
Memories
of
the
Future

Sara Angelucci, Robert Hengeveld, Eleanor King and Matt Macintosh

Curated by Noa Bronstein and Katherine Dennis
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Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of the home, and by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.

— Gaston Bachelard [1]

Matt Macintosh,
*Arla Harkness on
Fence*, 5.5 x 5 inch
Inkjet print, 2014,
archival image
courtesy of the
Gibson House
Museum Archive.

Written in 1920s Soviet Moscow, Ukrainian-born author Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's *Memories of the Future* was initially considered too subversive to publish [2]. His phantasmagorical fictions were censored on numerous occasions and it was not until the 1970s that his manuscripts found their way into circulation [3]. It was poet, literary historian, and essayist Vadim Perelmuter who uncovered Krzhizhanovsky's works, but he had to wait to publish the writer's archive until the perestroika – Gorbachev's policy of economic and governmental reform – had dismantled the established doctrines of censorship [4]. Newly published to literary acclaim, Krzhizhanovsky's works remain tied to these controversial beginnings, with reviews of the writing continuously contextualizing the author's biography and posthumous publication.

As the namesake suggests, the exhibition *Memories of the Future* attempts to uncover hidden stories and forgotten histories. Offering a kind of cultural excavation, this ongoing curatorial project digs deeper into the archive and provides alternate readings of historic narratives. For the inaugural exhibition four artists have been invited to intervene throughout Gibson House Museum, reframing the staged house as a dynamic site of interpretation and dialogue.

Gibson House Museum is the former home of David Gibson, a surveyor made famous by his reluctant participation in the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. During the early 1830s Gibson's political interests grew, as did his friendship with William Lyon Mackenzie [5], who encouraged his participation in the Rebellion. While Gibson's role in the uprising was largely confined

to guarding Loyalist prisoners at Montgomery's Inn tavern and protecting the prisoners from mistreatment, he was declared a traitor to the Crown. Avoiding imprisonment, Gibson fled to Rochester by boat, leaving behind his wife Eliza and four children. Loyalists burned down the family's wooden farmhouse, along with most of their belongings – although Eliza was able to rescue the grandfather clock, their most valuable possession, and Gibson's surveying tools. Gibson was pardoned in 1846 and returned to Canada in 1848, solidifying himself as a prominent farmer and surveyor. Rebuilt in 1851, the Late Georgian-style Gibson family house was converted into a museum in 1971. Today, the Gibson House Museum is one of ten historic sites operated by the City of Toronto with the aim of connecting the past to the present. Using a variety of programming strategies, such as costumed

tour guides, visitors to the museum are invited to 'step back in time.'

The majority of the available information about the Gibson family focuses on David Gibson's involvement in the Rebellion. This narrative is peppered with other anecdotes about his early role in surveying the Quebec and Ontario countryside, as well as stories of his family life, documented in diaries and letters. These accounts have been used to frame the house within one very specific moment in time and to statically preserve the space as an archetype of rural living in mid-nineteenth-century North York. The connection between the farmhouse and current realities, such as urban saturation from nearby condo development, often seem distant, tangential at best. As a means of enhancing contemporary connectivity, artists Sara Angelucci, Robert

Hengeveld, Eleanor King and Matt Macintosh present history as temporal and subjective, and offer personal interpretations of the site and of the house's former occupants. Each artist delves into an element of Gibson's history and the Museum's strategies of retelling, as a way to start to make visible parts of the story that fall outside of the accepted narrative. By commissioning new works, this project allows the artists to re-catalogue the archive and to explore history *in situ*.



Chapter I
Stage

MATT MACINTOSH
REAL ESTATES

We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.

— Michel Foucault [6]

Employing two seemingly dichotomous strategies, Matt Macintosh's *Real Estates* invites us to consider how historic spaces are constructed. In the first of these strategies Macintosh digitally alters a series of photographs from the Gibson House archive. The photographs were taken by Eliza Gibson (1879–1955), David Gibson's great granddaughter, whose ubiquitous images document the mundanity of familial moments. Macintosh worked with the Museum's curator, Dorie Billich, to select key photographs from within the larger archive. The final, eclectic selection conveys, amongst other things, the architectural details of the house, providing a sense of place. While several of the images capture subjects posing in a manner typical of the era, others record behaviours that could be read as unusual for the time period, such as the image labelled "Arla Harkness on Fence." Bisecting the central plane of

the image, Macintosh all but removes the figure. Peeking out from the margins of this axial midpoint are glimpses of the individual—partially exposed legs and hands, the limited reveal of clothing or of a bicycle and a lawn mower. Noticeably absent from these compositions is the individual's face, and so the figure becomes mired within his or her own ambiguity. Macintosh debases the archive of its representational and instructive qualities, offering instead a more speculative reading of Eliza's images.

