

FEELING TIME AND CHANGE THROUGH THE LENTICULAR

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Dedication

For Migueltzinta

Abstract

Through the juxtaposition of image pairs, visual artists and designers use flipping-style lenticular film to convey complex relationships and affects. Solo visual art exhibitions *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* at the Art Gallery of Alberta (2021) and *Don't Dream It, Be It* at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (2024) took the lenticular as both craft material and capacious analogy for affects of time and change. At both exhibitions' center, a series of eight institutional portraits commissioned in elementary and high school were combined with contemporary equivalents. Visual effects and movements resulting from lenticular lens misalignment offered a shimmering diachronic perspective on trajectories of self. Meanwhile, conspicuously crafted clocks failed to keep time. The exhibitions' playful archive of objects and feelings offered a generative and critical stage on which to consider social trajectories of gender transition and embodiment via visual metaphor. This support paper documents and contextualizes the artist's ongoing research-creation practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“The then that disrupts the tyranny of the now is both past and future.”

—José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 29

The task assigned to me—apparently by myself—during this degree was multifold and only revealed itself slowly, indirectly, and even more dramatically. My program’s first task was to create space for my transition. This was even a semi-conscious desire, but please don’t look too closely. To make possible this my brain performed a ‘hard reboot’ via a severe MS attack at the end of my first semester in December 2017. As I discussed in my comprehensive exams, this primarily cognitive attack smashed my brain like it was built from legos—which I was eventually able to reassemble using a subtly different and novel pattern. This wasn’t a tragedy - the work supported by this paper could not exist without the insights that directly resulted from those experiences of shifts in my senses, thinking, embodiment, relationships and self. My most recent artistic research is not ‘about’ disability in the way it might be said to be ‘about’ gender transition, but nevertheless is deeply and semi-visibly informed by it (if you know where to look and how to see). This bifold task of conscious rearrangement of my self meant that I have been challenged continuously and intensely.

The core intellectual task during this PhD has been to explore via my ongoing research-creation practice the expressive capacities of the lenticular in multiple physical, conceptual, and metaphorical senses. Throughout this support paper, I follow the lenticular around as a central analogy for discussing my own research-creation work alongside its wider social context and concerns. I discuss how other contemporary artists and designers have used flipping-style lenticular material to convey ideas and affects. I explore unique visual qualities which result from the physical shape of a lenticular image’s many parallel lenses, putting a particular focus on

ghosting. I consider the visual and textual movements that shift with lenticular film's alignment or misalignment with its underlying images. I argue that the form of lenticular images allows them to be superb carriers of conceptual juxtapositions, and that the lenticular embodies the potential to think in and with playful conceptual shapes. Even when lenticularity is not the direct topic, its shape is still always present in the text, serving as an analogy for social structure, and an influence and model for the support paper's interleaved arrangement and sometimes-erratic movements.

Another ongoing task during this degree was to explore new directions and opportunities in my artistic practice. To this end, the two exhibitions discussed here were two among several. Before I began, I imagined myself moving toward public art and commissions. Although it is reasonable to believe I could be successful in that space, the desire is no longer with me. I have since concluded that I no longer have the administrative and political patience for an art practice whose 'making' demands, first, largely outsourced production and second, collaboration with institutions that take themselves for granted. This degree and the funding I received early on afforded a very privileged space to think and make things, as well as engage in extra-academic work that was nevertheless critical to intellectual and personal growth. It was a pool in which to dog-paddle in circles, to reference Berlant's description of the impasse.

"The impasse is a space of time lived without a narrative genre. Adaptation to it usually involves a gesture or undramatic action that points to and revises an unresolved situation. ... An impasse is a holding station that doesn't hold securely but opens out into anxiety, that dogpaddling around a space whose contours remain obscure. An impasse is decompositional—in the unbound temporality of the stretch of time, it marks a delay that demands activity." (Berlant 199)

Although I sometimes semi-playfully question the original wisdom of my decision to begin a PhD, I don't regret anything—except my regrets.

The task of this support paper is to document, contextualize, and reflect on the body of research-creation work I developed during and for my PhD studies, and to selectively draw out and expand on these works' most important themes. To best do this, this support paper makes liberal use of literary writing techniques which in their collective indirection suggest a trajectory. Buoyed by the positive reception to "On Not Running" during my comprehensive exams, this support paper takes a similar approach to structure.

The first chapter of this support paper introduces lenticular images in general, and lays out the methodological context for this exploration of lenticularity alongside transness in my work. The second chapter investigates select work by other contemporary visual artists. It draws examples from select projects which enlist lenticular images in representing time and its associated affects. An in-depth discussion of Mary Longman's haunting series of decolonial lenticulars, *Transposing Perspectives*, gives a sense of lenticulars' capacity for conveying nuanced, pre-linguistic senses of memory and the unspeakable present. Discussions of George Legrady's dreamily anachronistic scenes and Elizabeth Belliveau's time-frozen still-lives present unique takes on lenticular time. Meanwhile, Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn's performative lenticulars demonstrate a different sort of simultaneity.

The third and longest chapter documents the first of two major solo exhibitions related to my PhD studies, *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* (2021). This chapter juxtaposes transcripts of events and oral interviews with my responses after the fact; it uses these transcripts as scaffolding (in a construction sense rather than a pedagogical one). After a more descriptive discussion of projects, the second section of chapter three builds on a transcript from a public walkthrough event produced by the Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) for *Time Warp*. It alternates between my spoken words—which explain relatively straightforward, factual aspects of Time

Warp to a nonspecialist audience—and my interposed academic voice from several years later that offers more nuanced interpretations and theorizations. Chapter four launches from those dialogues as well as those during another very different walkthrough of *Time Warp* hosted by Edmonton drag queen Lourdes the Merry Virgin. It slides down a highly abridged version of Lourdes’s tour to draw out my thoughts and perspective on some of the exhibition’s themes - gender, memory and nostalgia.

Chapter five discusses subsequent developments surrounding the exhibition’s much larger second iteration in 2024 at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (SAAG), *Don’t Dream It, Be It*. Chapter five follows a similar structure to its older sibling, first documenting new components separately and then in their new context. This chapter concludes with a private walkthrough with Migueltzinta Solís conducted during and for his own process of writing about *Don’t Dream It, Be It* for a review. It laces the transcript of my much more familiar conversation with Miguel into description and situation of new work from the SAAG show. Each of these transcripts interleaves multiple versions of my voice—present with relatively recent past, academic with personal feelings and memories. Many speaking voices—each my own—team up to tell the stories of these artworks to different audiences that each have unique needs and relationships with me and the context. Different layers of my current and past voices clamber over each other to be heard. Some are officially sanctioned to meet the needs of their sponsoring institution, while others feel more intimate and provisional. Like the images in the series *Never Change*, this technique presents different versions of my narrating ‘self’ simultaneously.

In conclusion, I review my understanding of the multiple physical and metaphorical senses of the lenticular as they have developed through my work. Returning to what I’ve learned about lenticular capacities through producing this body of creative research, I discuss the underlying

aesthetic logic of the lenticular that makes it such a generative visual analogy for change and the passage of time. Drawing from thinkers in visual art and cultural studies including Tara McPherson, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and Deleuze and Guattari, I argue for an understanding of *the lenticular* first as a kind of visual object which makes use of a parallel lens array, and second as a conceptual shape informed by lenticular film's striated juxtapositions.

Note: In everyday life I use the name Harley and he/him pronouns. However, because this support paper explicitly concerns itself with gender transition, time, and retrospection and their representation via visual metaphor, you will notice that I will refer to myself variously as either he or she, Harley or Megan as feels appropriate in a given context. It is my personal preference in most cases to refer to myself by whichever name and pronoun I used at the time in question.

“Lenticular photographs juxtapose elementary school photos of the artist with contemporary portraits; glitchy clocks shimmer and stutter amid nostalgic low craft media in this immersive installation work” (summary sentence used in Art Gallery of Alberta promotional material (“Time Warp Catalogue”))

Introducing Lenticular Images

Lenticular images use a transparent plastic sheet comprised of many narrow half-cylindrical lenses (or “lenticules”). These lenses can refract a different offset image to each eye (tricking the brain into thinking an image is three-dimensional) or quickly roll from image to image, creating the illusion of motion or visual transition. Lenticulars were popularized in the West in the middle of the 20th century. Most audiences have seen lenticular printing before, but may not have paid attention to it because it is so common on mass-produced items. Children’s toys and their packaging, promotional fast food drink cups, movie posters, religious iconography, tacky psychedelic art, and titillating nudes are lenticular images’ typical domain.

Although there are several related methods of achieving similar visual effects, my research focuses exclusively on the use of clear plastic material with parallel ridges to produce flipping and animated lenticular images. Artwork that engages related historical techniques (such as accordion painting), glass, and Fresnel lenses is outside its scope.

The word lenticular is sometimes used broadly to describe physical objects (such as clouds and galaxies) with a similar ‘lentil-like’ shape; nothing in this dissertation should be taken to apply to these non-image lenticulars. Colloquially, lenticulars are sometimes called by terms that describe their visual actions: ‘flickers’ or ‘wiggle pictures’, even in academic literature, lenticulars that include an aspect of visual depth are sometimes mistaken for holograms. Put simply, there are two main overlapping genres of lenticular image, according to what kind of trick their plastic overlay performs: 1) 3D (which create the illusion of dimensionality); and 2) flip/animated (which create the illusion of change or motion). Most lenticular film is optimized

for only one of these effects, although it is common to see commercially printed images that attempt both. Because multiple images become a part of a single composite visual frame, their juxtapositions suggest relationships between images, like the frames of a digital animated gif. Commonly, flipping-style lenticulars show multiple states of an object or scene sequentially, suggesting the passage of time. Other flipping lenticulars composite divergent images, suggesting a simultaneity or instrumentality. Is there one image or more than one? Ghostly remnants peek through the image most in focus, and sneak in at the corners — giving away that the image that’s currently visible could shimmer away, shifting again before your eyes.

Lenticular images that use a plastic sheet overlay have one stripe of each composited image under each lens. In the case of simple two-image flips using sheet optimized for animation, there are two image stripes under each half-cylindrical lens, or *lenticule*. 3D images use a lenticular sheet with lenticules that have a more oblique curve, and require many more source images; nine images is common, but sometimes as many as thirty depending on the lens pitch. The lenticular prints I make by hand at the university are sandwiches: a digital print on DisplayTrans backlight media, a layer of optically clear adhesive, and the lens sheet on top, precisely aligned. Most modern, mass-produced lenticular products are made by printing directly on the flat, coated reverse side of a plastic lenticular sheet.

The majority of contemporary academic research directly regarding plastic lenticular film and images falls into three general areas. First, research is concentrated in the technical areas of material science engineering and optics, particularly regarding the production and refinement of the lenticular-like overlays used in some 3D screens; research in this area has mostly been useful for the introductory background and contextualizations some authors provide. My interest in lenticular material lies exclusively in how the capabilities of already-available material is

mobilized by end users in the present day, specifically artists and designers. In this context, technical innovation is less relevant than how and under what circumstances lenticulars are used, and what those uses communicate.

Second and more relevantly, media historians have written accounts of the development of pre-digital cinematic technologies and their objects. France-based photography historian Kim Timby's *3D and Animated Lenticular Photography: Between Utopia and Entertainment* (2015) comprehensively traces the birth and adoption of stereoscopic technologies in regard to studio portraiture and advertising in Paris. Timby connects innovation and the desire for entertainment, locating lenticulars as a product of technological modernity (Baetens, 2016); elsewhere she discusses lenticular film as an emergent technology for colour film photography during the first quarter of the 20th century (Timby "Colour Photography" 193). Beginning in the 1940s, those same lenticular screens allowed for stereoscopic film projection without glasses — aka 3D (Johnson 184). Historian and theorist of material culture Merideth Bak has analyzed the uses and effects of optical toys for pedagogical purposes. Relatedly, collectors of vintage objects outside of academia formed an irreplaceable source. Though the lenticular is not usually examined by its collectors as a form-in-itself, in the name of authenticity and valuation collectors often provide detailed and reliable accounts of the form and subject matter of historical toys. Objects which incorporate lenticular film have been preserved by collectors of historical toys and novelties; for example, the mid-20th century 'flicker rings', campaign buttons, and other objects produced by the company Vari-View are extremely collectable and well-documented because of their perceived value.

Third, artists, curators of visual and media art, as well as a few scholars in visual cultural studies have written about lenticular images, but typically in specific and limited contexts. These have been indispensable, and are explored in subsequent chapters.

Why study the lenticular when other more contemporary techniques provide similar results? 3D effects are used widely in film and television, using polarized glasses or parallax barriers. Gifs are ubiquitous. Harry Potter-style backwards/forwards animation of photographs can be done for free in seconds on any smartphone. Lenticular images fascinate precisely because they aren't contemporary; they represent a disused analog technology that became possible with the cheap industrial manufacture of plastics. Mackenzie Wark asks how viewers come to interpret perception; in his essay for the exhibition 'Super Vision', he offers one explanation: nowadays, visual perception that seems natural is "not first natural and then technically extended and enhanced ... 'natural' perception is an aftereffect of the screen" (Wark et al. 160). But that wasn't always the case. Lenticulars and other optical toys aren't playback devices; they create their effects for live viewers, interacting with their bare eyes in real time (Bak 4). How does this anachronistic technology provide not just a visual but a temporal and affective filter through which to consider not just the past, but the present and future?

Below and throughout, I draw out select examples of commercial lenticular objects in order to give the reader a sense of how lenticulars were/are used in popular culture, and how ideas about lenticular images' capabilities circulate.

Lenticulars As Novelties

Paradoxically, contemporary lenticulars are designed to both attract attention and be easily discardable. Because of their plastic construction, playful affect, and typical content, lenticulars came to be regarded in the popular imagination primarily as 'novelty' items. Novelties are small

commercial items whose primary purpose is amusement, attractive because of their humor, uniqueness, or newness ('novelty'), or more practical items with similarly fanciful elements. As a marketing tool, the lenticular's boundaries are wide and blurry, overlapping with toys aimed at adults (Newgarden 10). Gag objects, executive desk toys, devices that demonstrate scientific principles, magic tricks and gimmicks, small plastic objects that fill piñatas, bubblegum from 7-11 that comes enclosed in a plastic shoe, and the penis-shaped lollipops at a vanilla sex shop are examples of the category's expansiveness. Souvenirs and promotional swag items often share many of these qualities. In his visual history of the novelty industry, comic artist Mark Newgarden ironically describes an imagined buyer of lenticular 'Dazzle Eyes' glasses which bat illustrated eyelashes (Newgarden 75):

"The point-of-purchase copy, 'Personality Specs..... the life of the party!' is particularly vague, suggesting either that an individual with no personality could acquire one herein for pronto party deployment, or, worse still, that this inanimate object itself has inherently more life and personality than any aspect of the sort of parties the unfortunate consumer could ever hope to attend." (Newgarden 74)

The most classic, lasting novelties evince a sense of nostalgia and mildly transgressive but juvenile humour. As a style in which to frame an object, the novelty is distinctly old-fashioned. Timby credits animated lenticulars' "spontaneous appeal" with their commercial success and ubiquity in France in the mid-1960s:

"[Lenticulars'] popular charm was perfectly summed up by the woman who purchased the postcard of a tuba-playing girl with animated lenticular eyes...In 1965 she sent it to a young acquaintance off doing his military service: 'Dear Francis, I'm sending you a card to entertain you because the eyes change when you move it,' she wrote on the back, adding: 'It's kind of fun'." (Timby 3D 181)

Writing specifically of holograms, Johnson reminds that public opinion regarding the many 3D mediums popularized after the second world war (including anaglyphic red/blue comics and

the View-Master) followed a typical flight path: “Most of these applications evinced a trajectory of popular acclaim, declining interest, niche novelty, and a transformation for the children’s market” (Johnson 401).

Commonly, lenticular film is engaged to persuade customers to keep a disposable object a little bit longer by making it special. In other words, an included lenticular can turn an everyday object into a ‘premium’. For example, *TV Guide* was an inexpensive newsprint weekly digest once widely available at newsstands and grocery counters in the United States. For the release of sequel the *Matrix Revolutions*, the October 25-31, 2003 issue of TV Guide featured a series of three lenticular covers (“Secrets of the Matrix”). Round-cornered 4”x4” lenticular cards were glued to each front, with lenses running vertically to enable changing via a left-right tilt. The series features clever applications of both dimensionality and flipping to animate well-chosen stills from the film. In one of the covers, Neo (Keanu Reeves) holds up a hand, surrounded by levitating rocks which form a three-dimensional cloud around him. In the second lenticular—its flipping a remarkable facsimile of the film’s action—dual memetic copies of Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) trade punches back and forth in front of a sea of others. In the third image, Neo faces us motionless in the red wingback armchair, dressed entirely in black. With just a tilt to the right, Neo’s face becomes Trinity’s (Carrie-Anne Moss).

In 2016, Canada Post released a set of two lenticular postage stamps to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Star Trek’s original series run. The two collectable \$5 stamps are inset in a 4”x6” postcard. A large red planet looms in the background, clouds slowly swirling, as the Enterprise swoops forward under the title ‘Star Trek’ in gold. As stated on the card’s reverse, each stamp is a separate vignette from the episode “The City on the Edge of Forever”. On the left, in the transporter room, Scotty dematerializes an away party; Kirk (William Shatner), Spock

(Leonard Nimoy), and McCoy (DeForest Kelley) disappear into sparkles, reappearing below among ruins on a rocky planet. On the right, Kirk and Spock appear to jump out of an ambiguous dark-ringed hollow, then look around with concern.

