Spots of Memory: what I remembered during one month away after six years on Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2008**

two-channel stereo video mastered from 243 still photographs and audio recording, 19 min. 36 sec.; and digital print on rag paper of original hand-drawn memory map; audio recording and video editing by Elizabeth Zetlin. This is a facsimile of the original memory map drawing, pencil on Stonehenge paper, which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

I'm getting to know the place where I live one tree at a time. And one boulder, one wildflower, one clump of moss....

While abroad for a month, I reflected on the patch of boreal forest where I'd been living for six years. I tried to remember as many details as I could by consciously visualizing what it was like to walk around the place. I wrote them down and, at the end of the month, the list numbered 243. The video presents these details. Accompanying the video is a memory-map drawing. It shows the areas of greatest recall, which are the areas where I have the most familiarity. The blank areas on the map are places largely unknown to me. There are still several areas where I have not yet set foot because either the brush is so dense or the incline is so steep. (key #9)



**From the Ground Tier to a Sparrow Batch, Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2012–2013**

from *A Newfoundland Treasury of Terms for Ice and Snow* video, 26 min. 7 sec.

Credits: voice recordings by Jake Nicoll; video editing by Christopher Darlington. (key #7)



**Sea Ice, Conception Bay, Newfoundland, March 2014**

from *A Newfoundland Treasury of Terms for Ice and Snow* video, 14 min. 14 sec.

Credit: video editing by Christopher Darlington. (key #1)

A wide local vocabulary was developed in Newfoundland to distinguish specific phenomena in the continuous modulations of winter weather. I made an inventory of over eighty such terms. Behind these terms is a way of experiencing and knowing the world. They register an attention to the land and the sea. Knowing these terms and expressions helps us actually see different phenomena, instead of winter being just a cold, white blur.

This vocabulary is now a fragile intangible artifact. The loss of local linguistic complexity is a result of major changes in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the decline of the fishery as an occupation. And these terms are fragile for another reason—global warming.

cover: **From the Ground Tier to a Sparrow Batch, Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2012–2013** (video still)



**Between the Earth and the Firmament,  
Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2020**

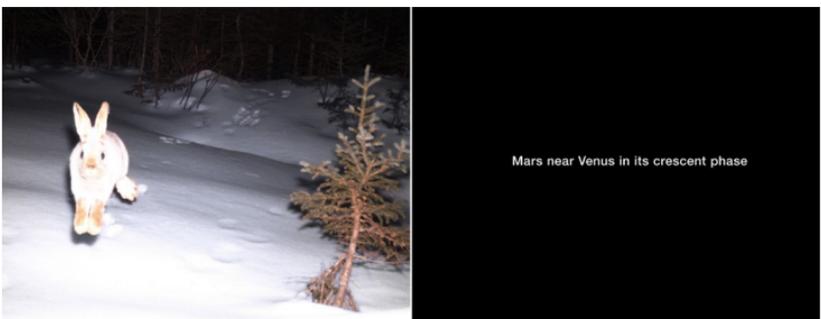
*On the Frozen Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2020, excerpt from the series.*

assemblages of 100% cotton vellum paper with charcoal frottage/rubbing, photographs printed on adhesive-backed polyester photo fabric with hand-written text in pigment ink, and painted pine hanging bars.

The drawings in these assemblages are not based on visual observation. They are frottages (rubblings) I made around myself while lying on the paper—the merest membrane between myself and the land. Wherever I lie down outside, I’m in what’s known as “the boundary layer”—the thin layer of air between the surface of the ground and the atmosphere. The photographs represent the visual dimensions of what was beneath me—such as the vegetation or the snow—and what I saw overhead while lying in place.

The hand-written texts in each work are from my field notes. They refer to some of the phenomena that were present. But most of what exists is imperceptible to the human eye: under the vegetation that I’m lying on are countless microscopic organisms as well as enormous geological formations; and overhead, beyond the tree canopy, there is even more matter in the immensity of the celestial sphere.

Everything in the cosmos and everything on Earth—every leaf, every stone, every drop of water, and every creature—is the result of the 14-billion-year history of the constantly changing universe, from which we’re borrowing the atoms in our sensing bodies. (key #3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4)



**What Came to Light at Blast Hole Pond River,  
Newfoundland 2015–ongoing**

*February 5, 2017, excerpt from the series.*

colour photographs and text printed with Epson UltraChrome inks on Epson lustre paper.