The second of Macintosh's strategies is an additive process whereby various artifacts from the Orillia Museum of Art and History have been situated throughout the historic house. The objects have not only been displaced from one collection and introduced into a completely unrelated institution, but have also been estranged from their pairings.



(Previous and above) Matt Macintosh, *Real Estates*, 2014, installation documentation by Toni Hafkenscheid



(Above and right)
 Matt Macintosh,
Real Estates, 2014,
 installation docu-
 mentation by Toni
 Hafkenscheid



Typically part of a duo, a triplet or a series, they are given new agency as standalones. Macintosh's two approaches trouble our perceptions of wholeness, of being able to fully access the history of objects. *Real Estates* traces how removal and contortion have been used in the staging of historic spaces and invites a closer reading of museum strategies for meaning-making. Within this museological context objects are made

to signify the established narrative of the historic house. The grandfather clock, for instance, is made to represent Gibson's role in the Rebellion and his ability to rebuild. Historic houses are also often framed as tableaux vivant, as if the owners had recently left or just briefly stepped out for an errand. The reality, of course, is that the house is preserved through a series of curatorial and programmatic interpretations, through "layers

of architectural alteration, generations of personal history and moments of interpretive renovation." [7] It is here that Macintosh's interventions attempt to disrupt the historic house as complete, immutable and neutral. By exaggerating the gestures of removal and inclusion we are asked to actively consider how these same kinds of gestures have been used in staging the historic space.



Chapter II
Memory

ROBERT HENGEVELD
SIGHTLINES

There is no reason to assume that even the most extravagant series of unveilings would ever reach anything but another veil.

— J. Hillis Miller [8]



(Previous and left)
Robert Hengeveld,
Sightlines, 2014,
installation docu-
mentation by Toni
Hafkenscheid

Similarly to Macintosh, Robert Hengeveld questions the Museum's attempts to construct a cohesive narrative and challenges the authenticity of such interpretations. As with the objects that inhabit historic houses, the memories that accompany these items start to decompose with time. Recognizing that the 'truth' and the 'real' are conceivably fragmented over the 150 year history of the house, Hengeveld envisions a scenario wherein our protagonist, David Gibson, is imbued with different characteristics and behaviours than those presented by the museum, while maintaining some semblance to the documented history of the surveyor's life. *Sightlines* imagines a passionate and captivated Gibson whose work overflows and fills his office space. Here, Hengeveld negotiates two landscapes: one of memory and one of imagination. As Paul Ricoeur notes, the former points towards reality while the latter

towards the fictional and the fantastic [9]. Yet, as Ricoeur also notes, this relationship is not necessarily oppositional. "Memory," he states, is "reduced to recall, [and] thus operates in the wake of the imagination." [10]

Countering the fixed, unchanging notions of identity that are often presented by historic houses, Hengeveld's Gibson does not keep his work concealed within an orderly space. Instead he is busy at work on a large collection of detailed architectural models that engulf the office. Surveying strings and other tools also populate the small room, along with model streetscapes. In keeping with Gaston Bachelard's notion that "over-picturesqueness in a house can conceal its intimacy," [11] the no longer invariable and pristine mise-en-scène takes on new meaning reinvigorated by imagination and fantasy.

In order to present a methodically curated workspace the Gibson House not only makes use of historic artifacts once owned by the Gibson family, but also displays period pieces, as well as modern reproductions. Intermingled within the staged office, these original and introduced objects are indistinguishable from one another and intentionally unmarked. The Museum does not include didactic material that signals real from fake, antique from contemporary. As Umberto Eco explains, visitors to museums are encouraged

to disregard this separation when encountering a museum display [12]. Central to the ability of museums to convey relatable experiences is this suspension of reality, for “to speak of things that one wants to connote as real, these things must seem real. The ‘completely real’ becomes identified with the ‘completely fake.’ Absolute unreality is offered as real presence.” [13] *Sightlines* is positioned somewhere between the real and the oneiric, and it is in this liminal threshold that Hengeveld is able to collapse the boundaries between the remembered and the imagined.