“The City on the Edge of Forever” is the penultimate episode of the series’ first season, one of the most popular and iconic of its run. In it, McCoy becomes delusional and paranoid after overdosing on an experimental drug; he flees to the transporter room and beams himself to the surface of an unknown nearby planet. When his colleagues search for him, they find the ruined planet inhabited by the Guardian of Forever, who watches over a portal to all of time and space. McCoy’s friends follow the amnesiac, still-paranoid doctor through the portal (pictured in the left-hand stamp) and into the past—1930s New York City. The episode was written by Harlan Ellison.

As stamps, the Star Trek lenticular scenes circulate through space on mail while depicting, circularly through animation, their spacefaring subjects. I find these stamps’ use of lenticular animation clever and deeply satisfying. Their material and form are incredibly appropriate to their subject matter. The stamps were designed by Vancouver-based design firm Signals. They make use of lenticular capacities for both animation and 3D, depicting subjects moving through space and time while doing the same thing themselves. Moreover, lenticulars’ magical-seeming analog form seems well-suited for the anniversary of a television show from the same era in which lenticular images were popularized. To contemporary observers, lenticulars embody the nostalgia of Star Trek’s relentlessly optimistic retro-futurism.

Lenticular images demand the presence of a viewer’s physical body to which their accordion-like striations shift in relation. Their ever-shifting resolution into one of more of their interlaced source images is a temporary state produced by the angle of their viewing.

Lenticulars' grainy images, even when fully visible, hold the promise of transforming into something else with the slightest movement. If, physically and textually, the images move, they move temporally as well. The lenticular's unstable images feel located simultaneously in the past, present, and future. They are haunted by the ghosts of what they are not, of what they might become, and of what they are about to become. They flicker, unstable. Initially composed from two or more images, the lenticular prints become more than two: a visual and temporal array. Instead of merely reconciling opposites (each defined by what they are not), the lenticulars' image binaries have become inextricably conjoined. Not only do lenticulars' flickering images themselves move, but they prompt the viewer to move.

Even when still, kinetic lenticular images are literally moving. Most lenticular images are small enough to be held; they are tilted, inclined, panned, and posed. Their light, flexible materials are tactile objects that can be held in the hand, worn on the wrist, drunk from, affixed to things, and generally do anything you might expect a thin sheet of plastic to do. And what is a more contemporary metaphor than peering through a fuzzy layer of plastic to see the dissembled image underneath? I argue that lenticular images can convey affect and other conceptual mechanisms that precede or evade language – including experiences of memory, change, and the passage of time.

Research Creation Methodology

My research-creation integrates embodied knowledge from experiences of disability and transition with an archive of critical, poststructuralist, and queer affect theory and visual art's malleable material methods. A primary goal of my research has often been one that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council calls "knowledge mobilization": making complex ideas accessible to a wider audience by tracing paths between theory and its practical applications. My work attempts to make perceptible the hegemonic processes that structure social relations. In other words, although I have often chosen to communicate using visual media in addition to text, I understand my research as performing a kind of translation.

As a methodological approach, research-creation asserts that creative practice in its multivalent forms can be a technique for generating insights and new knowledge. Since I returned to school ten years ago to pursue my MFA, research-creation and related research processes centered on art production framed by Chapman & Sawchuck in 2012 have made great gains in their perceived legitimacy. This slow-fast process of academic legitimation for cyclic habits of mutually-arising thinking & making & feeling & thinking emerged with similar benefits and drawbacks to other liberalizing visibilities.

This artistic research's theoretical framework is informed by queer and trans theories of affect which privilege the embodied, experiential nature of knowledge. In this sense, 'queer', here, becomes both a condition of contra-normative social possibility and an orientation toward desire. Spinoza's notion of affect concerns the capacity to *affect* and *be affected by*; in other words, the ability to change, transform, and to spur transformations (Ruddick 25). For Brian Massumi, affect is a visceral experience of intensity and potential that resides just outside the boundary of conscious thought. Affect is a not-yet-feeling, existing outside language and

signification (Massumi 85-93). In his column in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, critical theorist Brad Evans echoes Massumi, asserting that it is through affect that the political becomes the *felt*.

For my practice, the physical processes of creating work are frequently of secondary importance to concurrent systemic ones. Making art as a fundamentally social activity, not in that I am actively collaborating with others to produce an object, but in that others will interact with it via looking, feeling, and thinking. The social world in its entirety is the context for my research-creation practice. For me, my art practice feels most rewarding in its capacity as mediator of the social: Maybe someone will look at my work (or maybe they won't). Maybe they will catch a bus to go see it. They will walk into a building they may have never been inside before and eye the donation stand, or maybe they will share a surname with one engraved onto a plaque. They will decide whether they have enough energy to take the stairs up to the gallery... or maybe they will use the elevator. They will decide how to move around my work, and look at who else is looking and how. They will worry about how they are dressed because they will take a selfie in front of it. They will follow a possibly-instructional map on the gallery wall. Maybe their friends and family will be there, or maybe they will be alone. Maybe they will move their face up close to a gap in a frame and sniff, trying to catch a whiff of a smell that reminds them of another time. They will award the work an exhibition, a grant, or a degree. They will remember it suddenly when they are handed a cup at the movie theater.

Reframing Past Artistic Research

Interactive text-based games like installation *Wordgames with Friends* (2013) animated history and art for broad, all-ages audiences. *Super Art Activity Fun Book: Saskatchewan Edition* (2014), which received funding from the Saskatchewan Arts Board in 2012, reimagined classic

children's game books to convey surprising stories and critically inflected facts about visual art in Saskatchewan from 1960-2014. Informed by children's and "low" craft, early work evolved in its representation of Canadian contemporary artists and cultural institutions. For example, in the series *Friends of Friends* (2007-12), I needlepointed photographic portraits of people I had never met, but felt like I knew, through friends' stories and art community gossip. Though *Friends'* colourful, intricate portraits asserted group membership of both maker and subject, the stories which had originally informed them remained secret, figuratively sewn up. *Art Party's* (2012-14) cheeky queer insinuation went one step further; its candy-coloured, pixelated portraits of queer performance artists was unabashedly suggestive. This early portrait work explored the role of informal, feminized communicative styles in processes of socialization into a professional community.

These playful approaches speak to both public and academic audiences. Artwork emerging from my materially diverse research practice has been united by its humorous, colourful, cheeky tone, and a firm grounding in critical theory. Using visually familiar, nostalgic styles encourages audiences to explore and play, while soothing the sting that comes from critiquing institutions and canon. Throughout my practice I have used a diverse range of mostly synthetic media at the intersection of craft, photography, and public design; recently this has included digital photography and video, lenticular imaging, fused beads and other plastics, adhesive vinyl, games, text, and institutions themselves.

For example, in 2013, I produced for the Art Gallery of Alberta a project titled *Now You See It*, a word search puzzle hiding the names of 280 artists with work in their permanent collection. Shiny gold adhesive vinyl letters wrapped the walls of Manning Hall, their largest and most public-facing rental space, spanning 90 feet in width and reaching 9 feet high. Manning Hall is a

grand foyer—one of the first things visitors see, a gathering place for tour groups, a place for bored spouses to sit while their partner browses the gift shop, and a popular rental venue for weddings and upscale receptions. Its swooping silver cladding is instantly recognizable, and a popular location for photography. This word search puzzle was as a game, but more importantly, a glittering yet easy-to-ignore pattern-like backdrop for events in the space. *Now You See It*'s title referenced both the actions of searching and discovery performed by visitors interacting with the piece, and the revelation of the sociocultural cachet that in part makes Manning Hall such a popular location for events. What could have been more attractive to engaged couples and Instagram models looking to share in the gallery's class-based cachet? *Now You See It* was influenced by Istvan Kantor's 2005 "donation" to the under-construction Art Gallery of Ontario, *Invisible Gift*, in which Kantor poured vials of his own blood into wet concrete pillars. In my practice, the 'art world' has been both an audience and a subject of analysis and critique.

Other work using similar formal strategies has been concerned with urban development and its social effects. In the fall of 2014, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery commissioned "*Downtown Lethbridge*"; this public project inserted punctuation marks into the facades of central Lethbridge buildings, literalizing the task of 'reading architecture'. When the City of Calgary invited me to develop a temporary two-dimensional work for a traffic-calming revitalization project on a residential street, I used candy-coloured snap-in 'put-in cups' to draw text on a chain-link fence; "where we're going, we don't need roads". It's the line spoken by actor Christopher Lloyd as 'Doc' Brown, as he flicks down silver sunglasses and flies off in his upgraded DeLorean at the end of *Back to the Future* (1985), teasing a sequel. This line from the popular film evokes both nostalgia and a thrilling sense of forward-looking possibility. At another level, when juxtaposed with street-level construction the artwork seems to comment on the construction being performed

by the municipal department responsible for traffic infrastructure. Or is it intended as a provocative political statement about cars? This project, like many of my others, is somewhat ambiguous on purpose to leave room for curiosity and interpretation.

My Master of Fine Arts degree program, undertaken here at the University of Lethbridge from 2014-2016, helped refine my understanding of the circulation of public emotions. My ambitious thesis project, “Assume the Position: Play’s Mediation of Institutional Anxiety” was awarded both the Faculty of Fine Arts Graduate Medal of Merit and the Governor General’s Gold Medal in the spring of 2017. *Assume the Position* used visual art’s flexible methodologies to consider the complex structural, affective, socioeconomic, and spatial relations between visual artists and the cultural institutions with which they are imbricated. Adopting a transdisciplinary approach that drew from visual art, cultural studies, and sociology, my practice-based research explored anxiety as a physical and temporal approach, as well as a significant relation-to-objects under neoliberalism. Materially diverse projects privileged playful approaches and new attitudes toward temporality as strategies for mediating these contemporary affects. Projects cohered by their strategic complication of vision and time, and emphasized approachability through engaging humour, play, and the saturated, visual language of childhood.

During my M.F.A. I began collecting vintage lenticulars. Initially attracted by nostalgia, I created a series of lenticular photographs of inexpertly handmade 1/12-scale miniatures and toys that together depicted what I thought of as “professional artistic disasters”: wooden crates bursting, things getting smashed and generally flying out of control. Via Sarah Ahmed, this series helped refine (and to some extent exorcise) my research’s relationship with the circulation of emotion.

“So so much of my artwork is inspired by pop culture -- well naming my artwork in particular is inspired by pop culture. The show that I have up right now in the

AGA, Let's Do the Time Warp Again, is named after the Rocky Horror Picture Show --and for the kind of movement that people do when they're looking at the lenticulars in this show. They kind of sway back and forth like 'it's just a step to the left and a jump to the right'... people actually do that kind of movement when they're looking at my work, and also I like that people would be holding that kind of expectation in their head when they walk into my show."
--Harley Morman, speaking in "Fun Moments with Harley Morman Part 1"

Autotheory

If research-creation practice uses art as material, tool and/or framework for thinking, autotheory does the same with personal experience. Autotheory describes a style of fiction or nonfiction writing that integrates self-aware autobiography with theory. As a genre, it is related to but distinct from autoethnography. In her recent *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (2021), Lauren Fournier frames the autotheoretical impulse as a contemporary literary mode broadly influenced by mid-20th century feminist art and thought. Autotheory "takes one's embodied experiences as a primary text or raw material through which to theorize, process, and reiterate" (Fournier "Sick Women" 646). As an aesthetic genre, it integrates disparate stylistic and disciplinary techniques; for its practitioners, it provides nothing less than a means of speaking a self into being. The mobilization of the personal toward political ends has long been a defining epistemological habit in feminist thought, but even as media has changed since the late 1960s, these autotheoretical habits have morphed and retained currency because the root structural and discursive conditions of their production remain in place. Working as it does here with the most personal of archives incorporating personal narrative into theorization is intuitive.

In her preface to her decade-spanning essay collection *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, feminist philosopher and literary scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak returns to Derrida: In his preface to his own essay collection *Psyché*, he claims to search among his

writings of over a decade for *théorie distraite*. Spivak translates this as “distracted theory” (Spivak *Aesthetic* ix) or “inattentive theory” (Spivak *Outside* 308). Distracted theory emerges while one is not paying attention; because it only becomes evident after the fact, hunting for it demands a return to one’s old writing, to one’s past, in a search for connections that may or may not emerge into something more. For Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* was itself a return to an archive in the form of four decades of collected essays, lectures, and other texts not published elsewhere. Spivak’s discursive orientation toward critical intimacy—a reminder that you can and should critique from a position inside or close to your object, rather than assuming a rhetorical position outside it—famously upends the Western notion of objective distance (Paulson). But she moves one step beyond that here, applying a constructive deconstructive impulse to her own archive. Although her topic isn’t otherwise personal, we might read her literary technique of hunting for new themes inside her own voice as a kind of autotheorizing.

In grade 5 I began keeping detailed personal diaries and paper records. With a raw and urgent sense of not being believed, drawings and personal notes written in Polari-like code were interspersed among school assignments, photographs, and news clippings about drag queens interleaved with test results and health insurance paperwork. I’ve been carrying seven paper boxes full of childhood documentation with me since I left home, in the assumption that its testimony would eventually come in handy. And they have and continue to be useful, but obliquely and regarding contents other than I had expected. (As an example, the school portraits used in *Never Change* were extracted from these archives.) *Archive fever*. For maximum opacity, these coded archives were organized not by date but according to relationships among the people they concerned. It was to these I returned when transition finally demanded the task.

I genuinely can't recall the first time I saw the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. It must have been on late night cable after my parents were asleep. What I know from looking through old notebooks is that *Rocky Horror* appeared suddenly in my code-written diaries during the summer between grades 8 and 9, and that I was immediately obsessed. Where boys wore snuff can circles into their tight denim, my back pockets bulged with another protective talisman: hand-copied lyrics to "Rose Tint My World". As a queer youth in the mid-1990's, I felt as if I kept them close to me that *something* would *happen*. Not a physical event like a car accident, more like the 'event' of a sudden becoming, the 'event' of being safe and prepared for anything. Through its words, something would be enabled that I would be ready for. I integrated *Rocky Horror* into the organic layers of references that today make the diaries challenging to decipher. Born in 1979, at 14 I wasn't old enough to remember (or directly 'get') most of *Rocky Horror*'s references, but that didn't feel necessary because I knew in my gut it was for me. It shamelessly reassembles dozens of literary and film references from the past, calling back to an archive spanning the 19th and 20th centuries.

Here, *Rocky Horror* serves as model and cypher. Originally written and produced for the stage in the early 1970s by playwright Richard O'Brien, performance scholar Cameron Crookston characterizes the film as "constructed as a self-conscious pastiche of multiple cultural moments and queer coded pieces of popular culture; Gothic literature, classic Hollywood film, science fiction B movies, glam rock, and drag" (Crookston 234). Richardson and Smith write that the film is best understood in its sociocultural context as a musical—a notoriously heterosexual genre. *Rocky Horror* not only validated extraheterosexual activities and characters by showing them on screen, but "interpellated the spectator into an identification with that very queerness" (Richardson and Smith 26). They argue that it was unique in the history of musical

cinema for how it delighted in audience involvement. Attending a screening of the film is an interactive experience, where audiences can take on playing the roles of the characters. One is not just allowed but *expected* to conduct oneself in a deviant way, through dressing up, talking back, and throwing things at the screen. And *Rocky Horror* is *meta*, with the character of the narrator encouraging the audience to be aware of itself watching a possibly-cautionary tale unfold. Richardson and Smith note that the film's "ironic representation of the omniscient, extradiegetic narrator evokes a Brechtian distancing effect while, paradoxically, also facilitating greater identification with the narrative" (26). The film opened the spaceship-castle door to a collective, ritualized audience misbehaviour that made *Rocky Horror* an archetypal cult movie and a nostalgic pop culture staple.

In the 49 years since the film's release in 1975, cultural expectations regarding media representations of gender and sexual diversity have changed radically, while *Rocky Horror* has not. As liberal Western expectations marched forward, depictions that were once read as potentially transgressive entered the mainstream and then quickly slipped far, far behind. An emergent mainstream of trans discourse and identity politics—for legitimate reasons—is happy to leave once-common media tropes about cross-dressing and trans women's monstrosity for the history books. From this contemporary perspective, the actions of protagonist Frank N. Furter (Tim Curry) make him a deranged, cannibalistic rapist and murderer (Sandel), while the film's seeming citation of an archive of stereotypes appears to further entrench them. While one might easily argue that this is the thinnest of surface readings, it is more interesting to consider the circumstances under which this strain of discourse came about.

According to trans media studies scholar Cael Keegan, in order to be considered 'good', representations of transness need to be "authentic, progressive, and diverse" (Keegan "In Praise

of the Bad Trans Object"). Good trans media casts trans people to play trans characters who are the right kind of visible. But in a sociocultural context where increased visibility leads to increased scrutiny and possibly real (not fictional) violence, Keegan asks us to further consider visibility's stakes. He notes that *Rocky Horror* reverses the story of Dr. Frankenstein's monster—so beloved among generations of trans scholars as a metaphor for medicalized transition and its affects.