The series is about the possibilities for artistic agency when I deliberately relinquish being the photographer and leave it to an infrared trail camera that is triggered by wildlife.

This series is also about movement—the movement of wildlife at ground level and of celestial bodies overhead. The events juxtaposed in each pair are just two of the countless natural phenomena that occurred at the same time. (key #6-1, 6-2, 6-3)



**About 8½ Minutes from the Sun to the Moon to the River  
to My Face to the Camera, Blast Hole Pond River,  
Newfoundland 2012**

diptych of 2 pigment-based ink-jet photographic prints.

A clear night, 2 a.m., the September  
full moon a bright companionable sphere.

As I step into the river in high rubber waders  
it drifts on the current, glints

and scatters among the ripples.  
A back-eddy pool gathers its shape,

reflects the white light up to my face  
then through the lens, while all around me

the boreal forest is spires of lacy black.

(key #8)

*to speak out what you see. there is nothing contrived.*

curatorial words / Denise Lawson + Angela Somerset

*Field notes – Our sensing bodies are at the heart of the work*

Over the years, we had heard about Marlene Creates. Her approach to her work as a land-based artist intrigued us. She was not interested in shaping the land, but rather with being in relationship with it. Marlene went out to meet the land, not impose upon it in the way other artists of the time were doing. She went quietly and gently “to set myself a structure for experiences, whatever they would be.” (1) Her posture was one of being with, of observation, of placing her sensing body in intimate encounter with a place.

“My artwork is where the inside (my thoughts) and the outside (my surroundings) meet.... [B]oth my daily activities and my artistic endeavours are profoundly physical and involve all my senses. Everything in the cosmos and everything on Earth—every leaf, every stone, every drop of water, and every creature—is the result of the 14-billion-year history of the constantly changing universe, from which we’re borrowing the atoms in our sensing bodies.” (2)

We wondered what it would be like to have her come to a place layered with eons of human and non-human relational narratives.

*Remembering the formations of relationship with Marlene Creates, 2018 - 2022*

We began with an invitation to have her come to the Comox Valley for an artist residency and exhibition. The pandemic suspended moving forward. Emails and virtual conversations became the small bridges we crossed as we got to know one another. We shared our frustrations, hopes, and small delights in our own immediate surroundings—a snowshoe hare outside the artist’s window, unwrapping the brown paper that clothed her book sent to us through the mail. We waited for the pandemic to wane and, finally, this spring our plans were enacted. Marlene flew across the expanse between east and west to be in this place.

*The artist Marlene Creates is in this place, June 2022*

When we meet, Marlene relates about one of her first nights at the residence that lies in coastal forest that lines the Strait of Georgia. “Last night I went outside to watch the sky—something I love to do. But just outside the cottage in the clump of bushes to the right, I heard a growl. That morning, as I sat working in front of the picture window, I happened to look up just when a black bear walked along the rocky shore in front of me.”

Throughout local history and mythical folklore, bears have played a vital role in signifying the larger link that exists between humans and the places we find ourselves. So began Marlene’s new relationship with this place.

*Sensing bodies. Reflecting about what it is in the ecology of Marlene Creates’s art practice that resonates*

The images, text, drawings, and videos that comprise the exhibition, *Marlene Creates: Works from Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2002–2021 / Œuvres réalisées au chemin Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2002–2021*, bear witness to Creates’s process of engaging with one place ‘corporeally, emotionally, intellectually, instinctively, linguistically, and in astonishment.’ (3) Her work represents decades of a thoughtful, creative practice. The book, *Marlene Creates: Places, Paths, and Pauses*, a retrospective of her work, has been read and reread, articles and websites referenced.

It is one thing to anticipate, imagine, to have shared virtual space, and quite another to be in the actual moment and reality of being here together. Her work is uncrated, and the gallery is being enlivened with her work. The whole team is held within the reciprocal engagement of setting up Marlene’s exhibition. The artist’s presence and her work are our glue. Her work has touched us all. We put our heads together and our hands to the tasks. Our hearts are enlivened. Marlene turns to us with

these words, “The saturation in the video needs to be toned down”—four of us standing together as we witness the moment the work is transformed with the rightness of a tonal setting found. Small details—the height of work placement, the case of the letters—are worked through collaboratively as we fine tune. Perceptions and orientations shift as artist and her work inhabit this place.