Robert Hengeveld,
Sightlines, 2014,
installation docu-
mentation by Toni
Hafkenscheid





Chapter III
Sound

**ELEANOR KING
QUIET (FALLOW)**

Not my language
but a voice
chanting in patterns
survives on earth
not history's bones
but vocal tones

— Allen Ginsberg, "A Prophecy" [14]

Although museums tend towards privileging the visual, historic houses are often able to actuate other senses as a way of stimulating individual and collective memories. The smell of the operable historic kitchen in the Gibson House Museum, for instance, lingers and carries through the space the scent of the wood-burning fireplace. Recognizing the potency of echoic memory, a type of sensory memory specific to auditory information, Eleanor King's multi-channel soundtrack endeavours to mute the constant noise of modern-day rhythms, foregrounding instead the sounds of nature, the hum of the farm and the daily activities of the women who inhabited the house. Attempting to get 'off the grid,' King struggled to find a place where she could capture the sounds of an orchard without the drone of a highway, of farm equipment powered by people and horses rather than by engines, or of the crackling

of cooking done by fire as opposed to gas and electricity. This challenge of returning to past modes of livelihood is shared by 'back-to-the-land' movements [15] (which have ebbed in and out of popularity since the twentieth century and seem to continually resurface in times of great socio-economic change) and became a source of inspiration for the project. King's attempt may appear futile, since the recordings are infiltrated by the voices of tour guides, the sounds of the nearby construction site and the persistent buzzing of central air and fluorescent lights. Still, she is able to carve out enough acoustic space to consider what the Gibson House would have sounded like in the 1800s.

The collected sounds reference historical modes of production, but these cues resonate beyond a nostalgic yearning for the past, offering a critical questioning of the



(Previous and above)
Eleanor King,
quiet (fallow),
2014, installation
documentation by
Toni Hafkenschheid

present. As Andreas Huyssen notes, "[N]o matter how much the museum, consciously or unconsciously, produces and affirms symbolic order, there is always a surplus of meaning that exceeds set ideological boundaries, opening spaces for reflection and counter-hegemonic memory." [16] *quiet (fallow)* surveys this surplus of meaning, reinterpreting

the formalized narrative with ancillary components. Through subtle auditory incursions, the soundtrack draws attention to gendered divisions of labour. King disrupts the prevailing narrative of the museum, which largely focuses on David Gibson's career as a surveyor, and focuses instead on the roles and thus the expectations of the women of the house, referencing

knitting and mending, cooking, and practicing piano for guests and family members. In doing so, King repositions the primacy of the museum's reliance on visual language and the house museum's privileging of the patriarch. And with this she imparts both a literal and figurative voice to the silenced.



Chapter IV
Site

SARA ANGELUCCI
UPROOT, REROOT

I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography
- to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and
women on buildings. We are communal histories, communal books.

— Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* [17]



Considering the history of the site itself, Sara Angelucci's *Uproot, reroot* transposes the landscape across and between spatial and historic boundaries. In the first part of the project, a Tremaine Map of the County of York (1860) is blown up and adhered to a wall of the upper floor. The map indicates the region's generous farmlands and how the land was neatly parsed into lots of approximately 100 acres. As with Macintosh's project, it is what the map leaves out that becomes vital to unpacking the complexities of the site. The grid does not reveal the laborious efforts of deforesting the region to support the establishment of farms, nor does it indicate habitation before European settlement, nor its disputed sale to the British Crown by the Mississaugas in the 1787/1805 Toronto Purchase. Interrupting the perceived neutrality of the cartographic image, Angelucci intervenes in the map by adding a compendium that details the history of the Toronto Purchase. She explicates such details as the 1986 Mississauga Tribal Claims Council submitting a number of claims (including the Toronto Purchase claim) to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. One of the claims, for instance, asserts that a vast expanse

of land in southern Ontario, including Metropolitan Toronto, had not been properly surrendered to the Crown. And in doing so is able to intimate that "the surveyor, whether consciously or otherwise, replicates not just the 'environment' in some abstract sense but equally the territorial imperatives of a particular political system." [18]

The Tremaine map is part of a vast collection of areal representations of North York. As we move from 1860 to today, the plots in these maps become more densely partitioned, as the land is continuously subdivided to accommodate for rapid population growth. Having transformed from an agricultural hub to a suburban expanse, the area now grows quickly upwards with increasing condo development. While the land is particularly fertile due to deposits left behind by the receding glaciers after the last ice age [19], urban sprawl has replaced much of the area's green space, along with the extensive apple orchards that once occupied the landscape around the house. Angelucci returns the apple tree to Gibson House. Uprooted from her backyard, an apple tree stump looms large against this domestic backdrop [20]. The root's tentacles spread upward