"We witness the resulting mayhem through the perspective of the chaste, heteronormative couple—Brad Majors (Barry Bostwick) and Janet Weiss (Susan Sarandon)—who fall under Dr. Frank N. Furter's thrall and are "transduced" into gender non-normativity, queerness, and sexual liberation. Rocky Horror thus reverses the process of gender transition, producing trans bodies (Brad and Janet become copies of Frank N. Furter) from cisgender ones." (Keegan "In Praise of the Bad Trans Object" para. 13)

In the early summer of 2018, several weeks after confessing my yearning for back hair, a friend advised me to make a mood board. Common among design disciplines, architecture and theatre, mood boards use collage to help students refine and visually communicate feelings, affects, and styles via palettes of references. Grumpy about a task that made me feel old, and still too skeptical to believe that I would find a physician to help me, I humoured him anyway. My first tentative attempt was more like a collage of disidentifications: It was easy for me to imagine what I was not and didn't want to be, but imagining what I might plausibly become was hard. Sedgwick reminds us that identifying *as* necessarily includes multiple layered processes of identifying *with* as well as *against* (Sedgwick *Epistemology of the Closet* 61). Under contemporary neoliberalism, when identity is understood as only as a matter of one's individual choice to identify (Amin "We Are All Nonbinary" 111), gender becomes an aesthetic category as much as a description of the social relations of power.

From an explicitly queer perspective, Muñoz advances the concept of *disidentification* in his text of the same name. Elaborated more generally elsewhere by Fanon and Butler, Muñoz concentrates on the specific ways queer people of colour scramble, reuse, and recycle cultural texts to create coded representations from cultural leftovers. Assemblage has been a long-time queer habit. Like racoons, we sift through garbage (Oliviera). Arriving in the dark to sweep up a party's scraps—and then declaring them queer—is the contemporary queer culture. The odds and ends, the disregarded scraps, the available but overlooked, the outdated, the plentiful but tacky form a shimmering raft of molecular detritus.

In *The Architectural Review* (2021), Crawford recalls an aborted encounter with collage during one summer's architecture studio intensive at Columbia University. Crawford mines the work of four trans visual artists in search of advice for his younger self. "One could argue that transgender life is collage par excellence, that trans people exemplify the ethos of sampling," he suggests, before reaching to art historian David Getsy for collage's long history of being used to visualize hybridity, where "the given or the found can be used as raw material for transformation." (Crawford "Trans Formations: Control and Freedom through Collage"; Getsy and Simmons 51).

In Eliza Steinbock's *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change*, they forward a kindred thesis. In the introduction, they begin with film's identificatory power. Steinbock argues that "cinematic cuts and sutures between the visual and the spoken, between frames, and between genres are delinking and relinking processes of transfiguration" hold potential for trans people make and remake themselves (Steinbock 2). In other words, Steinbock understands both film's images and matter as material that can be cut up and crafted, collage style. Cinema also offers, for them, a mode of mediating disjunctions between affects

that are seen, felt, and embodied (Steinbock 2). They suggest and elaborate the concept of *shimmering* to describe the visual and affective qualities of change on screen, and the emergent forms of trans bodies and identities in their analogization. In his contribution to the Keywords section published as the first issue of TSQ, Kadji Amin offers the insight: “Autobiography is a diachronic narrative form that retrospectively bestows an illusion of teleological progression upon the aleatory chaos of life experience” (Amin “Temporality” 219). For Steinbock, film—animated with individual-yet-sequential frames—promises just this.

What were the most attractive, desirable objects from your childhood? Are they as you remember them, glimmering iridescent rainbows? Or are they just as we need them to be? In organizing the bodies of work for these two exhibitions, I began with materials and misremembered memories from my childhood and reconsidered them through the lenticular’s many senses. This support paper reflects the process of searching, contextualizing, and re-annotating one’s own archive that mirrors the one trans people are socioculturally obliged to engage in. This task is associated with the neoliberal obligation to account for oneself by and providing convincing evidence of one’s ‘new’ gender via the archive. But unexpected perspectives and possibilities can emerge via these retellings. New kinds of sense can be made when one commits to excavation. I’m particularly interested in thinking with the lenticular as an affective technique for thinking through cognitive dissonance with productive disjunction. Due to the light-bending capacity of their lensed form, lenticular images have a unique ability to visually depict multiple layers at the same time. The recombinant images can be both sequential and/or simultaneous, lenticular images present themselves as a rich visual analogy for thinking about reconciling perspectives. And eventually our selves become coherent through the mirrors held up to us by other people: we see ourselves as other people see us. With the lenticular, the

formal provides a model-toward-becoming more open and potentially generative than a simple mirror. By flipping between personal, social and institutional framings, juxtaposing times and diverging paths, one might come to recognize what one stumbles across.

Chapter 2: Lenticular Images in Motion

*“It's just a jump to the left
And then a step to the right
Put your hands on your hips
You bring your knees in tight
But it's the pelvic thrust
That really drives you insane
Let's do the Time Warp again
Let's do the Time Warp again” (The Time Warp”)*

In recollections before his death in 1976, Surrealist photographer Man Ray told apocryphal anecdotes about the genesis of one of his most well-known works, a metronome with a photograph of an eye attached to its swinging arm. The original model existed in the artist's studio around 1923:

“I had a metronome in my place which I set going when I painted – like the pianist sets it going when he starts playing – its ticking noise regulated the frequency of and number of my brushstrokes. The faster it went, the faster I painted; and if the metronome stopped then I knew I had painted too long. I was repeating myself, my painting was no good and I would destroy it... A painter needs an audience, so I also clipped the photo of an eye to the metronome's swinging arm to create the illusion of being watched as I painted. One day I did not accept the metronome's verdict, the silence was unbearable and since I had called it with certain premonition ‘Object of Destruction’, I smashed it to pieces” (Man Ray as quoted in Schwarz 205-206)

In the first iteration, the eye was a photograph of his lover, photojournalist Lee Miller. According to art historian David Campany, versions of the metronome were repeatedly made, destroyed, and remade over several decades by both Man Ray and those from whom he commissioned multiples. In 1970 and again in 1974, editions were commissioned which replaced the ‘cutout’ photo with a lenticular version of Miller's eye. The animated lenticular photograph appears to blink and flicker in time with the metronome's beat. Possibly the most famous ‘high art’ use of a lenticular image, *Perpetual Motif*'s novel use of the material references and

reinforces the object's absurdity. *Perpetual Motif* and its object siblings are timekeepers in the most literal way.

Incidentally, while looking through photographs, I was delighted to run across an accordion-style lenticular photograph that juxtaposes two portraits of Man Ray's close friend Marcel Duchamp. In the first portrait taken in 1920, he appears as his gender-swapped alter ego Rose Sélavy. Rose, framed to the left, still holds our gaze with dark smoky eyes and crisp lipstick. Hands with chunky rings gently frame the fur collar of her coat, which is pulled over her jaw high enough to meet the corrugated brim of her hat. In the second photo, taken 4 years later, Duchamp is framed in 3/4 facing the viewer's right; he is 37 years old. He is partially covered with thick shaving foam which makes the hair on his head stand up in a wide V above his forehead. Foam covers his clean-shaven jaw and spills onto his rumpled shirt collar as gentle eyes look directly at the viewer. Man Ray, who often photographed his friend in costume, assembled the old prints inside a Plexiglas box frame in 1970, two years after Duchamp died.

Today there are still a not-insignificant number of artists working with lenticular film and related techniques. Abstract and non-representational art in a purely formal tradition passed down from kinetic and op-art, fall outside the scope of this analysis, as do non-conceptual popular arts that use lenticular film for visual effects. Here I am most concerned with contemporary conceptual artwork and its antecedents that use the lenticular flip to analogize time. Below, I briefly discuss four projects as well as concepts broadly related to personal and cultural identity.

Mary Longman, Transposing Perspectives

Saulteaux artist Mary Longman's lenticular prints in *Competing War Histories: Devastation of the Indies* and *Hills Never Lie: Lebret Graveyard* offer visually distinct critical perspectives

on colonization which suggest a reconsideration of the temporality and presentness of historical violence. Longman's mobilization of the lenticular presents an ambiguous challenge to both neoliberal imperatives of visibility and the anticolonial tactic of opacity. Through their depiction of the aftermath of both settler and extractive colonialism, these works use the form of the lenticular to illustrate the emotional force of violence and grief following colonialism.

Mary Longman (Aski-Piyewiskwew) was born in what is now Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan in 1964. A member of Gordon First Nation, Longman attended Emily Carr Institute of Art as an undergraduate before obtaining an MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1993. In 2006 she completed a PhD in Art Education at the University of Victoria. Specializing in contemporary Aboriginal art, her dissertation was titled "Challenging the Ideology of Representation: Contemporary First Nations Art in Canada". Since 2007, she has taught art history and studio sculpture at the University of Saskatchewan. Longman's prints were part of a visually diverse lenticular series created during 2008-9 for an exhibition at Saskatoon's Mendel Art Gallery. The prints' solo exhibition, titled *Transposing Perspectives*, was curated by Jen Budney. Budney later edited the show's print catalogue of the same name. *Transposing Perspectives* included eight flipping-style lenticular prints. Among them were composite self-portraits and formal remnants of settler colonial systems, including Canadian currency and stamps. All were printed commercially at high resolution, on fine-textured, high-LPI film using a flatbed digital offset press, and were composited from two source images (Longman 6-7). Below I focus on two of the exhibition's historical images.

Competing War Histories: Devastation of the Indies juxtaposes two illustrations, each titled in deep blood red near the top. 'JAMESTOWN MASSACRE 1622' and 'DEVASTATION OF THE INDIES 1552' slide in and out of view. The awkwardness of their italic font (clearly not

intended for display in all caps) seems to presage the ‘bad’ typography of vaporwave and mid-1990s nostalgia. Their colour palettes are dominated by warm browns and greens, with muted blue and pops of red. Their faded colour is reminiscent of lithographed illustration plates in a history book, though the exhibited version was 40”x44”.

The first of the two source drawings, ‘Jamestown Massacre’ depicts a scene of abject chaos and violence. The drawing lacks a center object of focus; instead, we see a roiling ocean of struggling bodies. In the foreground, figures with mohawks, red loincloths and huge knives wrestle other figures to the ground. Attackers pull at western clothing, dragging people away from a set table outside a wooden structure. In the lower right, a labourer is attacked from behind as he wields his own axe. Smoke rises from chimneys. Men’s hats litter the grass. Behind them, a woman in a blue dress cowers. In the distance, boats full of figures head toward shore; inset at the ocean’s horizon, a settler woman clutches a small boy to her side, surveying the damage. This is a scene of ambush—indiscriminate and amoral murder.

This image is based on a 1628 woodcut by Matthäus Merian, an illustration on the conflict that took place in Jamestown, Virginia (Longman 11). In March of 1622, after decades of aggression and theft by starving British colonists, Powhatan leadership was fed up and staged a surprise attack on settlements along what is now the James River. This incident was quickly mobilized by the British, decontextualized and labelled a massacre as part of a larger strategy to reassert dominance over their young colony. Merian’s woodcut, produced years after the fact in Europe, formed part of that effort.

“[The British] articulated their outrage and crystallized what they found troubling about their own status as victims. In the process of deciding their plans for revenge, they also outlined the rights they believed they possessed as injured parties and would-be conquerors, including, in the case of Virginia, the right to murder enemies, dispossess their land and appropriate their labour” (Games 505-508)

The second image of the pair, ‘Devastation of the Indies 1552’, pictures a scene of even more intense violence than its partner. On the right, the bodies of thirteen men and women hang by their necks from a gallows constructed from two forked trees and a crossbar log. They are naked and in loincloths, hands tied behind their backs. Their brown bodies appear in shadow, though the rest of the scene does not. Below their feet, a pale figure crouches to stoke a lit fire. To his left, another man in identical blue breeches, red overshirt, and a dynamic stance holds a small brown boy by his ankles, preparing to swing him into a nearby monolith. Behind them, other uniformed men run through a break in the overhanging trees with what appear to be clubs. Behind those, a tall ship waits in a bay. This killing is depicted as messy (though not bloody), but probably premeditated. This image is based on a copperplate engraving by Theodor de Bry, which was an illustration in Bartolomé de las Casas’ *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, published in 1552. Longman has colourized the engraving and made it look like a collage, as apparent through the obvious cut-out-ness and misplaced feel of its originally black-and-white elements.

Longman’s ‘artistic license’ points to the images’ value in terms of affective, rather than technical, accuracy. Neither of the original artists were present in the locations they depicted. Both Merian and de Bry worked in Frankfurt. De Bry’s image, too, can be considered a kind of nationalist propaganda; his depiction of the extremes of violence against people in what are now the Americas may have led to sentiment that was anti-Spanish as much as pro-indigenous. De Bry’s images, in combination with Las Casas’ text, provided an important rationale for the British doctrine of manifest destiny (Kanellos). Together, the pair of source images represent different sides of an argument for the legitimacy and necessity of violence.

In both scenes, the figure of the child underscores the atrocity and injustice of what is occurring. If colonial narratives associate white settler women with vulnerability and the need for protection (Loomba 164), then children come to represent hope for the reproductive future of a community. Children and the ideal of their innocence become instrumentalized in debates about ideology; innocence must be defended at all cost (Vallgård et al. 16). Yet the son clinging to his mother in ‘Jamestown Massacre’ is a stoic witness to the violence below him; he serves as a proxy for the viewer’s own numb shock. In ‘Devastation of the Indies’, the boy about to be smashed into a rock is a focus for the viewer’s horror. When overlaid, the two scenes create a wall of almost cartoonish atrocity. It is as if Longman intends the two illustrations to figuratively wrestle each other, but there is no clear winner. *Competing War Histories*’ lenticularity could be taken as metaphor for “back-and-forth” progression of the conflicts between vulnerable early settlers and indigenous nations. However, there is little evidence that conflicts between indigenous people and settlers were either inevitable or evenly matched. Rather, Longman’s juxtaposition points to indigenous people’s continued resistance, agency, and personhood.

Longman writes in a didactic panel that accompanied *Competing War Histories*: *Devastation of the Indies*: “Canadian history textbooks are excellent examples of colonial propaganda; they are tools for conditioning members of society at a young age” (Longman 10). Similarly, her *Hills Never Lie: Lebret Graveyard* is the transposition of two photographs of the graveyard outside of Lebret, Saskatchewan. Lebret is located along Mission Lake in the Qu’Appelle Valley, about 70 kilometers northeast of Regina. The photographs are taken from the same viewpoint, making their transition considerably smoother than the messy, chaotic transition of *Devastation of the Indies*. These photos, too, have been colorized; both images are sepia-

toned, but are painted with brighter, less muddy colours than its counterpart above. This flipping lenticular print is 28"x44". *Hills Never Lie* was purchased by the Canada Council Art Bank.

In the first image, a figure wrapped in a blanket stands in front of a cluster of small structures that look like tiny houses. Most do not even reach the figure's shoulder. The structure closest to the camera is constructed from finished dark wooden planks that form the four walls and slanted roof. It is longer than it is tall. On the short end that faces the camera, trim has been affixed to the planks in a door-like shape. A white cross leans haphazardly against it. Someone has painted two lines of letters in white above the 'door':

1885 / LABRET, SASKATCHEWAN

On the roof at the front end, a simple wood cross has been attached, sticking into the sky and increasing the height by half. At least a dozen small structures are visible in the photograph's partial view. Many use similar construction with variations in colour and trim. Some are quite fancy, with turrets and spires that tower over their neighbours. Others are more modest, more like today's domestic backyard sheds or children's treehouses. The structures sit in a large yard of equal parts dirt and trampled, overgrown prairie grass. Behind them more single crosses sprout, disorderly. These are grave houses.

The figure looking at the camera appears to be a middle-aged man with long, wavy brown hair. His blanket is brown with thick red trim. It has thick bright green stripes hugged by thin yellow stripes. Close to the camera, the yard is bounded on the left by a white picket fence. Further out, the grass dissolves into a field, and finally into hills. Dominating the top third of the photo, the hills have been colourized green; they are the only colourized part except for the man's blanket. Dark and ominous clouds linger over the left half of the sky, obscuring the sunlight.

This image was based on a photograph taken by O.B. Buell in 1885. It was later published in Edward Cavell's book, *Sometimes a Great Nation, A Photo Album of Canada, 1850-1925* (1984), which is where the artist first encountered it and became fascinated. She writes "There was something strangely familiar, which I couldn't pinpoint, until I realized that this was near where I was born ... I had visited this graveyard on a few occasions, next to the Sacred Heart Church" (Longman 31). The identity of the photo's subject is unknown, but the artist believes he bears a strong resemblance to Chief Big Bear.

In its partner photo, another figure stands on a lawn. This one is well-manicured around flat and standing white stone headstones. Marked graves are scattered loosely here and there, singly and in small clusters. A thick trimmed hedge delineates the border of the graveyard. Several trees grow now throughout, obscuring the view of the hills. Directly behind the hedge a road is implied by the presence of a house on the left. The house is a low bungalow that matches the flat landscape it crouches in. The air looks dry and dusty. A figure stands in precisely the same location as her historical twin, recognizable as Longman herself. Her thick braids fall in front of her shoulders, which are wrapped in a traditional green, red, yellow, and black on white striped Hudson's Bay blanket. Behind everything, green hills.

This second photograph was taken by Longman in 2008. In the composited image, it is difficult to tell which features belong to each image. Likewise, it is not immediately apparent which image is the archival one, although modern houses give the newer one away. The way Longman has colourized both images makes them approximately equivalent in visual weight. To contemporary eyes, their sepia tone gives both a sheen of age. The sense of where the images sit in time appears to have been ambiguated by their colourization.