Memory travels back to the first encounter with Marlene Creates’s practice during a lecture about her work at Emily Carr University in 2012. A small coal within glowed hot. Today, as we talk about Marlene and what it is like to have her and some of her work with us, the glow of the coals burns brightly with respect for this artist and her unwavering commitment to following her own way.

### *Words arose in our conversation*

Imagine her as a young artist saying to herself, “I am going to follow my instincts.” It was really radical. she did her own thing. choosing to be in the land and not disturb it. she took her body and out she went. principles grabbed on to resolutely. thinking about disturbance, but in a way that nature could put it back. redistribute. quietly observing and seeing what is there. think of the low-level jet bomber flight training in Labrador over the land that was considered just nothing. imagine her questioning the status quo—wait a minute, who says a place is just nothing, a no-man’s-land? wait a minute, let’s look at this, see who is there, and what do they have to say? resolving to go to there and see what that place has to say. no manipulating. just listening, observing with curiosity, gathering humble statements. so thoughtful, so powerful. that way of being with and bearing witness stands its own ground. it really does, you know.

Think of the projects with signs. those are great too. such a sense of wit and humour. to just look and see. to say, how ridiculous is that? signs that signify what is important. what we should do. what way we should go. and we swallow it hook, line, and sinker. but Marlene disrupts that complacency by calling attention and asking, says who and why?

Committing to one place, she has quietly carried on all these years in one patch of boreal forest—paying attention. the simple act of looking at the water. seeing the water looking back. one by one the trees are known. a boggy patch. a pink lady’s slipper orchid. subtleties of snow and ice. collaborating with moose and hare and fox. following the cycle of nature. the sensing body. the cosmos. nothing is static. everything is in motion. her body in place shifting over the years. change being the only certainty.

Marlene Creates’s commitment inspires us to pay attention to our own impulses and to trust them. To be attuned. We know how hard it is to trust them. There is power in her work—to instill an idea that goes deep, that roots a sense of connection with unconstrained curiosity and astonishment, and then to speak out what you see, uncontrived. it is so important. there is potency in that.

“I am interested in the relationship between human experience and the land: the intersection of geography with memory, impossible truths and inevitable ambiguities. I am fascinated by the different layers—‘natural’ and human—that can occur in the same place.” (4)  
“Some things may last a long time, and others may only last between one wave and the next. The only thing certain is change.” (5)  
Her words of recognition and orientation become a place of resonance where we find ourselves.

Marlene Creates’s practice integrates art and life, listening and looking. Her artwork is a form of wayfinding through multiple narratives and ways of knowing.

Marlene Creates: Works from Blast Hole Pond Road,  
Newfoundland 2002–2021

Œuvres réalisées au chemin Blast Hole Pond,  
Terre-Neuve 2002–2021

Exhibition | 15 June – 10 September, 2022

June 16 7pm | Art Opening + Artist Talk | CVAG + live stream

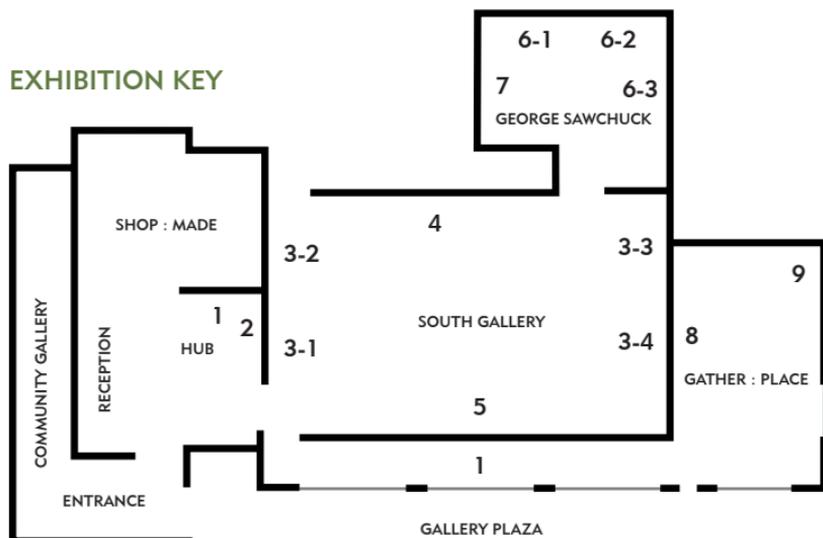
Community Events:

