

Originating in science fiction, *terraforming* is a term that refers to the alteration of foreign environments in outer space in order to make them suitable to support human life. The term represents an outward horizon for colonialist projects of expansion and hegemony. In addition to political and social encroachment, terraforming can also be seen as a way to describe human encroachment onto the natural world. This exhibition directs attention to the process of terraforming found not only in the physical manipulation of environments, but also in the systems of thought shaped by language and culture that give order to society. These works reposition subjectivities to highlight their entanglement within their environments, and to critique current capitalist and machine-based systems that govern humans' relationship with the land.

Featuring work by **Anna Eyler**, **Kristina Guison**, **Melissa General**, **Safiya Randerera**, and **Trudy Erin Elmore**, *Terraforming* encounters Nature as a medium for creating alternatives to the established socio-economic order. From the physical movement of bodies from one place to another, through the regenerative qualities of fire and water; to expanded virtual landscapes and digital subjects; these artists engage with the elements of nature to alter, transfer, move, and reorganize established social systems or prescribed modes of thinking and acting. In resistance to the naturalization of socio-political hegemonies, these works look to the earth in search of tools for rethinking our histories and futures.

Beginning with an act of recovery, **Melissa General's** video work *Reclamation* taps into the local history of the Toronto Islands to uncover its use by the Anishnaabek as a place for healing. By situating herself between earth and water, General reclaims in the landscape an ancestral relationship that establishes well-being. The rhythmic sound of waves moving against the earth accompanies the artist's gentle and slow-moving gestures as she digs into the sand; unearthing a long and

narrow piece of fabric which trails over her shoulders and cuts through the ground with its bright red colour. Wrapped around her, the cloth becomes an extension of her body and is enveloped and held up by water. As a life-supporting element, the water's flow carries with it a cyclical symbolism of cleansing and rebirth, yet at the same time can be conceptualized as a conduit for history, presencing the passing of time. In this moment, the connection between body and land reclaims a balance between the two, while at the same time acknowledging the impact that colonization has had on both.

The precarious balance between time, body and water finds an echo in the physics of buoyancy at work in **Kristina Guison's** *Displacement*. Based on the design of a paper canoe, Guison's sculpture is a large-scale steel vessel that was intentionally sunk into a lagoon, also in the Toronto Islands. Weathered by a winter under water, this vessel reveals the effects of cold temperatures, ice, snow and other seasonal manifestations on its steel surface. In itself, the canoe represents the earliest type of vessel developed by humankind in recorded history. Its technology enabled the movement of people and cultures across space and time; beginning with indigenous migrations, through early colonial settlements, to what is now the foundation of international commerce and global competitiveness. For example, in Canada the marine transportation industry has a significant role in economic growth;¹ in 2015, the value of waterborne trade was \$205 billion, whilst 1.34 million passengers passed through major Canadian ports.²

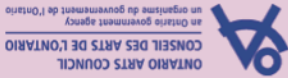
The erosion and displacement of surface materials in this sculpture parallels the displacement of cultures in moving from one place to another, characterizing human expansion through loss. As a symbol of movement, globalization, and the consumption of natural resources in the name of progress, the rust and peel of this metal sculpture also functions as a

reminder of human's fragile existence, ultimately subject to the physics of nature and the passage of time.

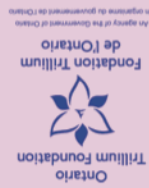
As much as the vessel appears as one of the earliest technologies to support movement and travel, the controlled use of fire has a deeper history in human evolution. From cooking to forging metals and clearing forests for planting, fire emerges as an essential tool that supports our existence. Located in the midst of Toronto's High Park, the endangered 110-acre Black Oak Savanna is what remains of what was once the primary and autochthonous landscape of the area surrounding the Great Lakes.³ As an ecosystem that is always in transition to forest, this particular environment lent itself to hunting and farming, and was the dwelling place of The Huron, the Wendat, the Petun, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River.⁴ The ecosystem was maintained through controlled burns by its inhabitants with a fire that stimulates the seeds and regenerates the soil. This practice disappeared after European colonization, and the surviving savanna was maintained by cattle grazing and aesthetic landscaping. Only recently has the practice of controlled burns been recuperated.⁵

As a three-channel installation, **Safiya Randerera's** *Oak Savanna* witnesses the controlled burning of the High Park Oak Savanna. The work documents the ceremonial nature of the burn, and foregrounds the regenerative power of fire. The videos' slow paced and silent qualities further enhance their meditative aspect, enabling the viewer to commune with the elements. Contrasting the notion of fire as a destructive force, this visually stunning and high resolution imagery reconceives fire as a tool that balances the ecosystem by witnessing and returning to indigenous forestry.

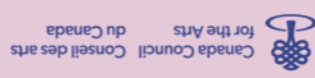
While the domestication of fire supports a balanced relationship between humans and the land, it is also forged as the root of technology, which precedes the machine.