Like *Competing War Histories*, this image is also cluttered with death—if more subtly. The practice of building grave houses was both spiritual and practical. They served as symbolic resting places for those who had passed on, also provided protection from wild animals and livestock that might dig up graves (Longman 31). But more remarkable than its fullness are its absences. Gone are the tiny houses that once unmistakably marked it as a living space for the dead. The epidemics, warfare, ethnic cleansing, and residential schools that led to the death of so many have also disappeared from view, but are still affectively present in their absence. Due to inadequate record-keeping, it is impossible to be sure who was buried in the Lebret cemetery, or precisely where individual graves are. The cemetery is adjacent to the Sacred Heart Catholic church, next to what was once one of the largest residential schools in Canada. The school opened in 1884, a year after the original photo was taken. Still, these absences are deafening; they haunt the cemetery and the hills that overlook it. Again, Longman is more interested in affect than technical detail: “While absent of accurate details, the hills still hold the truth of this particular place and time” (Longman 32). Historian Jonathan Crary reminds us that the increased emphasis on vision during the late 19th century—as embodied in the pre-cinematic optical toys which were precursors to modern lenticular images—was foundational to the empiricist ideologies that rationalized colonization (Crary 15). Longman has used lenticulars’ repetitious visual slide, in which images become discernable only to disappear again, an analogy consider her own personal relation to memory and place. Longman’s memories and the land’s memories collapse into each other. And as Dales and Samur noted in their review of *Transposing Perspectives*, “the viewer experiences the images flipping back and forth in these artworks, Aboriginal representations begin to emerge from under the shadow of the colonial master narrative” (para. 4).

Longman's commercial Saskatoon gallery Art Placement still sells smaller handheld versions of several of the prints from *Transposing Perspectives*. These affordable postcard-sized versions can be tilted, inclined, panned, and posed. Here, a viewer gains the ability to shift images to suit themselves, becoming active and complicit in meaning-making in an even more overt way than in a larger wall-based version.

I saw *Transposing Perspectives* in person at the Mendel Art Gallery years ago when I lived in Saskatoon. These works remain wildly memorable to me years later, as the first contemporary art I had seen using lenticular material, and as hauntingly clever political communication.

Longman's work was a direct inspiration for how and what I tried to convey through my own first attempts at lenticular images. At the time, Longman's show was scandalously unpopular among artist-audiences who read its graphic directness as an unsophisticated anachronism. In contrast to the relatively traditional bronze sculpture and public works she was already known for, at its opening *Transposing Perspectives* was critiqued as being both didactic and gimmicky. At one level, such critiques are ignorant of the long history of contemporary indigenous art that critically disengages with Western expectations to favour a 'de-skilled' style that can appear childlike. In this, critiques that would sever the political from the aesthetic are transparently racist and not a subject of concern. Martineau and Ritskes remind us that Indigenous art forms are indistinguishable from political forms. They advocate for refusal as an important political strategy. Specifically, the refusal of visibility—a sort of protective opacity, an intentional obscuration of the clarity on which neoliberalism's pervasive surveillance depends. This is a sentiment you can hear echoed and feel reflected by many artists and other thinkers from marginalized backgrounds. Indigenous art “contributes to decolonization by disrupting colonialism's linear ordering of the world and its conditioning of possibility” (Martineau and

Ritskes 5). More relevantly, I argue that *Transposing Perspectives*' novel use of popular material forms is what makes it both meaningful and broadly accessible.

The ostensible gimmickiness of lenticulars lends a sense of playfulness inside which their solemn content becomes somewhat buffered. Longman's mobilization of a 'fun' form makes the images widely palatable. Lenticular images' playful affect is one of their most consistent and enduring qualities, and Longman uses this playfulness of form to disarm viewers before hitting us with ugly truths. Instead of only reconciling binary opposites, her lenticulars blossom into an array as images slide in and out of focus, in and out of presence. Juxtaposed images become conjoined in a dance of layered, flickering repetition. Graves disappear and then reappear again, only to disappear once more. This lenticular time moves in a zig-zag, rolling over itself forwards and backwards, over and over. Their repetition becomes reminiscent of the emotional movements explored by theorists of grief and post-traumatic stress. Remembering, for Fanon, becomes re-membering during the painful process of "a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha xxxv).

In *Hills Never Lie* this ghosting becomes more than an optic artifact or philosophical metaphor. If to 'haunt' is to habitually frequent a place, then home is always already haunted (Bhanji 159). Combined, *Hills Never Lie*'s dual source photos become a shimmering, unstable multiplicity, always blending and recombining in resistance to being seen in isolation. Visual artifacts that 'ghost' through become the ghosts of the dead. Jackson 2Bears, in *Mythologies of an Undead Indian*, discusses haunting's relationship to repetition in Derrida:

"one never encounters a specter, and therefore one is never only possessed by 'some ghost', but rather by a multiplicity of ghosts and revenants, apparitions and spirits. Haunting means, therefore, to be spectralized by always 'more than one specter.' ... Hyper-phantomality, like the simulacra of the simulacra, is about the multiplication of ghosts, the endless series of the re-apparition of specters in a

series that radiates outward as phantasmic projections. Thus, for Derrida, repetition becomes the very condition of a hauntology” (2Bears 149)

Transposing Perspectives remains the only lenticular series Longman has produced. Their playful lenticular form animates Longman’s challenging anti-colonial content, suggesting dynamic and nuanced stances of simultaneous adoption and refusal. Purposively rather than ineptly didactic, *Transposing Perspectives* uses lenticulars as a decolonial teaching tool – one with an interesting and important relationship to neoliberal colonial imperatives toward visibility and transparency.

George Legrady, *Refraction*

George Legrady was born in Budapest but raised in Montreal; since the early 1970s, Legrady has been known for novel and technically complex documentary media work. He is Distinguished Professor in the Media Arts & Technology program at UC-Santa Barbara, where he directs the Experimental Visualization Lab. His innovations in digital photographic processing, combined with an interest in socio-historical narrative led to a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2016.

Legrady’s 2011 series *Refraction* is a departure from the obviously technological (Ollman). In it, Legrady dug into his own photographic archive to revisit a set of cinematic black and white photographs shot at the 1972 Hungarian Ball in Montreal, while Legrady was still an undergraduate studying visual anthropology at Goddard. The exhibition catalog produced by ‘Edward Cella Art+Architecture’ contains ample documentation of the original photographs as well as mockups of overlaid stills it calls “simulations” of the artist’s lenticular “compositions” (Solomon-Godeau 3). Each of Legrady’s eight lenticulars combines three source photos, for a

total of 24—seemingly a reference to the standard cinematic frame rate of 24 frames per second which creates cinema’s foundational illusion of motion.

Attendees, chefs and serving staff are *Refraction*’s subjects. White-tied partygoers mingle in a swag-draped banquet hall; ornately decorated food is piled high in silver chafing dishes and circulated on trays. Legrady captures quiet moments amid bustle, flirty glances, faceless crowds, bartenders with arms motion-blurred. Besequined young women with high updos awkwardly hold the arms of their teenage dates. Legrady was a participant-observer here.

In comparison to Longman’s deeply specific historical series, Legrady’s work takes an very different approach to illustrating the past. To a casual viewer’s first glance, the photos’ time is not apparent. I am reminded of the Gold Ballroom scene in *The Shining* where the ghosts of many pasts blur together in a similar but even more ornate space. Art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau seems to agree. In her catalogue essay, Solomon-Godeau writes “Like a clock stopped in media res, the Hungarian Ball is now the space of ghosts”. Her essay continues, working within cinema discourse to elaborate a temporal affect she calls “nonspecific anteriority” that is just far enough from the present to feel like the past without seeming like any particular one.

Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn, *Untitled (Entitled)*

Vietnamese-Canadian artist Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn’s 2021 exhibition *Untitled (Entitled)* at Stockholm’s contemporary art space Bonniers Konsthall engaged lenticular material in service of anticolonial politics and sentiment. In developing *Untitled (Entitled)*, between 2019-2021 Nguyễn interviewed bicultural cultural workers; these workers often use two names, one in their first language and another “western homologue” (Medina and Nguyễn 25). The resulting lenticular prints were an effort to express those stories; text-based lenticular prints juxtaposed

workers' names in both languages. Nguyễn's double-sided prints were mounted inside wheeled armatures rimmed with thick chrome, and activated by dancers who alternately glided, slipped, and wrestled with the sail-like frames to audio composited from beginner language learning texts (Bonniers Konsthall). The lenticular images themselves juxtapose text in sans-serif Latin type with characters that seem, to a monolingual Westerner, unreadably 'other'. The images' main transition appears to be between the two text forms, but each side of the flip also contains colour variations. The images' flatness and relative minimalism contributes to notable ghosting of the off-image in Nguyễn's professional printing, noticeable as gradients in areas of flat colour.

The lenticular text images are suspended inside frames shaped like a square, circle, and many isosceles triangles; they use their own transparency as illumination. The frames are intentionally reminiscent of restroom grab-bars: sturdy and comfortably hand-shaped grips which one can use to steady and lift oneself. Indeed, similar custom-fabricated grab bar devices adorn the walls of the gallery, going far beyond what would typically be required for physical accessibility. *Untitled (Entitled)*'s support bars are attached at atypical angles and heights appropriate for access by a standing person, rather than someone using a chair. Against the gallery's pastel lavender paint the bars look both institutional and decorative.

Nguyễn's conceptual work investigates the ideological construction of multicultural policy in liberal settler-colonial societies, and its unintended outcomes (Medina and Nguyễn 25). With *Untitled (Entitled)*, she draws our attention to Westernizing naming practices among migrant and diasporic communities.

"To facilitate my integration into Canadian society, and coinciding with the beginning of my education, my parents gave me a French-sounding name: Jacqueline. Three generations in my family had already been to French school and were accustomed to French culture due to the colonization of Vietnam, but I never thought that having Jacqueline, instead of Hoàng, as my given name was something

remarkable. It, however, performed as a linguistic proxy and facilitated my teachers' daily roll call performance." (Medina and Nguyễn 26)

In Nguyễn's anecdote, Westernization of naming practices functions as a mono-directional accessibility device which allows an authority figure to avoid pronouncing an unfamiliar name, ostensibly preserving a delicate veneer of authority.

In its activation at Bonniers Konsthall, three dancers move among the frames and bars. All have light olive/tan skin and long curly brown hair; they are dressed in street clothes of monochromatic periwinkle, mint and baby pink; they wear matching eyeliner, white masks and white PEVA foam clogs (a style favoured by both nurses and orthotic-wearers for its supportive comfort). The dancers slowly walk the length of the gallery dragging their feet before moving to a frame. Slippery on rotating casters, they appear to provide little resistance via friction as the dancers waltz them through positions which show off their transitions. The frames spin easily into and through placements around the audience members watching tentatively from the edges. I feel both disappointed and relieved that the dancers interact only with the frames and not more acrobatically with the grip bars. The audience, though, intersperses itself with the bars; leaning and half-sitting on their inviting solidity (Nguyễn Vimeo).

While I find myself ambivalent about *Untitled (Entitled)*'s analogization of accessible infrastructure, I am significantly less unsure about the engineered scarcity which sometimes pits dis/ability against other marginalized positions. Even though the most developed part of the exhibition feels like the lenticulars' structural frames rather than the composite images themselves, Nguyễn's conceptual lenticular work stands as another affecting example of lenticular plastic film being mobilized in service of illustrating colonialism's double binds.

Elisabeth Belliveau, *Gift*

Recently, Edmonton-based settler artist Elisabeth Belliveau began making lenticular photographs as an extension of her time-based practices of stop motion animation and time-lapse video. Belliveau was born in Antigonish, NS, received her BFA in Sculpture from Calgary's AU Arts and an MFA from Concordia in 2009; she currently teaches drawing at MacEwan University, where she is also the chair. In 2020 her multimedia installation *Gift* was part of the group exhibition *even the birds are walking* curated by Noor Bhangu at Latitude 53.

At Latitude 53, *Gift* encompassed a projection of a silent time-lapse animation loop, five lenticular prints assembled as a box, and the narrow table on which the box sat (Belliveau "Gift"). In the projection, collections of organic, crafted, and industrially-produced objects are carefully arranged as still lifes in Slurpee cup vases. A list of the items in its first of three complex scenes reveals its curated diversity. "Slurpee cup, carnation, roses, tansy, pink cup from dentist office, coral, wheat, thistle, cheesecake cafe box, Orange Stake Flag" (Belliveau *Gift* personal website). In Belliveau's video—almost imperceptibly—leaves and petals curl and wheat's fuzzy beards waggle. The items' haphazard arrangement is belied by their movement: this isn't a stationary video of a messy bouquet, it's a time-lapse video of a still life's quiet disintegration.

The lenticular images are drawn from the animation's second scene: "Chrysanthemums in yogurt container, with concave mirror, cheesecake café box, Mokuba silk ribbon, printed cloth from Iwaki" (Belliveau *Gift* personal website). Five unframed lenticular prints are assembled as a rectangular box with four sides and a top. The box is similarly sized to its subject, and one can imagine it as a kind of simulacra holding the same space. As one physically moves around the box sitting on its L-shaped table, a viewer's perspective on the flowers doesn't change—spindly

blossoms continue to nod in the same direction from all sides. Instead, moving around the box results in a temporal change in the flowers rather than a physical one. Yellow and orange chrysanthemums in an Olympic yogurt container move between luscious full bloom and drooping.

The box's photographs are blurry from heavy ghosting between 3-image flips; the flowers' past and present states always show through, if unclearly. They seem forever caught in a between-state of partial disintegration. Commonly, photographic lenticular images document their subject from precise angles, only modifying either spatial perspective as in 3D effects, or time. *Gift's* lenticular photos do not line up neatly and appear more like snapshots than the typical precisely calibrated documentation that many commercial lenticular scenes rely on. The 'sloppy' camera movement echoes the messy drooping of the flowers as they slowly collapse. This additional distortion resulting from camera movement contributes a semi-attentive, unreal quality to the images that is almost like remembering a dream.

While the chrysanthemums wither, the non-organic objects in the photos also shift slightly with them. On the left, a white cloth with small black dots remains motionless, serving to emphasize the movement of a blue organza ribbon as the flower head onto which it is tied slumps. At the lower right, a black and white striped rectangle in the images' lower left provides a reference point, as does a small convex mirror above the bouquet's left shoulder. The scene's banal domesticity leads me to speculate about which choices were made intentionally and which resulted from chance or were an outcome of the structure of Belliveau's process. At first looking only at the lenticular source images, it seemed plausible that as the flowers sagged toward the right side of the composition, she shifted the bouquet's position (at some time between the first

and second photographs) to keep it at a similar place in the frame. In fact, in the stop-motion video you can watch exactly this happen (Belliveau "Gift" Vimeo).

Lenticular prints are already more tactile and physically demanding than most images. By reproducing the lenticular prints as the sides of a cube, they become present in three dimensions. Despite her art taking form in images, according to Musselwhite, Belliveau's practice relies on being in the presence of objects (Musselwhite). *Gift* and her other animation trade squarely in the recognizable 'aesthetic' of contemporary minimalism, already a heavily gendered, classed, and culturally white style.

Gift logically follows from Belliveau's animation process and is an interesting use of lenticular media to directly portray the passage of time via its effects. Later in 2020, Belliveau showed more work resulting from this process at Toronto's Gallery 44 in an exhibition titled *Alone in the House, Still Life with Clarice Lispector*. Curator Heather Rigg's text for *Alone in the House* animates the influences and considerations for Belliveau's stop-motion animations, including the Jewish-Brazilian short fiction writer Clarice Lispector. After her family fled Ukraine following the first world war and beginning in the 1940s, Lispector wrote about the interior lives of girls and women in a non-linear stream of consciousness style (Rigg 2). In Lispector's prose, time does not proceed via a sequential series of happenings, but is "an almost tangible, flexible material that inconsistently folds into and out of itself" (Lispector 37). It is this slinky, material time that Belliveau hoped to channel with her animation and lenticulars.

Chapter 3: *Let's Do the Time Warp Again*

*"It's astounding
Time is fleeting
Madness takes its toll
But listen closely
Not for very much longer
I've got to keep control
I remember doing the Time Warp
Drinking those moments when
The blackness would hit me
And the void would be calling
Let's do the Time Warp again
Let's do the Time Warp again" ("The Time Warp")*

Exhibition Information

**Let's Do the Time Warp Again, Harley Morman
Art Gallery of Alberta**

Important Dates:

October 9, 2021 - January 30, 2022
Installation period: October 4-8, 2021
Artist Walkthrough: 5:30pm, October 28, 2021
#AGALive Tour with Lourdes 6pm, January 27, 2022

Paint Colours:

Benjamin Moore Basil Green 2029-10 &
Benjamin Moore Laguna Blue 2059-30

RIGHT WALL:

Timekeepers series

Motorized lenticular clocks:

- *Wow, Mom...*
- *Spaced Out*
- *Maybe*
- *Lemon-Lime*
- *Really Drives You Insane* (pendulum)
- *SuperShades*
- *Time Slip* (~40" total diameter)

Non-motorized lenticular stickers:

- *Best Boy*
- *Scholastic*
- *Great!*
- *Lucky*
- *Never Change*
- *The Transylvanians* (3 9" hand mirrors with eyeglasses)
- assorted acrylic mirror shapes

CENTER WALL:

Scorekeeper installation

LEFT WALL:

Mirage

Never Change series

- *Grade 5*
- *Grade 6 (h)*
- *Grade 7*
- *Grade 8*
- *Grade 9*
- *Grade 10*
- *Grade 11 (h)*
- *Grade 12*

Like most artists in what is now Alberta, I have applied for the Alberta Biennial whenever there has been a chance. This expansive, reenvisioned edition was co-organized among the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton and Saskatoon's Remail Modern, as well as the Banff Centre for the Arts' Walter Phillips Gallery; it had four curators — Sandra Fraser, Felicia Gay, Franchesca Hebert-Spence and Lindsey Sharman. After sending materials to the open call, I snagged a studio visit with the curators during the Lethbridge leg of their tour. Nice! Then working for the summer in an office in the Institute for Child and Youth Studies, the *Disorientation* lenticular series of digital images for my comprehensive exams was deeply underway during their visit on July 13, 2019. I wasn't chosen for the Biennial, but 15 months later Lindsey followed up to offer a space in the RBC New Works Gallery, a smaller space on the second floor dedicated to new and in-progress projects. We swapped emails about ideas: I was excited to propose an ambitious and interactive kinetic project that would have invited audiences to use a bicycle crankset to roll a wide band of interlaced line drawings underneath a pane of large-grained lenticular film, thereby creating wiggly dancing movements—essentially a giant version of the classic hand-held 'toy television'. But almost immediately, the pandemic swept in and kiboshed any art plans that involved public touch of common surfaces. The portrait series *Never Change* had lingered in the back of my mind since completing my MFA, but I always dismissed it, thinking the idea was probably "too obvious".