(Previous and left) Sara Angelucci, *Uproot, reroot*, installation documentation by Toni Hafkenscheid

THE TORONTO PURCHASE



HIGHLIGHTS of one of the
greatest land swindles in Canadian history (1)

- 17TH CENTURY. The Mississaugas, a branch of the Ojibwa Indians, occupied lands on the N. Shore of Lake Huron when they first encountered explorers from New France. By the 1700's their territory expanded to include the N. Shore of Lake Ontario.
- 18-19TH CENTURY. Fur trade with the French and English create an increasing reliance on European trade goods, competition for territory, and wars among First Nations people.
- 1765 BRITISH ROYAL PROCLAMATION declares that land for settlement can only be purchased directly from "Indians" by and for the Crown.
- 1787 FIRST TORONTO PURCHASE. What discussions or negotiations took place remain obscure, however within seven years the British realize the document is illegal as it did not describe the boundaries or quantity of land, or name the Chiefs of the bands from whom the surrender was taken. As Lord Dorchester, writes: "proceedings are so informal and irregular as to invalidate and set aside the whole transaction," and that the deed itself was "of no validity or value."
- 1791 NEW SETTLERS ARRIVE FROM LOWER CANADA. The influx of settlers caused great consternation among the Mississaugas as they encroached on fisheries and denied land access. The Mississaugas began to understand that the agreements of the 1780's were not to share land but were outright surrenders. They began to protest to government officials, and on occasion their discontent led to raids on settlers' farms.
- 1797 LAND OWNERSHIP PROBLEMS. Upper Canada administrator Peter Russell faces high tension between settlers and the Mississaugas: "we were exceedingly alarmed on reading the Paragraph which related to the Purchase made at Toronto in 1787, which if more generally known, would probably shake the Tranquillity of many respectable Persons, who have risked nearly their whole Property within its Limits. For should the whole of that Transaction be invalid, as your Excy and Lord Dorchester have judged it to be, the King's right to any Part of the Land between the Rivers Etobicoak & Don, may become very doubtful; and our tenure of the intermediate Space (involving a great many cultivated farms, as well as the Seat of Government) might consequently be at the Mercy of the Messissagues, who, if they were apprized of the Circumstance, might be induced to give trouble with a view of making their own advantages from it."
- 1805 SECOND TORONTO PURCHASE. Russell's proposed solution required the government to conceal the true value of the land, quietly cancel the 1787 transaction, and draft an undisclosed expansion of the 1787 land area to include a surrender parcel of 250,880 acres. The total consideration for the "Indians" consent to the above was 10 shillings (approximately \$60 in today's terms).
- 1986 THE MISSISSAUGA TRIBAL CLAIMS COUNCIL submitted a number of claims, including the Toronto purchase claim, to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The claim in respect to the Toronto Purchase alleged that a vast expanse of land in southern Ontario which includes Metropolitan Toronto, had never been properly surrendered to the Crown. It also alleged that the transactions concerning the purchase, which took place in 1787 and 1805, were tainted by breaches of fiduciary duty owed by the Crown to the Mississauga Nation.
- 2010 MISSISSAUGA CLAIM SETTLEMENT. The federal government paid a landmark settlement of \$145 million to the Mississaugas of New Credit based on estimates of proper land values in 1805, extrapolated to today's dollars.

and outward, reaching between the interstitial spaces of the house. As with the root, the final part of the project offers a restorative gesture. In the found nineteenth-century Willowdale cabinet-card, Angelucci allows nature to reclaim the figure, as the photographed male is now shown being enveloped by the painted forest backdrop, subsumed by bark and twig. *Uproot, reroot* repositions systematized visual morphologies—the map and the portrait—and in doing so recasts standards of representation, allowing the images to reverberate across histories.

For more information visit: aaron.ca/columns/Mississauga_English.pdf



(Left)
Sara Angelucci,
Tremaine Map,
1860, *Addendum*,
29 x 60.66 inch
vinyl print, 2014.