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Trinity Square Video is a space to re-imagine media arts. As a not-for-profit, charitable organization Trinity Square Video aims to meaningfully engage diverse creative voices through its accessible production, post-production, and exhibition support. Trinity Square Video champions an evolving definition of video by presenting challenging contemporary art that inspires its members and audiences to expand their understanding of media art.

www.trinitysquarevideo.com

SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) is the only non-profit artist-run centre in Canada dedicated to supporting South Asian artists. For over two decades, SAVAC has increased the visibility of culturally diverse artists by curating and exhibiting their work, providing mentorship, and facilitating professional development. Focusing on programs that explore issues shaping the experiences of people from the region and its diaspora, SAVAC encourages work that is challenging, experimental, and engaged in critical discussions that offer new perspectives on the contemporary world.

Design: Aliya Pabani

AN EXHIBITION OF MEMBERS' WORK PRESENTED BY
TRINITY SQUARE VIDEO & SOUTH ASIAN VISUAL ARTS CENTRE
06 JULY - 25 AUGUST 2016
CURATOR: MARIA ALEJANDRINA COATES
KRISTINA GUISON
MELISSA GENERAL
ANNA EYLER
SAFIYA RANDERA
TRUDY ERIN ELMORE
401 RICHMOND ST. W.
SUITE 121

cradled in his arms. In relating with the transference of feeling to inanimate objects, Eyler uses the ubiquity of sexual scripts to animate her persona and transgress the idea of landscape as a passive environment, as well as that of the internet as a neutral space. In repurposing these spaces in *Second Life*, Eyler challenges the boundaries between humans, the landscape, and technology, to disturb the ideologies embedded into our real and virtual selves.

Together, the subjective and experiential encounters with the natural elements proposed by these artists reconceptualize the act of terraforming from altering environments that prioritize human existence, to recovering a balance in our relationship with the earth. In doing so, the works deny the patterns of behaviour that establish anthropogenic paradigms based on industry and technology, and instead offer alternative thoughts and actions that intend to support a fluid, regenerative, spiritual, and borderless world.

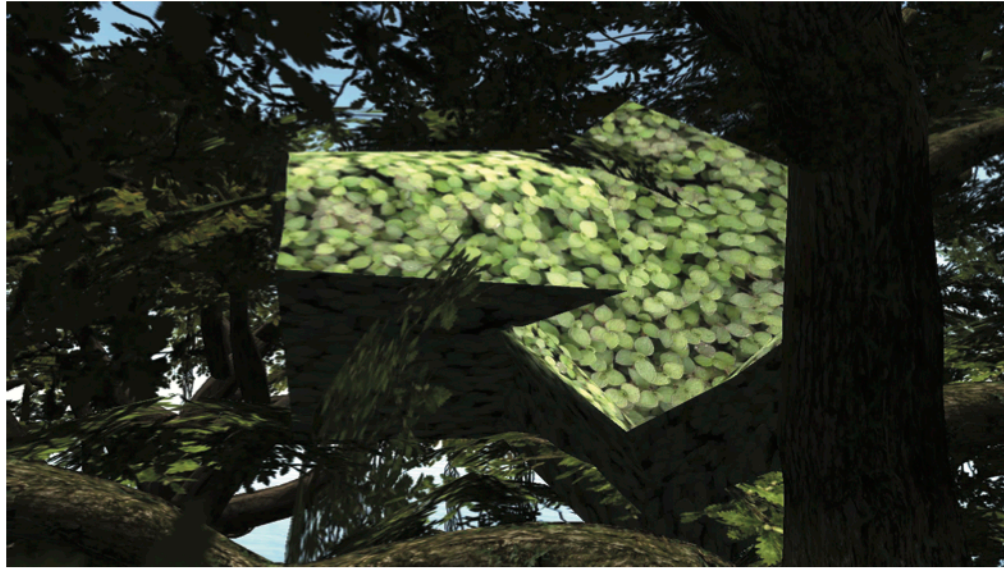
Maria Alejandrina Coates is a Uruguayan born, Toronto-based curator whose practice is focused on creating environments that can challenge, disrupt, and reorganize normative perceptions of reality and cultural identities. She recently served as curator for e-fagia visual and media arts organization, as well as a board member for Gendai Gallery. She co-founded and currently contributes to the community-based sos curatorial collective. Maria received a bachelors degree from the University of British Columbia; and a master's degree in Art History and Curatorial Studies from York University. She is a mother of two and maintains an active curatorial practice in Toronto.