The following was my suggestion for an interpretive blurb for *Time Warp*, sent to exhibition curator Lindsey Sharman in January 2021: "In popular emotional vocabulary, anxiety never sits still. It escapes in tiny movements—twitching, jittering, stuttering—and habits that pace back and forth. Anxiety circles between the imagined future and the ever-present past. Harley Morman's *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* considers time and repetition as conceptual and

physical movements. Seemingly nostalgic for high school's impasse, Morman digs through a campy maximalist archive to find material with which to occupy and remake himself. Plastic lenticular lens film is familiar to most from 3D advertising gimmicks and mid-20th century children's toys that flicker like analogue animated GIFs. Lenticular film is *Time Warp's* central material metaphor; Morman approaches it as a low craft material and embraces the ghostly glitches, stutters, and parallax transitions of this striated 'novelty' medium. Morman's school portraits that move between institutional past and idealized present challenge viewers to hold multiple angles simultaneously, while an anachronistic 'sticker album' animated by clock motors dares viewers to remember what time it is."

The following was the Art Gallery of Alberta's promotional blurb for *Time Warp*:

"Harley Morman's Let's Do the Time Warp Again uses lenticular images to consider time and repetition. You may be familiar with these retro 'animations' in which two related images are combined and seem to come alive when you change perspective or position. Lenticulars were used on toys, bookmarks, and might have been found on any number of things in a Scholastic book fair. By using Lenticulars in his artworks, Morman presents images that transform as you move around the exhibition space and to show how a change in perspective can completely alter what and how you see.

Lenticular film is Time Warp's central material metaphor. Morman approaches it as a low craft material and embraces the ghostly glitches, stutters, and transitions of this striated 'novelty' medium. The artist uses nostalgic and campy middle school imagery to move between an institutional past and idealized present to challenge viewers to hold multiple angles simultaneously while also challenging concepts of time. Let's do the time warp again!

Organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta and curated by Lindsey Sharman. The RBC New Works Gallery features new artworks by Alberta artists and continues the Art Gallery of Alberta's tradition of supporting and promoting Alberta artists." ("AGA website")

Short publications accompany all exhibitions in the Art Gallery of Alberta's RBC New Works Gallery. The one produced for *Time Warp* before its opening contained photographs of

artwork and an 1800-word interpretive essay written by curator Lindsey Sharman. The small, full-colour pamphlet is 5” x 6” and 16 pages.



Figure 1: Cover art for *Time Warp* catalogue

Over the course of this degree I experimented with size and LPI (*lenses per inch*) in addition to lens mis/alignment. A sheet with a larger lens pitch has a longer optimum viewing distance and is easier to work with. Most lenticulars are produced for close or handheld viewing and use the highest possible; higher LPIs is more physically flexible and often translates to a ‘higher

resolution’ and reproduction of fine image detail. But higher LPI sheets are difficult or impossible to align by hand. A high-LPI sheet which can accommodate very fine detail at close range is typically printed industrially on flat-bed printers. Most commercial lenticulars are printed directly on the back of the lens sheet. This has the advantage of more precise tolerances and more easily accounting for small variations in LPI. Commercial lenticular printing is expensive and has other disadvantages: less control over the final image; less flexibility in production timelines; lack of that immediacy that lets you productively experiment with processes with lower stakes.

Through trial and error, I have found that anything under 30-LPI is a workable pitch for aligning (and misaligning) by hand. Except for *Scorekeeper*’s numbers on 10-LPI, and incidental decorative use of some 60-LPI on some of the *Timekeepers*, the lenticular sheet used in both iterations of the exhibition was the 30-LPI flipping-style sheet from the producer Microlens.

Unfortunately, this particular lenticular sheet is no longer available as the owners of Microlens retired and closed their small business early in the COVID-19 pandemic; I was able to stock up after hearing of the impending closure. Interestingly, the largest segment of Microlens’ business was production of the engraved metal die cylinders used by other manufacturers to imprint security features on currency. Selling small quantities of medium and large format lenticular sheets directly to individuals was a subspecialty that was not passed on with the sale of their assets.

Artwork Descriptions

The following pages introduce the individual artworks in *Let’s Do the Time Warp Again*. This section provides photographs and basic descriptive information; in the following Walkthrough section, works are explored in their exhibition context and in increasing depth.

Never Change series



Figure 2: Close-up view of exhibition labels with mirror acrylic rabbit

The portrait series *Never Change* is the core of the exhibition. In these eight two-image flip lenticulars, the institutional portraits commissioned in elementary and high school are juxtaposed with contemporary equivalents. These self-portraits attempt to capture a spark of the time-warping affect of midlife gender transition.

Except where specified, all school photographs at Cedar Mountain School District were taken by staff at Photography by David of Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Despite their uniformity, the individual portraits taken on school picture day were more frequently used for social, rather than official purposes. Although it's reasonable to assume that they were attached to student records, I never actually saw an example of this and can only speculate. My school district in

Minnesota was small and used the same security measures as the local bank; during the time of my attendance (1984-1997) we never used ID cards, relying instead on just knowing everybody. Rather, families who could afford it ordered prints of these school photos to share with friends and relatives. As my first assignment as yearbook editor in Grade 11, I was given contact sheets of these individual portraits, taken in alphabetical order, to assist in identifying the elementary schoolers I didn't know in their group class pictures.

The contemporary portraits were shot by Lethbridge photographer Angeline Simon over two sessions in mid-January 2021. Working with a detailed list of colours and angles, I wanted these new versions to complement their counterparts in specific ways via my clothing, pose and expression. Although even a close viewer can't tell, following COVID guidelines our first session happened outdoors in the snow, exactly two weeks after my top surgery and while still wearing a post-surgical compression binder. Originally this scheduling was entirely pragmatic. We needed a week with decent weather and, for lighting, a time during the right part of the afternoon.

The composited lenticular images are framed in flat panel LED light boxes which provide a uniform glow. The frames are secured on hidden recessed mounts, but with the illusion of provisionality. The light boxes appear to hang from nails on plastic chains and paperclips that match others used to hang *Scorekeeper's* mirrors. The eight images in *Never Change* were 18" x 22" and hung in portrait orientation, except for Grade 6 and Grade 11, which were in identical frames but landscape. In contrast to other lenticular series I have produced, all of these portraits have been strategically misaligned so that both of the paired images are always visible at once.

Following are brief descriptions of the individual works in the series *Never Change*. In both exhibitions, the series was displayed with the oldest portraits closest to the entrance to facilitate a viewer encountering them in chronological order.



Figure 3: Unilluminated installation view of Lenticular digital image series *Never Change* at the Art Gallery of Alberta

Note: Provided documentation of individual works in this series was shot at SAAG rather than AGA because the exhibition's lighting conditions in that space were more conducive to photographing the infamously difficult to capture lenticular work.

Grade 5

In Grade 5 for picture day, I wore a favourite shirt from the summer, a loose bell-shaped cropped jersey top in white with huge black polka dots. I sported wavy light brown hair just past my shoulders and a precocious smirk. I may or may not have looked like a bit of an asshole. A white border is visible around the old photo's edge, and on the righthand side the beginning of another. In this case and some of the others, I chose to leave these borders visible as markers of their analog origin—this school photo was just one on a sheet of several meant to be cut apart and distributed to grandparents, friends, kept in a wallet, etc. The border serves as a reminder of the older image's physicality at a time when images circulated as objects (but did still circulate).

In the contemporary photo I wore a black v-neck t-shirt, black beanie and white sweater with smaller black dots. (Incidentally this is the same studious sweater in the fused bead self-portrait *A Megan* that would later be the SAAG exhibition, purchased because it reminded me of my earlier shirt. Here, polka dots are the wardrobe of keeners.)

This lenticular is lined up via the eyes; they almost seamlessly blend into each other. But as the portrait background changes from studio blue to light grey, stripes of each image waver past at a 60 degree angle. Bits of ruddy blonde mustache and beard appear and disappear. *My beard now is the same colour as my head hair was thirty years ago.* Not making this kind of comparison is impossible when faced so directly with change. The juxtaposition throws both differences and similarities into relief. Is the most notable difference between the two that I am

older in one of the photos, or that my gender is subtly different? A viewer is invited to try and fail to tell which is which. As two faces slide past and into each other, facial features blend.



Figure 4: *Grade 5* from series *Never Change*

Grade 6

In the contemporary portrait for Grade 6, I'm standing against an ultramarine blue backdrop and gazing at the audience expectantly. I'm wearing a black sweatshirt of which only the top half is visible. We see the text "NO NATION — NO STATE..." above the fold which on the real

shirt continues with “... NO PLACE — NO BEDROOMS...” below. This screenprinted multiple is part of a larger project, *No State* (2020) by August Klintberg. Klintberg’s artwork, like his public art practice, references gay cruising; the project addresses the afterlife of Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s 1967 remark “there is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation”. The famous phrase describes the liberal Canadian attitude toward sexuality and privacy which requires legitimate sexuality to happen only in private (PFOAC).

Grade 6 is one of the two images for which I had no past portrait. (I missed quite a lot of school that year, picture day was not a priority.) After experimenting with notes and drawings from this period, I settled on replacing this missing portrait with a field of purple static; this felt like the most affectively appropriate substitute for a very bad year of which I’m glad to not be reminded.

Because of the static’s uniformity, ghosting is particularly present in *Grade 6*. As one composite image among several, *Grade 6* is striking for its surly stance. My baldness, black clothing, direct stare, closed, cross-armed posture would look at home on the bouncer outside a leather bar. This is the closest the portrait series comes to depicting a normative version of masculinity. Like with *Grade 11*, this current self is protective of my past, static one.



Figure 5: *Grade 6* from series *Never Change* (view 1)



Figure 6: *Grade 6* from series *Never Change* (view 2)

Grade 7

In Grade 7, my perm was sunbleached golden at the ends by September, but dark on top where it was usually covered by a bandana. Wreathing my smiling face, it takes up most of the frame and obscures most of my teal, navy blue, yellow, and red colour-blocked dress shirt. My eyes are very blue and still perky; I wasn't actually wearing any makeup. Its contemporary partner has very different framing. Instead of inside a puff of hair, my recent self is visible almost from my waist up so we can see my similar clothing. Recent me is wearing a colourblocked shirt in the very same colours, as well as an orange hat. All the clothing in the recent photos are things that I regularly wore in 2021, but it has been long enough for styles and colours to return. As a composited image, the gentle tilt of my head matches the tilt of the wide lens striping.

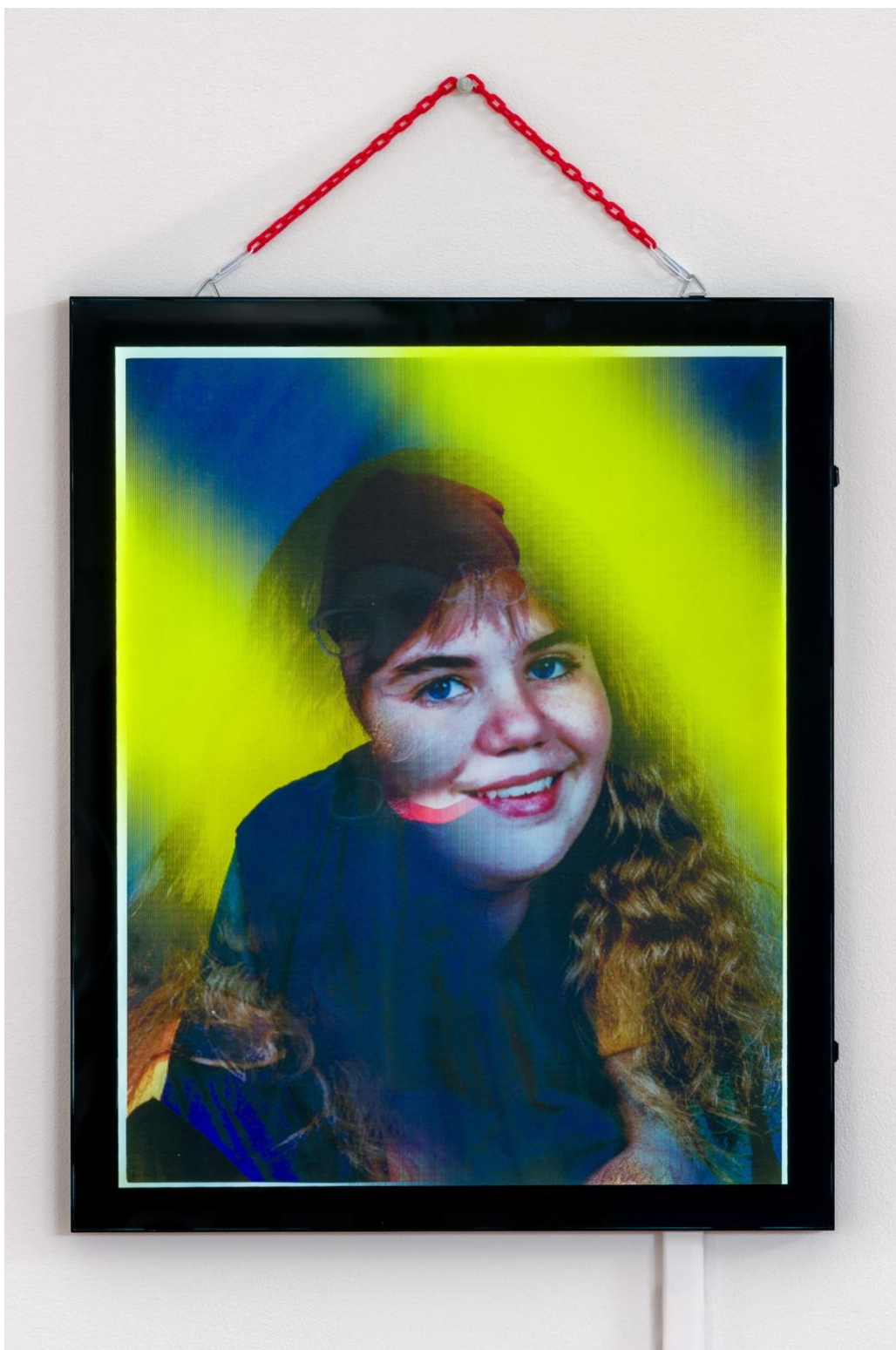


Figure 7: *Grade 7* from series *Never Change*

Grade 8

In Grade 8, I smile tight-lipped and chubby cheeked over my braces and try hard not to laugh. My hair has grown dramatically since the previous school year and become darker, and my prominent glasses are now rimmed with metallic blue that matches my eyes (my mom said) and the photographer's blue-black backdrop. My blue and orange checked flannel shirt is buttoned all the way up. This school portrait is higher in contrast and saturation than the others, and has a prominent white border. In its partner, I sit straight up and stare with wide expressionless eyes over the camera's right shoulder. Against the warm orange backdrop, my sweater's saturated vermillion almost hurts the eyes. My beard and skin look especially ruddy, reflecting an intense colour glow. Under my sweater, only a stiff navy blue collar is visible. Composited, Grade 8 is aligned at my full face; in this one, the images remain easy to differentiate because the divergent background colours create dramatic 'rick-rack' striping that pours and wiggles down the image at about 80 degrees.



Figure 8: *Grade 8* from series *Never Change*

Grade 9

In *Grade 9*, my face is pale and swollen. A thick red keloid from that summer's surgery mirrors my pained attempt to smile. I'm wearing a long-sleeved polo in cotton candy blue because it doesn't rub on my sensitive scar and it hides the angry red marks that had begun appearing everywhere on my body in the surgery's empty wake. I look obviously ill. For its side of the duo, this small school photo already having been cut from its sheet was scanned on top of a paper textbook cover decorated in tribute to the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Its ball-point pen scribbles form the portrait's new border.

For its partner, I gave Angeline instructions to let me look tired and sad—resulting in a set of images that I love but which wouldn't make a typical photographer's cut. Not bothering to 'smize', as Tyra Banks put it, or sit up straight for the camera, I slump to the viewer's left: My brown camp-collar shirt rumples over a red t-shirt. My beanie is pulled too low. The scar on my neck is just a trace; a blue striped sweater rolled up at the arms reveals hair but no red marks. Some acne on my left cheek matches the deep crimson behind me.