June 15 | Artist Make Art Workshop with SD71 Students

June 18 11am – 4pm | Artist Walk | McLoughlin Gardens

June 22 5 – 7pm | Marlene Creates + Don McKay

*The Boreal Poetry Garden* Talk | CVAG (live stream)



### WINDOW GALLERY + HUB

- 1 *Sea Ice, Conception Bay, Newfoundland, March 2014 / Glace de mer, baie de la Conception, Terre-Neuve, mars 2014*, video 14:14, video editing by Christopher Darlington.
- 2 Reading nook (publications)

### SOUTH GALLERY

*Between the Earth and the Firmament, Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2020 / Entre la Terre et le Firmament, chemin Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2020*, assemblages of 100% cotton vellum paper with charcoal frottage/rubbing, two photographs printed on adhesive-backed polyester photo fabric with hand-written text in pigment ink, and painted pine hanging bars.

- 3-1 *On the Frozen Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2020 / Sur la rivière Blast Hole Pond gelée, hiver 2020*
- 3-2 *Under the Large Larch Tree, Spring 2020 / Sous le grand mélèze, printemps 2020*
- 3-3 *On the Bedrock at the Riverbend, Summer 2020 / Sur le substrat rocheux au bord de la rivière, été 2020*
- 3-4 *On the Ledge of the Tolt, Autumn 2020 / Sur la saillie du « Tolt », automne 2020*
- 4 *Larch, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Hand, Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2007–ongoing / Mélèze, épinette, sapin, bouleau, main, chemin Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2007–en cours*, 18 excerpts from the series: 9 black and white photographs, silver prints, and 9 colour digital prints.

- 5 *Water Flowing to the Sea Captured at the Speed of Light, Blast Hole Pond River, Newfoundland 2002–2003 / Eau coulant vers la mer saisie à la vitesse de la lumière, rivière Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2002–2003*, 4 pairs of chromogenic photographic prints: Fall 2002, Winter 2003, Spring 2003, Summer 2003.

### GEORGE SAWCHUK GALLERY

*What Came to Light at Blast Hole Pond River, Newfoundland 2015–ongoing / Ce qui s'est révélé à la rivière Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2015–en cours*, colour photographs and text printed with Epson UltraChrome inks on Epson lustre paper.

6-1 *November 19, 2015 / 19 novembre 2015*

6-2 *February 5, 2017 / 5 février 2017*

6-3 *March 17, 2016 / 17 mars 2016*

- 7 *From the Ground Tier to a Sparrow Batch: A Newfoundland Treasury of Terms for Ice and Snow, Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2012–2013 / De « Ground Tier » à « Sparrow Batch » : trésor de terminologie de la glace et de la neige à Terre-Neuve, rivière Blast Hole Pond, hiver 2012–2013*, video 26:7; voice recordings by Jake Nicoll; video editing by Christopher Darlington.

### GATHER PLACE GALLERY

- 8 *About 8½ Minutes from the Sun to the Moon to the River to My Face to the Camera, Blast Hole Pond River, Newfoundland 2012 / Environ 8½ minutes du Soleil à la Lune à la rivière à mon visage à l'appareil photo, rivière Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2012*, diptych of 2 pigment-based ink-jet photographic prints.
- 9 *Spots of Memory: what I remembered during one month away after six years on Blast Hole Pond Road, Newfoundland 2008 / Points de mémoire : ce dont je me suis souvenue durant un mois à l'étranger après avoir vécu six ans sur le chemin Blast Hole Pond, Terre-Neuve 2008*, two-channel stereo video mastered from 243 still photographs and audio recording, 19:36; and digital print on rag paper of original hand-drawn memory map; audio recording and video editing by Elizabeth Zetlin. This is a facsimile of the original memory map drawing, pencil on Stonehenge paper, which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

All works courtesy of Paul Petro Contemporary Art.



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HOURS WEDNESDAY TO SATURDAY 10 – 5  
ADMISSION: DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

The Comox Valley Art Gallery would like to acknowledge that we are located upon the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. CVAG recognizes the enduring presence of First Nations people on this land. The gallery is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with artists, writers, guest curators, community partners, our volunteers, donors + members. CVAG's programming is supported by our funders: Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, Government of Canada, Province of BC, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, Comox Valley Regional District, BC Gaming, ArtsNL | Local Support: SD71 Print Shop, Sherwin-Williams, Industrial Plastics, Hitec Screen Printing, Shine-Eze, Cumberland Village Works, Safe + Sound | Community Collaborators: School District 71, McLoughlin Gardens Society



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