Endnotes

- 1 "Transportation in Canada 2015 — Overview Report", Government of Canada, https://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/policy/2015_TC_Annual_Report_Overview-EN-Accessible.pdf, accessed June 2nd, 2016, Page 15.
- 2 Ibid, Page 17.
- 3 "High Park Nature" last modified on February 05, 2016, <http://www.highparknature.org/wiki/wiki.php?n=habitats.savannahs>, accessed June 2nd, 2016.
- 4 Ayeren Liberona and Natasha Myers in "Becoming Sensor in An Oak Savannah": <https://becomingsensor.com/>, accessed June 6th, 2016
- 5 "High Park Nature", last modified on February 05, 2016. <http://www.highparknature.org/wiki/wiki.php?n=habitats.savannahs>, accessed June 2nd, 2016
- 6 Trudy Erin Elmore, Artist Statement.

References

- Trudy Erin Elmore, Artist Statement
- Anna Eyler, Artist Statement
- Melissa General, Artist Statement
- Kristina Guison, Artist Statement
- Safiya Randerera, Artist Statement



ANNA EYLER

How to Explain Love to a Tape Measure
Machinima
2016
Canada
9 min, 48 sec.

Anna Eyler is a multidisciplinary artist based in Montréal. In her work, Eyler reflects on contemporary ideas of the sacred. Her media-based installations question strict distinctions between interior/exterior, nature/technology, absence/presence, and cyclicity/linearity. According to theorist Jane Bennett, contemporary culture is widely understood to be devoid of a sense of "enchantment," which is an experience of being "struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday." Through the subversion of familiar forms and objects, Eyler aims to reinvigorate these sites of wonder within daily life.

Eyler holds a BA in Religious Studies and Art History from Carleton University (2010) and a BFA from the University of Ottawa (2015). Recent awards include the Governor General's Academic Medal (2010), the Jacqueline Fry Scholarship (2014), and the Artengine New Media Award for her graduate exhibition (2015). Her work will be shown in the upcoming two-person exhibition *beyond différence*, on now at Ace Art Inc. in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



SAFIYA RANDERA

Oak Savanna
Digital video
2016
Canada
Three channel installation
20 min, 39 sec.

Melissa General is from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. She is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design and completed a Masters of Fine Arts degree at York University. Working in photography, installation and video, concepts involving memory, history, land and her Indigenous identity have been a focus in her practice. Her work has been exhibited at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Harbourfront Centre, Art Gallery of Peterborough, Gallery 101, Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography and has been included in the 2016 Contemporary Native Art Biennial in Montreal.



MELISSA GENERAL

Reclamation
Digital video
2014
Canada
6 min, 27 sec.

Trudy Erin Elmore is an emerging, new media artist based in Toronto, Canada. Her work deals with issues of mortality, technological evolution and the paradoxical human condition relating to and existing in a hyper consumer culture. Although her practice is largely digital, she remains weary of the 'new way of seeing'—mediated almost entirely by electronic screens—and of technological evolutions' contingency upon systems of wealth and resource extraction.

Elmore participated in OCAD University's Nomadic Residency Program with Ryan Gander (2016) and Pedro Reyes (2015). She was awarded the Summer Student Artists in Residency at Trinity Square Video for her selected screening at Video Fever (2016). Elmore has recently showed work in the 2016 Toronto Images Festival and in the 2016 Luminato Festival.



KRISTINA GUISON

Displacement
22-gauge mild steel metal sheets, chain and lock, digital video
2016
Video documentation by Renelyn Quinicot
Image courtesy of artist

Kristina Guison is a Manila-born, Filipino-Canadian artist based in Toronto, a graduate of OCAD U for BFA major in Sculpture/Installation and a minor in Integrated Media from OCAD U in 2016. Her practice derives from pathways of socio-political interactions and intersections between pre-colonial and contemporary cultural identities in the heavily globalized 21st century. She combines social practice with fabrication-based processes that are research-based, performative, culturally immersive, collaborative and generative.

Her body of work for the past recent years has existed in different forms, ranging from experimental research projects, gallery shows and artist residencies across Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Andalucía, Cleveland, Toronto and The Philippines.



TRUDY ERIN ELMORE

Stranded Assets
Digital video
2016
Canada
10 min, 50 sec.
Sound design: Trudy Erin Elmore & Steve Niilo

Safiya Rander is a multi-disciplinary artist primarily working within the fields of painting, experimental video and creative documentary. Rander has received international acclaim for her films *My Father, the Terrorist?* (2010), *My Girl 2012* (2011), *Health Status Survey* (2000), and *Jangri* (1998). She has over a decade of experience as an independent director, producer and editor, addressing diverse topics such as disability, feminism and multiculturalism.

In 2012 Rander broadened the scope of her visual art practice by incorporating the spiritual practices of her ancestors as well as learning from the Shipbo. Establishing a commitment to these traditions has led to an indelible relationship with plant medicine. Rander has since been initiated into the medicine way and works as a channeller and energy healer. Her current thematic focus in the visual arts is an exploration of how we materialize the unseen through a connection to the plants and other spirits.