Figure 9: *Grade 9* from series *Never Change* (view 1)



Figure 10: *Grade 9* from series *Never Change* (view 2)

Grade 10

Tanned and less swollen but still with a dense perm, in *Grade 10*, I no longer look besieged-and maybe a bit relieved. This portrait's version of my self has once again begun to resemble younger versions. Now seemingly embracing nerdiness, a smile shines with black banded braces and my striped cotton shirt is collarless. Like *Grade 9*, grade 10's photo sits on top of a fuschia and teal Supershades folder whose fullness is apparent through worn binder holes. In its twin, looking straight into the camera, I cautiously adjust my glasses with a very hairy arm. I'm wearing a colourful striped shirt and a blue beanie. Interlaced as a lenticular, the subject of *Grade 10* becomes a janus-like figure connected through the conjunction of an eye. As my arm stretches up, my hand brushes the hair away from my face to adjust a 30 year-old set of glasses. As if a single figure with two faces, the two photos of *Grade 10* look outward from a shared center, working together.



Figure 11: Grade 10 from series *Never Change*

Grade 11

The contested school portrait during Grade 11 is a favourite to tell the story behind: After standing in line to have my photograph taken, the photographer declined, implying both that my political message was inappropriate for a yearbook and that it was not how I would want to remember myself. In the replacement, taken at my request by my cooperative mother, much more is visible of my body and all the nonnormative messages attached to and embodied by it, than would have been legible in a school portrait. I stand wide, hands on hips and a half smile on my face. Loose blue jeans obscure the contours of my lower body with their sag. Around my neck is an obscure strand of coloured beads; my shirt's offensive assertion 'This is what a feminist looks like' is barely readable.

Today the forbidden sentiment seems adorably moderate and the whole incident wholesome, but that's not how it was read in that specific place and time in the rural United States. It's worth noting that this photo of my rebellion played deeply into the normative styles and tropes in which I was culturally immersed as a youth. The photo looks down my parents' gravel driveway into the setting sun. The particular form—the family portrait posed in a driveway backed up by an array of domestic and agricultural vehicles—was a ubiquitous display of masculine aggression and power, and that is exactly what I wanted. Though my Dodge Spirit's hippie bumper stickers made it a frequent target, living in a very rural area, I also bought heavily into the idea that my car could set me free, could help me escape, could whisk me off to somewhere and something else.

In 2021's photo I wear a fuzzy grey toque, close-fitting dark jeans and no jewelry. A blue plaid overshirt is open wide, revealing another message on a lavender grey t-shirt underneath: "Let's objectify each other and get off" reads clear sans-serif text inside a black box.

Likewise, the more recent self stands beside a means of freedom and escape — this time a red Schwinn Meridian tricycle with a metal basket woven with colourful lawn chair webbing.

Grade 11 juxtaposes subjects and ideologies, and the normative signifiers of maturity and success. Viewed together, younger and older selves stand shoulder-to-shoulder in solidarity. Neither self hides.



Figure 12: *Grade 11* from series *Never Change*



Figure 13: *Grade 12* from series *Never Change*

Grade 12

Shot at Shayds of Colour in New Ulm, MN, the friendly photographer respected my request not to use soft focus, no questions asked. My grade 12 portrait in a vintage avocado green sweater looks like the self I was for years. In its match, I grin toward the camera wearing a mustard cardigan over white and black stripes. Composed, two figures recline on the ground facing one another, both smiling at the camera. Megan reclines wearing a thrifted green wool sweater; its V-neck reveals her ubiquitous rainbow beads. Her short bob is its natural light brown now. The fallen leaves she reclines on match her older twin's facial hair.

I have come to use extra photos from Grade 10's photoset regularly as headshots, because their self-conscious humour is closest to the affect I want to project as an artist and teacher. I put photos from the Grade 6 set on Grindr. In the weeks after my photoshoots with Angeline, looking through dozens of the photos, I felt these photos were the best present I could have given myself. *Never Change* helped me see my new/old body, and was also a chance for me to revisit people I used to be.

Scorekeeper



Figure 14: Installation view of *Scorekeeper*

Scorekeeper is an installation centered on a handmade ‘scoreboard’ with hanging mirrors. It was displayed in a similar configuration at both galleries, but to very different effect. In the centre of the wall, a white 40” x 25” wooden panel assumes the general stance of a scoreboard that tracks the winners and losers of competitive games. The shapes and locations of familiar scoreboard elements, like a clock and numbers, cue viewers in that this references something they may recognize, but it is a strange, awkward version. It’s also visibly homemade and unskilfully crafted. This scoreboard wasn’t purchased through a sponsorship deal with a cola company; someone made it by hand. Who would have made something like this? What could it possibly track, if it is capable of tracking anything?

A clock with its audibly ticking red second hand is surrounded by decorative plastic shapes and mirrors; larger mirrored acrylic shapes frame and adorn its border. Brittle transparent plastic flowers, once glass mirror decorations from another time, have become googly with neon beads. The space above the clock is caked with a rainbow of small plastic bits: vintage hair curlers, tiny toy hammers, board game pieces, novelty dinosaur zip ties, mysterious electronic components, anchors for screws and more beads. At the bottom corners in the spaces where it seems like numbers should go, granular 10-LPI lenticular panels defy attempts to extract information. Scorekeeper's chunky lenticular 'numbers' were based on the look of early digital scoreboards with incandescent bulbs.

Possibly it takes a while to notice that Scorekeeper's text and clock face are reversed and readable over a viewer's shoulder in a mirror, rather than when looked at directly. This style of reversed clock was known as a barbershop clock. Luckily, mirrors present themselves! They're everywhere, all around you. Just in front of the scoreboard panel, acrylic mirrors suspended on plastic chains hang back-to-back in a small arc, reflecting both inwards toward *Scorekeeper* and outwards into the rest of the gallery.

At AGA, *Scorekeeper* was centred on the south wall across from the entrance; lit dramatically in the heavy claustrophobic space, it was the most prominent work in the show. Audiences were invited through use of lighting and space to go ‘inside’ the work to view it. Judging by the number of mirror selfies taken in just that position, it would seem that viewers often did. If viewers were patient and nimble enough, they were usually able to squat and sway their way into a position where *Scorekeeper* showed their team the winner. The only possible scores were ‘1’ or ‘0’, and only one ‘side’ of *Scorekeeper* could score at a time. i.e. in any single viewing position if Home read as 1, then Away showed 0 (or something garbled). *Scorekeeper* was purposely ambiguous, looking and occasionally behaving like infrastructure of surveillance, but simultaneously foiling viewers’ attempts to interpret it.



Figure 15: *Scorekeeper*'s scoreboard reflected in one of its mirrors

Entering the RBC gallery and looking left, audiences encountered first the exhibition text, white adhesive vinyl on the deep blue wall. In front and to the right sat a brightly-lit glass-topped plinth. Inside it, at its centre was a round black display disk with a rainbow eraser on top. Surrounding it closely were vintage erasers of all colours and sizes piled haphazardly on one another, and mirror acrylic scraps that reflected the light, creating an unpredictable scatter of reflections on the dark gallery walls.

Mirage



Figure 16: Installation view of *Mirage* with title wall

“Don’t be fooled by imitation Mirages!” visitors to Opti-Gone’s website are warned. *Mirage* is an optical educational device* produced in California by manufacturer Opti-Gone. Composed of two facing highly reflective aluminum-coated acrylic mirrors, the mirrors’ parabolic shape is

precisely calibrated to reflect a remarkably lifelike floating “hologram” of any small object put inside (Adhya and Noé 1). From the outside and empty, the device’s flying saucer shape looks like a shiny black U.F.O, but with a curious gap on top. Peering into the 2.5” hole reveals a hyper-shiny inside and the space where an object would sit. Small objects carefully arranged in the reflective gap appear to be projected above the disc’s surface. Mirage’s illusion is viewable from above at an oblique angle, at centred 45 degrees above the plane of its base; outside that range the edges of the illusion appear progressively clipped at the edges. Within it, the illusion appears robustly in three dimensions, shifting as a viewer walks around it.

*Like other optical devices, Opti-Gone’s marketing materials are very clear that Mirages are not intended as toys (regardless of how they are interacted with by their purchaser). The business was originally cofounded by a technician and a recently-hired faculty member in the Physics department at the University of California Santa Barbara. In 1968, technician Caliste Landry was in a university storeroom to clean some of the surplus mirrors that had been removed from WWII searchlights, when startlingly he encountered dust “that couldn’t be cleaned” because it was illusory (Adhya & Noé 2). After filing for a patent and experimenting with glass mirrors, the pair settled on newly-accessible reflective acrylic; through changes in ownership, Opti-Gone has been producing devices of varying sizes using the same basic principle since 1977.

Beginning in the 1980s, desktop-scale models came with the small pink pig figurine that has since come to be associated with Mirage in science educational contexts. My early model did not include a plastic pig; rather, the box’s cover photo suggests a test with nuts and bolts, reflecting initial marketing as an expensive and masculine executive desk toy. These first packaging photos may not have served Opti-Gone well, as the internal surface finish is quite delicate. A black and white advertisement in the Jan/Feb 1981 issue of *Science Digest* entices “A gift from science no-

one can touch”; heavy on text, the advertisement excitedly promises a new kind of illusion—even more real than a hologram!—and inspired with just enough technical optics information to make a lay reader feel smart. Small accompanying photographs demonstrate its magic with a strawberry and the head of a chrysanthemum ("A Gift Idea from Science...").

Mirage is inseparably of its time. Like lenticulars and other optical novelties developed after the post-war popularization of plastic, *Mirage* was made by and for adult children who grew up in a time saturated with the optimism and promise of science. The *Mirage* small model that featured in my exhibitions was 9.25” in diameter and 3” high. After my dad brought it home from his own office, it lingered in the hall closet for several decades while family lore pronounced it too valuable and delicate to play with—echoing *Opti-Gone*’s own claim. In defiance of inflation, the price tag attached to my model’s original packaging, in *Opti-Gone*’s 1981 ad, Adhya & Noé’s 2007 article, and their current website all list *Mirage*’s price as \$35 US. I’m not sure how much a *Mirage* is worth in erasers, but probably quite a few.



Figure 17: *Mirage* displayed with eraser collection

Heaped in the glass-topped display cabinet surrounding *Mirage* are many erasers. All the erasers shown with *Mirage* were part of this original collection built during the mid- to late 1980s. I started amassing erasers early in elementary school. The erasers in this collection were given to me as bribes, basically: they were part of an elaborate incentive system that encouraged me to do well on schoolwork and not complain. We made a deal where whenever I got 100% on a worksheet or assignment we would track it on a chart; after a certain number she would reward me with a tiny eraser—or I could save up “100%”s like arcade tickets to redeem for bigger, more desirable ones. Around grade 4, novelty erasers became sticker sheets that worked much the same way. This type of pre-digital incentivization was a fixture of childhood with my school psychologist mother (who, ironically, had written a Master’s thesis on the social effects of

intrinsic motivation). As a child, I could survey my hoard of small sparkly objects and feel in my gut that it was proof of my goodness.

Timekeepers series

Standing at the entrance to the RBC Gallery at AGA, the long green wall opposite the portraits (on the left) was covered with an array of small works that I have referred to by many names; in an attempt to be descriptive for once, I called them “the stickers and clocks”, but the official name for this grouping was the *Timekeepers*. The *Timekeepers*, like the *Disorientation* series produced for my exams, were a collection of experiments with material and subject.

Displayed as a group in both iterations, I intended their non-linear clustering to remind viewers of a sticker album, or the unselfconscious ‘tacking up’ of posters and ephemera by a youth in their bedroom, locker, or other personal space.

I’m completely serious when I say that privileged access to scratch-n-sniff was part of my cultural inheritance. As with the erasers, the stickers imaged and referenced in *Timekeepers* were also collected when as a child. Living in Minnesota, 3M scratch & sniff stickers were popular and plentiful as classroom rewards, but I should confess that the stickers in the show were not received as rewards from teachers, but rather via a back end deal. As a consulting psychometrist contracted by a collective of school districts, a former elementary teacher, and a long-time board member in my school district, my mother had ample access to educational supply catalogues that carried comprehensive selections and sold in bulk.

Unless otherwise specified, timekeepers that required batteries (clocks) were mounted with either a keyhole bracket (if in a frame) or D-rings (if frameless). Stickers were displayed stuck flush to the wall using low temperature hot glue. The following is a description of individual *Timekeepers* in the order in which they appeared at the AGA, as pictured below left to right.



Figure 18: *Timekeepers* installation view, Art Gallery of Alberta

Scholastic

Based on an image from a sticker sheet given away free with any purchase from the Scholastic's book fair, it is the text 'SUPER STUDENT' in hand-drawn bubble letters. As a lenticular, Scholastic uses 5 images to create muted wavy colour shifting in the letters S-U-P-E-R. Unlit from behind, Scholastic's colours seem yellowed with time. At the AGA, the mirror acrylic shape of a bitten apple sat on its upper right corner.



Figure 19: *Timekeepers* closer left wide installation view

Spaced Out

Spaced Out is a circular clock with a subtle lenticular face. It transposes two illustrations from 2.25” round Hallmark stickers. Both are of a similar deep ultramarine blue; one shows a smiling crescent moon in the starry night sky, and the other a rainbow with clouds. The day and night scenes each blend into the other. Its deep plastic frame was the red hue of a candied apple.

Really Drives You Insane

On *Really*’s 10” round white lenticular face, four heart stickers oriented themselves toward 12, 3, 6, and 9. Their pastel stripe and dot patterns shimmer, mimicking the pearlescence of their originals. Below and behind its face was the torn pink cover of a spiral-bound notebook entirely covered with messy writing in ball-point pen. *Really* was the only Timekeeper (that made the

cut) to use a pendulum movement— this one cut from a Fresnel lens. Usually a Fresnel lens held in front of a document will magnify it. But *Really*'s stubby pendulum swung too quickly to be useful and in practice had the effect of blocking rather than facilitating attempts to see underneath it. Looking closely, around the side of the pendulum revealed the cover's dire warnings against would-be readers. The unframed *Really* is an awkward and delicate object to handle...*Really* was easily upset.

I think *Really* is too small and subtle to be noticed among the *Timekeepers*, which just points to the difference between objects that are read as 'successful' in a gallery and those which regardless, are good to think with. *Really*'s efforts toward interpretation and visibility paradoxically fail. Like *Scorekeeper*, *Really* seems to have a desperate ambivalence about being seen.

Lemon-Lime

Lemon-Lime is a lenticular-faced clock with a simple flip juxtaposing a lime and a peach...I think it's a peach at least. The two one-inch round stickers on which it is based are recognizable as from a line of scratch-n-sniff stickers produced during the 1980s and early 1990s by chemical company 3M (the developers of microencapsulation). It's small, silly, and can't actually be scratched because of the protective plastic cover of its thick lime green frame.

SuperShades

On the lenticular clock *Supershades*, a mirrored dolphin breaches the face and leaps over its ticking hands and a mirrored palm tree below. This unframed round clock is based on Mead's beloved line of colourful spiral-bound notebook and its Memphis-style angular design. Checkers

in pinks, teal, and cornflower blue shift between colours while SuperShades' ever-cool toucan mascot surveys the tropical scene in his sunglasses.



Figure 20: *SuperShades* installation view

Great!

This sticker is not really that great. The word “GREAT!” is emphasized by a jagged orange and green hole, like a POW! sound effect in the original Batman tv series. The edges of the sticker are inexactly cut, as if it was quickly lopped out of a larger sheet. The only thing that changes on this lenticular illustration are red and white stripes that play slowly over the text. Without a referent, *Great!* is the only surviving sticker of its group of mostly-failed experiments I made in attempting to mimic the geometric diamond texture of holographic metallic decals. Its message is enthusiastic, but *Great!* seems like a consolation prize.



Figure 21: *Time Slip* installation view

Time Slip

Time Slip took an important place as visual centre. It was the first Timekeeper to go up; the rest were placed around it. *Time Slip* and its ragtag band of 'Keepers faced off with the portraits on the opposite wall. 40 inches in diameter at the AGA, *Time Slip* takes up significant space but feels unusually light because it is mostly empty space. It was an arrangement within an arrangement: Four 5.75" round brass frames hang at the main clock points. Inside each frame is a

lenticular drawing of an eye. Each of these eyes was taken from a sticker of a different style. These lenticular eyes don't move, but the colours shift: brown irises become green, an eye turns red as if crying, fur changes colour. The wrinkled eye at 12 o'clock stares straight at the viewer as its brown iris becomes green. At 3, a scaly creature's round purple glasses turn red, its pupil a pinprick. Down at 6, the eye of a tanned brown eye looks sharply to the right, while at 9 a bespectacled bunny stares into the middle distance as its fur turns blue. Between the four cardinal points, an arc of 2.5" mirrors mark the other numbers. At the clock's centre are long, pointed minute and hour hands made of brushed silver metal.

Do the disembodied eyes in *Time Slip* seem anxious, or is it just me?