(Right)
Sara Angelucci,
*Willowdale, Forest
with Marsh Wren*,
19 x 25.5 inch
chromogenic
print, 2014



The artists's works resonate deeply, not merely due to an ability to reanimate the past, but because each is able to explore and comment on our present condition. Themes of authenticity, sustainability, land claims and development, and the construction of history subtly lure the stories of Gibson House Museum into the twenty-first century. The artworks further point to the incomplete nature of art and history alike. Culling from one archive to create another kind of archive, the artists tend towards what Hal Foster describes as an "archival impulse." [21] This impulse moves the archive away from the passive and static to a site of negotiation and exchange [22]. By galvanizing the archive, the artists create space to reassess the ways in which the past is formalized within historic spaces. Using the visual language of the present and speculating on possibilities for the future, memories of the distant past are newly exposed, interpreted and remembered.

Gibson House
Museum dining
room, installation
documentation by
Toni Hafkenschied

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Sara Angelucci is a Toronto-based visual artist working in photography, video and audio, and is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Image Arts, Ryerson University. Angelucci's work explores vernacular photography and film analyzing the original context in which these images were made. Her work draws from the history of photography, as well as natural and social histories, transforming found images and repositioning them within the broader cultural context from which they emerge.

Eleanor King exhibits widely, most notably at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Nuit Blanche Toronto, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, and Galleri F15 (Norway). She received a BFA from NSCAD University in 2001 and has participated in residencies in the US and Canada, most recently at Yaddo, The MacDowell Colony, and The Banff Centre. She has received multiple creation grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and Arts Nova Scotia, and was short-listed for the Sobey Art Award in 2012. She plays drums and writes songs in the rock band Wet Denim. Eleanor is represented by Diaz Contemporary, Toronto.

Matt Macintosh is an interdisciplinary artist based in Ramara, Ontario. His practice is indebted mainly to painting and conceptual art traditions and is centred in both religious and secular notions of emancipation. His work explores, among other things, part-whole relationships, protocols for producing disciplinary knowledge, and systematic approaches to abstraction. He is a graduate of the Master of Visual Studies program at the University of Toronto and has exhibited in Canada and the U.S. He is currently the Curator at the Orillia Museum of Art & History.

Robert Hengeveld is an artist whose work explores the boundaries between reality and fiction, and where we find ourselves within that relationship. He completed his MFA at the University of Victoria in 2005 and studied at the Ontario College of Art & Design. He is currently the Artist-in-Residence at the University of Guelph in the School of Environmental Science. His work has been exhibited across Canada and internationally. Past and upcoming exhibitions include The Power Plant (Toronto), Hallwalls Contemporary (Buffalo), MacDonald Stewart (Guelph), EyeLevel Gallery (Halifax), Mercer Union (Toronto), and Mulherin Pollard (NYC).

NOTES

- [1] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6.
- [2] Joseph Cassara, "Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's Memories of the Future," *Asymptote*, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.asymptotejournal.com/article.php?cat=Criticism&id=10&curr_index=0
- [3] Leisl Schilling, "Night Visions," *The New York Times*, October 22, 2009, accessed June 20, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/25/books/review/Schillinger-t.html?pagewanted=all>
- [4] *Ibid*
- [5] The first mayor of Toronto, Upper Canada and leader of the Rebellion
- [6] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" in *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, trans. Jay Miskowiec (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984), 1.
- [7] Christina J. Hodge and Christa M. Beranek, "Dwelling: transforming narratives at historic house museums," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 17 (London: Routledge, 2011), 98.
- [8] J. Hillis Miller, *Others* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Page, qtd in Maria Litwin, *Ceci n'est pas une artiste*, (2011), 15.
- [9] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 5.
- [10] *Ibid*
- [11] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 12.
- [12] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harvest Book, 1990), 9.
- [13] *Ibid*, 7.
- [14] Allen Ginsburg, *The Fall of America: Poems of These States 1965-1971* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1972), 87.

- [15] See Dana Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2011) and C.J. Maloney, *Back to the Land: Arthurdale, FDR's New Deal and the Costs of Economic Planning* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).
- [16] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Making Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 15.
- [17] Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 261.
- [18] J.B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 54.
- [19] Scott Kennedy, *Willowdale: Yesterday's Farms, Today's Legacy* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2013), 11.
- [20] The apple tree had to be removed from Angelucci's yard as it was dying and was not removed for the sole purpose of this exhibition
- [21] Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," in *October*, Vol. 110 (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004): 5, accessed July 27 2014, www.jstor.org/stable/3397555
- [22] *Ibid*.