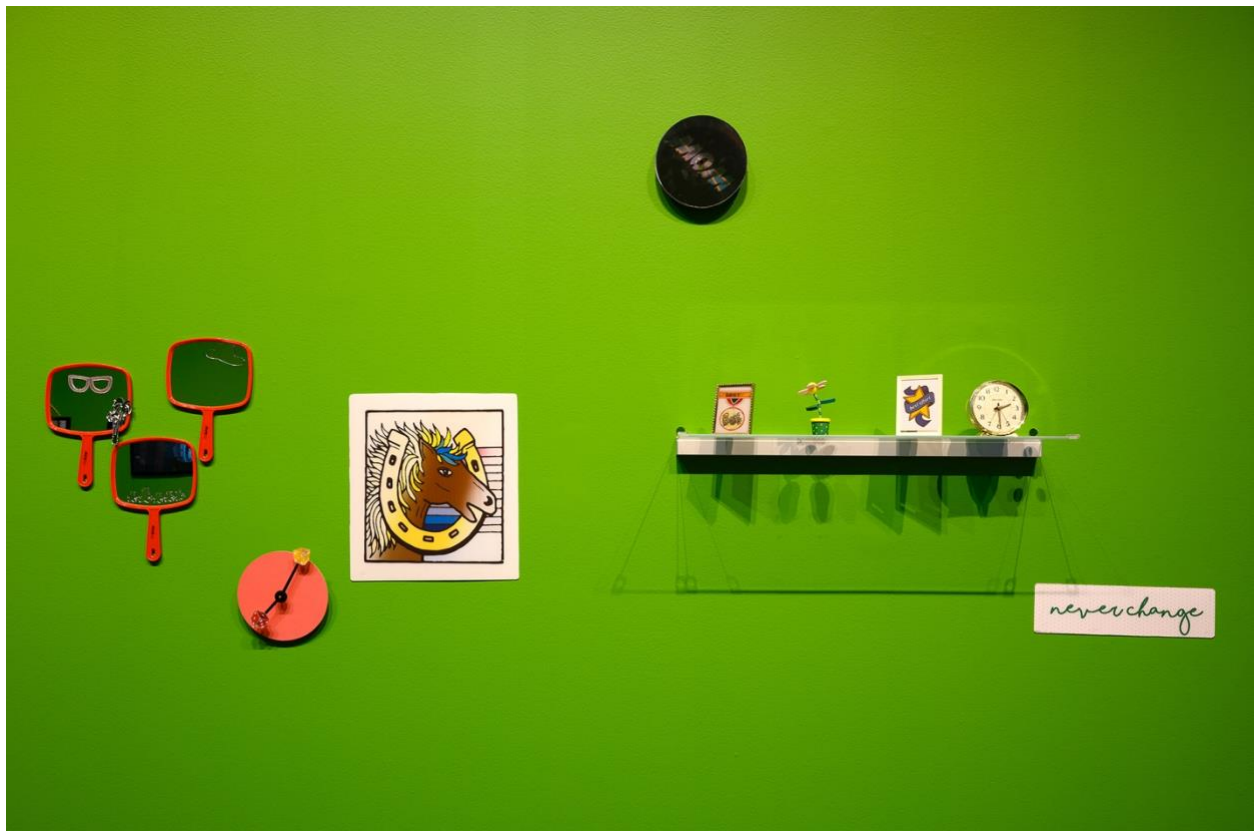


Figure 22: *Timekeepers* closer right side installation view

The Transylvanians

The Transylvanians is a trio of red plastic hand mirrors with mirror embellishments on their faces. They're short and squat: 9" high including the handles and about 7" wide. Glued to the wall lower than the exhibition's height to center, the Transylvanians exist to encourage people of all sizes to peer in and see themselves (just in case the other mirrors in the show weren't up to the job). The first Transylvanian suggests a jaunty cowboy hat; another a friendly ring of teddy bears. The third has a palm tree and the enigmatic lenticular outline of a cat-eye glasses frame.

These cheeky partygoers reliably drive viewers to duck and sway much like the lenticulars do, but feel different. If *Grade 10*, for example, makes people take a jump to the left, it's likely in order to view the recombinations of Megan/Harley's face from a different angle. When dancing with a Transylvanian, though, a step to the right results in a shift in one's own reflection.

Maybe

Maybe's bare wide arms spin 'clip art' of six-sided dice around pebbled pink naugahyde, their lenticular pips alternating between states as if slowly rolling. Will we get lucky?

Lucky Sticker

Lucky Sticker is a lenticular illustration of a horse that shifts between black and white and colourized. Facing right on a background of wide horizontal stripes, a simple line drawing of a horse with a wild, short mane is wreathed from underneath with a horseshoe. At 14.5"x17", it is the largest single work in the group. *Lucky Sticker* was based on a sticker from a package of sticker sheets produced by AMAV. The sticker sheets in the pack were black and white with a rough papery face and obviously intended for colouring in with markers or coloured pencils. As

a child, the illustrations were far too detailed to colour with crayons or thick Crayola markers; as a result these stickers were some of my favourites, but to gaze at rather than use.

The two compositing images were (a digitized, cleaned up version of) the black and white original, and a coloured version. In the colourized flip, the horse is chestnut brown with an improbable blonde and turquoise mane; it smiles through a golden shoe against a background of pinks and blues. *Lucky Sticker* was not in the SAAG exhibition because it was sold.



Figure 23: *Lucky Sticker* with *Maybe* at lower left

Wow, Mom...

On a frameless 8" round base of pink and blue lenticular material, a velvety black raised disc spins the text "WOW.MOM" around and around, always appearing to say the same thing.

Wow, Mom...'s delicate movement was damaged in transit, and instead of rotating its disk, it just

sagged and spun its wheels. It appeared at the AGA anyway, but always sideways and twitching. Teenagers, eh?

Are you judging me for showing broken art? What is *broken* even here? Get off my back.



Figure 24: *Best Boy* shelf installation view

Best Boy

A floating glass shelf sits at the wall's far right with a cluster of small domestic objects. On the left is *Best Boy* in a 4" gold photo frame. *Best Boy* is a simple 2 image flip based on another Scholastic sticker from a sheet of cheeky academic 'awards'; it moves clearly between two states, reading alternately "Best Boy" and "Best Girl".

To *Best Boy*'s right is a 5" crumpling flower in pink and greens; this type of handheld wooden toy that collapses when one squeezes it in a way that disrupts the inner tension holding it steady, only to reform when released. Next is another similarly-sized frame which, at first glance, looks similar in style to *Best Boy*'s. This is *Best Effort*. Its confession and acknowledgement is written on a blue swag wrapped around a gold star. *Best Effort* is not a

lenticular image and has been printed on quarter-inch graph paper, as though itself a final before a final, real version that never happened. It doesn't quite fit inside its white plastic frame and you can see through a gap at the bottom...but it was a good try. The final item on the shelf is an analog Big Ben alarm (clock identical to the one which woke me up during high school).

Never Change

The text "never change" appears in dark green messy cursive on a white and green ditsy ground. Generic good intentions from friendly but naive youth, a traditional yearbook curse. *Never Change* is printed like the other lenticular stickers are and looks like it might do something, but it cannot. *Never Change* lacks a partner image underneath its lenticular film. It's a disappointment and a missed opportunity.

Considered together, stickers and erasers form one of Time Warp's conceptual pairings. The novelty objects are materially representative of a particular cultural moment during the mid-1980's—the subject of my personal memory—that came around at vaguely the same time as the re-popularization of the lenticular.

Both are ripe for repurposing as analogies. The actions performed by the users of both types of object are figuratively compatible. Stickers attach, decorate, label, designate, and are usually intended to be seen. Stickers intended for decoration, crafting, or children's use are typically temporary and easily removable, while permanent decals and warning labels may require special tools or chemical lubrication to be removed; their dye or adhesive may stain a surface or leave residue and fragments behind. In the place and time in which I grew up, small stickers at the top of a worksheet were a popular reward from teachers. At home and in the classroom, tagboard charts with rows of Metallic foil stars tracked chores and good behaviour.

Like with domestic stickers, markets for cheap children's toys evolved erasers from functional and task-oriented into fun and decorative novelties. Erasers' ostensible function is to remove or modify the marks left by other implements. When rubbed over a marked surface, domestic erasers frequently leave parts of themselves messily behind. Not all lines are erasable; even if marks have become less visible, the impressions of those marks may remain. Even novelty erasers meant for play or display retain their original capability of being able to at least partially annul. They are conveniently attached to the hind end of most pencils. Did I mention that they smell good? If their rubbery-sweet smell lures one into a covert nibble, there are always more. Erasers are a tangible reminder that we should anticipate making mistakes.

Talking about *Timekeepers* individually, as above, selectively reveals some of my process and rationale, but I have only imagined Timekeepers being shown as part of a group. Some of the stationary Timekeepers based on stickers seem to work reasonably well as individual lenticular works; their colourful transitions are a quirky novelty, but seem richer as a part of their group. Like with *Scorekeeper*, I'm unsure of the extent that the *Timekeepers*' display was read as purposeful vs just unskilled—and whether that distinction mattered.

To *keep time* while playing music is to keep up with the group's collective motion, to move in sync with those around you. If *Time Warp* and *Don't Dream It* transformed their exhibition spaces into school gymnasiums, the Timekeepers were the elementary school band. Although starting out in relative synchronization, the Timekeepers struggled to keep time. At the centre of the group, the conductor's silver arms swept in a wide slow circle, as eyes pointed every direction but toward her conduction. Many of the *Timekeepers* did their best to maintain a rhythm, ticking forward in the semblance of a tempo. Other *Timekeepers* faltered and sagged under too-heavy constraints, their wonky unbalanced arms weighed down by plastic and glue.

Lenticular stickers were always already trapped in their own repeating loops. Most *Timekeepers* seemed preoccupied by their own bodily transitions and could not look up at anyone else. In maximalist semblance of Felix Gonzales Torres' *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, as a group the *Timekeepers* conformed to no tempo other than their own.



Figure 25: RBC New Works Gallery title wall & entrance, Art Gallery of Alberta

Installing Time Warp

Above, the ‘individual’ works in *Time Warp* are discussed separately for ease of reference; each of the elements was introduced via photographs and description, and sometimes discussion of my thinking and process. In the second half of this chapter the walkthrough will guide us through more in-depth discussion of choices, rationale, and possible interpretations of the work in its exhibition context. Below is a brief discussion of the installation process for *Time Warp*, focusing on unexpected challenges the AGA’s preparatory team and I encountered and the decisions that resulted. These ‘behind the scenes’ considerations substantially affect the exhibition as a whole, but they profoundly influence how I as the artist feel about a given exhibition and the possibility of showing the work again in the future.

The installation period for *Let’s Do the Time Warp Again* began on the morning of Monday, October 4 and continued until mid-afternoon on Friday, between the hours of 9:30am-5:30pm, with a 30-minute break for lunch. This is the standard working schedule of the AGA’s non-managerial staff. The lead prep assigned to *Time Warp* was Mackenzy Albright. The gallery had been painted in advance; artwork shipped previously was uncrated and neatly laid out on clothed folding tables. Despite excellent organization on the part of everyone involved, installation presented unanticipated challenges which took significant time and resources.

It’s a relatively standard practice to hang the largest objects first: following the exhibition map Lindsey and I had previously agreed upon, as a central element Scorekeeper’s board was the first thing to go up. Anticipating both preparatory expertise and grace, I hadn’t installed a mount on its reverse. We quickly settled on screws through its wood in each of the four corners; these were easily and completely hidden by the plastic elements on its front.

Next, in order of prominence, we placed the flat panel LED light boxes which held *Never Change*. The octet were selected from units of similar age which I already had for an earlier lenticular series. The light boxes had been equipped with D-rings along one long side, but they were in the wrong location for the six vertical images. As I have done before, I had attached additional D-rings for their new orientation. These rings fold backward when not in use. When extended they protrude about half an inch, allowing for easy hanging on nails which remain visible just above the top of their black frames. Still early on Monday, Lindsey seemed unsatisfied with the light boxes' hanging hardware. She thought it was messy in a way that looked unintentional—an assessment with which it was hard for me to disagree. We proceeded with installing other elements while Lindsey left to brainstorm other hardware options. While I arranged *Mirage*'s glass-topped plinth, Mackenzy began to tackle hanging Scorekeeper's mirrors with the help of AGA's small scissor lift. The three pairs of acrylic mirrors hang back-to-back from the ceiling on aircraft cable, over which is strung plastic chain which only gives the illusion of being structural. The chain-over-cable combo is sturdy when in place but deceptively delicate and fiddly to hang. With only one person at a time working at ceiling level, it took the two of us until Wednesday afternoon to finish hanging the mirrors. We finished just enough time for Lindsey to come back with an idea for the light boxes.

Lindsey suggested that we use the D-rings as fastening points for decorative plastic chains like those on the mirrors. Seeing this as clearly fantastically appropriate at formal and conceptual levels, I began assembling extra plastic chains and paperclips into lengths that would result in the most cartoonishly domestic angles, like a child's drawing of a family photo hanging on a wall. Lindsey called in a brigade of contract prep staff for Thursday morning to patch, paint and rehang *Never Change* on invisible flush nails. I felt incredibly happy with and gratified by this

last-minute change because of how the faux hardware emphasized the light boxes as hanging pictures and brought an air of craftedness to that side of the space.

Feeling good about the portraits, I turned my attention to the *Timekeepers* which went up easily by the end of Thursday afternoon; meanwhile, the speedy but less-experienced new prep team experimented with several options for minimizing the appearance of the light boxes' bulky 3-part cords on the green wall. The team taped down the cords and then painted the tape green (a decent option I've used in the past on walls with flat paint), but only after painting the cords themselves green also.

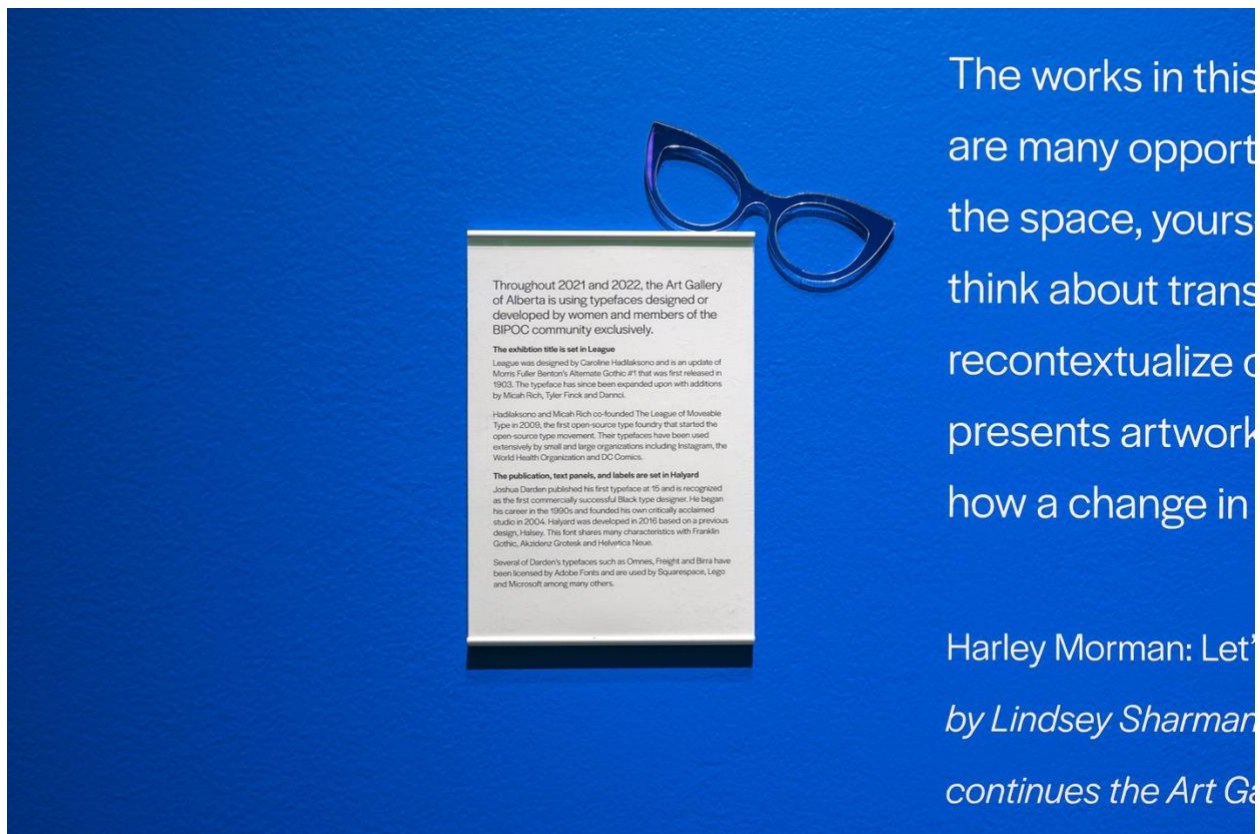


Figure 26: Close shot of the interior title wall (behind *Mirage*)

At the AGA, deeply saturated wall colours in a windowless space contributed to a feeling near claustrophobia. The contrasts of dramatic overhead spot lighting made white vinyl text and *Scorekeeper* glow.

As I have done with installations like *Art Party*, Time Warp had special elements that were added at the very end. Small mirror acrylic objects were scattered throughout the exhibition space. Attached firmly but invisibly to walls with low temperature hot glue, these subtle but playful school-related shapes were based on die-cut stickers. Shapes sat on top of frames, in corners, and in relation to text panels and tombstones (exhibition title markers). These ‘final touches’ drew extra attention to gallery conventions and infrastructure which is typically minimized or disguised. These small mirrors are fun and cheeky; like the larger hanging mirrors, they function as invitations for viewers. The tiny, unexpected objects draw a viewer closer to see.

Walkthrough

Despite being a selling point for event hosting, when the Art Gallery of Alberta's dramatic swooping facade breaches the indoors, its foyer becomes extremely echoey. Even when occupied, the spaces adjacent to Manning Hall are unusually reverberant. The loose plan made back in February 2021 was for me to do an artist talk and walkthrough just outside the exhibition space; in mid-August, still nervous about my ability to lecture reliably and coherently in a noisy environment, I decided to bite the bullet and tell Lindsey about my concerns. She immediately (and generously) suggested that we try a hybrid talk. We could record parts of a walkthrough ahead of time during installation, then at my lecture three weeks later I would have a second opportunity to fill in gaps and things I'd forgotten. In early October, COVID made another appearance, cancelling the exhibition's public opening reception. This already-hybrid lecture format was simple to shift onto Zoom; the workaround that had been initially proposed for one individual ended up seamlessly accommodating the whole group.

In the next section I return to the transcript of AGA Live on October 28, 2021 to discuss these works as they appeared at AGA, and some of the themes that emerged from readings of this iteration. The select segments of this conversation reproduced below have been edited to improve clarity and readability.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH1XuBK6xo8&list=FLsnOY0BkMrNePtVWAU3vLMA>

Artist: Harley Morman
Curator: Lindsey Sharman
Date: Saturday, 28/10/2021
Location: Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton
Transcription: Megan Morman & Nayan Velaskar

Lindsey: Lindsey Sharman speaking live at the Zoom event
Harley: Harley Morman speaking live at the Zoom event
Lindsey(video): Lindsey speaking in a prerecorded video walkthrough
Harley(video): Harley speaking in a prerecorded video walkthrough

--ZOOM--

0:01 On a black background, text:

#AGALIVE PRESENTS
HARLEY MORMAN
ARTIST IN CONVERSATION WITH
LINDSEY SHARMAN
<AGA LOGO>

[Framed from the chest up, Harley and Lindsey smile out of small squares at the bottom left corner of the transmission]

[Lindsey introduces herself and Harley, acknowledges the land and funders, and outlines how the talk will proceed]

PRERECORDED VIDEO PLAYS

[Lindsey stands in front of three angled oval mirrors hanging at chest height on colourful plastic chains; the mirrors reflect partial snippets of work on other walls. Partially obscured by the mirrors is a large white rectangle with a clock and what appear to be digital numbers]

[The camera angle switches and it's challenging to tell what we are looking at. The camera points at a mirror, capturing Harley and the scoreboard in its reflection. From this 'backward' angle, text on the scoreboard is legible and its clock reads the correct time]

Harley(video): "This work is called *Scorekeeper* and it was meant to, on purpose, be extremely ambiguous. So you notice in the reflection that's being filmed right now you can see me and the text on the scoreboard is facing the right side. You can read it and the clock looks relatively normal."

[Camera switches to straight-on view of backwards scoreboard]

Harley(video): "Looking at it from the typical direction you'll notice that everything on the scoreboard including the clock is backwards."

[Camera widens to show Harley standing in front of the work. Behind the cameras, the hanging mirrors' chains cast vertical shadows like prison bars. Harley points and gestures as he talks]

Harley(video): "So the clock runs backwards and the numbers on the scoreboard are lenticular, and both switch. As you direct your gaze toward one mirror or the other, they gradually shift between zero and one. And I liked the idea that it would be ambiguous and overtly decorative."

[Cut to photograph of the scoreboard reflected in a squat oval mirror. The board's face is encrusted with beads, clear plastic flowers, cut acrylic mirror, and a rainbow of small plastic objects]

Harley(video): "Scoreboards usually keep track of sports, but there aren't very many sports or sporty things in this exhibition. (In fact, I am almost the world's least sporty person—just as I was in junior high.) But I loved the idea of a very visible apparatus looming over you as you moved through the gallery. As for what is tracking... it could be tracking YOU... competing against yourself, or against some sort of imaginary other. Or nothing!"

According to Sedgwick, paranoia can be a tool for better seeing differences between approaches to textuality. Drawing heavily on Silvan Thompkins, according to Sedgwick:

*"Paranoia is anticipatory.
Paranoia is reflexive and mimetic.
Paranoia is a strong theory.
Paranoia is a theory of negative affects.
Paranoia places its faith in exposure."
(Sedgwick Touching 130)*

Paranoid practices of reading and interpretation may misunderstand some queer tactics, particularly in its last movement – the drive to see all; to make everything visible; to perform an unveiling Scooby-Doo style. Sedgwick points to the example of camp, and its elements of “parody, denaturalization, demystification, and mocking” (Sedgwick *Touching* 149). Paranoia’s aesthetic is pared-down, minimalist and austere; camp is ‘too much.’ Reparative practices, on the other hand, want to “assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have the resources

to offer to an inchoate self” (149). Reparative practices are generous, nurturing, and intentional in their concern with the ability to make something more; they might also be over-concerned with fragments and leftovers (150). Sedgwick, too, is nostalgic for potential.

At the AGA, *Scorekeeper* viscerally embarrassed me. I considered removing it from the exhibition because of how unsatisfied I felt with its heaviness. As a result, in *Time Warp*, I played up *Scorekeeper*’s purposeful ambiguity, often playing coy or flipping inquiries back at the asker when people wondered what it was tracking. As a reader likely suspects, on a personal level *Scorekeeper* was responding to a very specific, very trans, genre of situation: inter- and intrapersonal competitiveness around a subject’s emergent embodiment resulting from the second adolescence of physical transition. *Scorekeeper* was a work that many queer and trans people seemed to ‘get’ intuitively, but how should one approach that aspect of its translation for wider audiences? *Scorekeeper* felt politically delicate to unpack for cis people, as well as personally embarrassing to talk about even with other trans people. I had attempted and succeeded at capturing this affect of trans mortification; imagining even more appropriate and accessible analogies felt like someone else’s job. As a result, I coyly played up its ambiguity when asked to speak about it.

There was also the problem of its embodiment: As an artwork, *Scorekeeper* is both heavy and delicate, and prone to having pieces break off whenever it is handled. The mirrors are finicky to aim and quick to tangle. It is utterly non-robust in the way professionally installed artwork ideally will be. *Scorekeeper* looks like a craft project thrown together last minute (it was) by a teenager (me) with crap found lying around their house. In other words, it maps well onto trans experiences of self-creation. As a conceptual artwork to think with, I’m confident that *Scorekeeper* was and is successful. Simultaneously, I remain unsure if and under what

circumstances viewers can tell that these awkwardnesses were choices. Photos of it in this first installation are still difficult for me to look at. It cowers and postures like a racoon under a too-bright light. It looks dangerous and like it might attack.

Presented in a traditional gallery setting, multiple paranoid readings of *Scorekeeper* present themselves. Aside from any gamifying floor lines, the questions *Scorekeeper* poses around watching and competition are as relevant to art as they are to sport. For me, pointing out the hypercompetitive culture of art communities and opportunities feels different than it once did. In the past, my acknowledgment of my own personal interest and complicity in these institutional systems has been almost gleeful. In my daily life, as in my engagement with art communities, I often self-consciously assume a natural-feeling posture as a social weirdo ostensibly at the margins because of some combination of ability, gender, and politics. But while emerging as an academic, I am a mid-career insider among my artist peers and therefore already some measure of a ‘winner’ via art’s measuring systems. This privileged social placement enables any critiques I would offer.

[View changes, panning across the green wall of framed light boxes as Lindsey and Harley speak. The light boxes contain portraits periodically interrupted by moving stripes of their paired photograph]

Lindsey(video): “One of the main works in this exhibition is the series of grade school portraits. They are paired in lenticulars with contemporary portraits of himself, so when you're walking around them, they are kind of blurring and blending back and forth between Harley now and his younger self. Harley did you want to walk us through this work and what it means for you and what you’re trying to convey here?”

Harley(video): “It’s kind of a ‘thing’ for people when they're thinking about formally transitioning to revisit former incarnations and versions of themselves, even if they don’t think about it in those terms. It’s almost a cultural demand we make of trans people to reconcile themselves with anything that might have been a ‘sign’--” [Harley holds up two fingers on each hand to mimic quotation marks.] “or trends that somehow ‘prove’ that they really are trans. I went through my enormous archive of—not only erasers and stickers—but loads of paperwork from my childhood. When I looked through the photos I was

struck by how much they still look like me. Moreover they *feel* like me, although I look very different." [Harley makes pedagogical hand gestures that mimic pulling or drawing out.] "I noticed that a lot of the clothing is still be very much what I would pick now. My style hasn't changed that much since grade eight. Anyway, when I was planning the photographs in this series, I tried to match the younger institutional portraits in terms of colour and general affect: the kind of expression I was making, or the thing that I remember feeling."

Archival materials document events, aid our memories and preserve traces of feelings. In illuminating the past, archives point optimistically to the future. By preserving documents and traces of experiences, archivists posit a future where people will need or want to remember them. For Halberstam, an archive can and should be a place of making and remaking, of writing and rewriting stories about ourselves. But what kind of stories will be told, for whom, and to what ends? He argues for an extended notion of the archive which moves beyond a simple place to hold and store materials:

"The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity. In order for the archive to function it requires users, interpreters, and cultural historians to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making" (Halberstam 169)

In his 1995 essay *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida describes the passion which feeds the drive to archive as: "a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement" (Derrida and Prenowitz 57). In other words, the desire to archive can feel like a desire to return to that past. But what if the past one might return to is not a 'good' one?

In his classic reading of 20th century trans autobiographies *Second Skins*, Jay Prosser identifies trans self-narrativization as *the* symptom of transsexuality (Prosser 103). From its

beginnings in the gender clinic, it has been a necessity to tell a good—or good enough—story. Physicians realized that transsexuality did not manifest physically in any definitive way. Legitimate proof of one's desire lay elsewhere: Thus those hopeful for medical intervention became adept at accounting for themselves (Gill-Peterson "Doctors Who?"; Page 143). The main diagnostic criteria for "Gender Identity Disorder" in the DSM-IV (1994) and the diagnoses that preceded it relied on evidence in the form of personal history and testimony regarding one's past. These elements, interpreted as objective because they fell outside of a hopeful subject's current control, could establish 'strong and persistent cross-gender identification' and the 'sense of inappropriateness' of one's gender which were transsexuality's recognized manifestations (Prosser 104; Sedgwick "How To" 21).

In a discursive terrain overdetermined by such fraught relations to the clinic, Prosser also considered the photographs that accompanied early trans autobiographies. These photos provided their own sort of testimony. For most (though not all) of Prosser's mid-century subjects and their physicians, a transition could be defined as successful and finished after the final elimination of remaining traces of a previous sex.

"How can transsexuality as such be represented through the medium of the photograph? Photographs of transsexuals are situated on a tension between revealing and concealing transsexuality. Their primary function is to expose the transsexual body; yet how to achieve this when transsexuality on the body is that which by definition is to be concealed?" (Prosser 209)

So, newly-out trans people deeply searching personal archives for signs and symptoms of their own legitimacy is a cultural habit with a history precisely as long as the word and concept (Katz 2-18). At a sociocultural level, trans retrospection buys into neoliberal logics that demand legible etiology. At a personal level, the trajectory of one's desire is rarely so direct. Cultural theorist McKenzie Wark's autotheoretical *Reverse Cowgirl* (2020) returns to scenes of desire

from the 1980s to the present day. Born in 1961, Wark publicly announced her transition at the end of 2017—making her only slightly my senior in trans years (Szorenyi and Payne para. 2). Published by Semiotext(e), *Reverse Cowgirl* was the first of the always-prolific Wark's books to address her transition; its patchwork of carefully assembled vignettes are flashbulbs into the past's dark, illuminating glitter and sweat. It is so familiar. I saw the same dank sheen on the skin of ravers and drag queens whose photographs I sifted through when my own archive called. Wark describes *Reverse Cowgirl* as “an auto-ethnography of the opacity of the self” (Fournier "Trans in Retrospect" 129).

“The ‘gay’ child is History's future act of looking back”, writes Kathryn Bond Stockton in 2009's *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, before admitting that we are unable to return to texts “to think their meanings in their own time” (Stockton 9). Archives only exist for readers in the present day, to think with all the experiences and ideas we have amassed over time. “[S]uch children are narratively birthed backwards by the words spoken from adults’ lips” Gill-Peterson writes in summarizing the force of Stockton's argument (Gill-Peterson "Dissociation Two"). But children aren't just metaphors or conceptual figures onto which adults can project, she argues. In a post on her blog Sad Brown Girl, historian and author of *Histories of the Transgender Child*, Jules Gill-Peterson recounts an encounter with her own archive. She describes her shock as she watched an old VHS video in which her family members took turns telling stories. In it, Gill-Peterson was seven.

“So now I stared at a young Jules on a screen who was, alarmingly to the narrative I had worked so hard in therapy to construct, just like me. Where I had no memory of how my voice sounded, how I talked, how I carried myself, or how femme I really came across, I now saw a blatantly obvious archival record unabashedly telling me this kid is a girl. I cried, but that was more of a placeholder than anything at first. I didn't know what to make of the idea that I was continuous with my child-self. I didn't remember that to be true. It felt like being in an archive, researching one of

the trans kids I had written about in my book. How could she be me?" (Gill-Peterson "Dissociation Two")

What we might take from archives like these is not so much a sense of disjuncture or difference, but of continuity and recognition.

Harley(video): "My favourite photo to tell the story of is *Grade 11*. Grade eleven was one of the two years that I did not have a school portrait taken, but I do have another photo that was taken on portrait day. I was kind of a surly youth, and in grade eleven, I wore to school—specifically dressed up for class picture day— a blue t-shirt that read 'this is what a feminist looks like' and put a rainbow button on my pants and a few other pieces of rainbow jewellery. I dyed my hair purple with kool aid! When I got to school, the photographer didn't think I looked presentable enough to have my picture taken. They declined and told me to come back later...I drove home incensed and, in a fit of huffiness, made my mom take my picture standing in front of my car looking upset."

[Still photograph of a chubby-faced youth with dark wavy hair reaching to just below their shoulders, standing with hands on hips. They are wearing a baggy t-shirt and sagged jeans. A maroon sedan is parked to the teen's left at the end of a long gravel driveway, its license plate blown out by the camera's flash against the gathering darkness of fall]

[Switch to a view of Grade 11, which juxtaposes the youth with another similar photo of Harley looking unimpressed. Older Harley stands solidly, hands in jeans pockets, beside a red tricycle parked on the Lethbridge Civic Centre track's gravel; orange, yellow, and blue straps have been woven through its basket, reminiscent of Easter. From the right angle, the two stand shoulder to shoulder]

Harley(video): "I've kept it because it is a record of what I looked like and felt like in grade eleven. In the second portrait, I recreated, or attempted to re-envision, that shot. I'm standing on a track beside my tricycle, which is the modern equivalent of my car."

[Camera follows as Harley gestures toward the frame on its right]

Harley(video): "Where I'm from in Minnesota it's traditional for all high school seniors to have their portrait taken **not** at school, but to seek out an independent photographer for a photo shoot. These are the photos that are used in the yearbook. Instead of wearing a gown and holding a rose or another local convention, seniors have these expensive portraits that supposedly reflect their personality. I was whiney about having to do this photo shoot because I didn't like the way I looked and hated the idea of being shot in soft focus like most

other girls were."

[Wobbly view of Grade 12. Two figures are reclining on the ground in the same pose but reversed, both smiling at the camera. Megan reclines wearing a thrifted green wool sweater; it's V-neck reveals her ubiquitous rainbow beads. Her short bob is its natural light brown now. The fallen leaves she reclines on match her older twin's beard]

Harley(video): "Here you see me twice reclining on my arm. It was early October and I was wearing a sweater and a rainbow necklace" *Chuckles hesitantly*. "It was my tiny, invisible way of trying to assert myself."

[Lindsey and Harley are framed against a spring green wall; between them is a ring of small round objects arranged at the points of a clock. At the 12, 3, 6, & 9 of the ring, 7" brass rings frame cartoonish eyes. Clock hands advise that it is around 4:07. Behind them are more circular and mirrored objects]

Lindsey(video): "One of the things that I think is interesting with the school portraits and this entire exhibition is that it's this practice of knowing oneself. There is a certain element of care for oneself at all ages throughout your life. You know, looking back to high school and kind of giving care to those younger versions of yourself. But this idea of 'do we change?' and how we change and those sorts of larger questions are interesting to think about when looking at this exhibition. And sort of how we change over time"

Harley(video): (Speaking quietly and leaning into camera) "In contrast to the school portraits on the wall across from us that are very much about simultaneously holding the past and present at the same time and trying to reconcile the two, the clocks on this wall are quite playful, and some of them don't know what they're doing!"

[Camera flips to a close up of one of the pieces on the aforementioned wall. Mounted directly on the wall without a frame, Lucky Sticker is a lenticular illustration of a horse's head inside an upturned horseshoe. Towards the left, it appears black and white, but the right half gradually becomes coloured, revealing a chestnut horse with a tuft of green in its mane. View changes again to a long shot of Harley standing at left, with half a dozen other ambiguous clocks and stickers spread across the wall in front of him]

Harley (video): "At the centre of this wall there is a 4.5' clock with lenticulars at main points, the 12, the 3, the 6 and the 9. Like all the lenticulars on this wall, they're based on stickers, but these are also eyes. Of someone? Something is watching you."

The artwork in *Time Warp* was produced between November 2020 and October 2021, during and near the end of the pandemic's wide influence. The experience of living alone during the pandemic deeply influenced my thinking before and during making work for the show; this was a more profound sense of aloneness than that to which I'm accustomed. Because there weren't holidays or even the different days that one normally uses to mark time, time just felt like it wasn't happening. Because I was by myself, the passing of a day or an hour got muddled and my sense of time changed, like it had previously during acute MS attacks. Still in the thick of my gender transition, I was both thinking about time and emotionally feeling its repeat—which a person can feel in lenticulars' semi-circular durations. In *Time Warp*, clocks did both conceptual and physical work. The *Timekeepers* were the result of process-based experimentation with material—stickers and erasers and clock motors:

Harley(video): "I like the idea of using a very simple motor at a domestic scale as a craft material. You can tell these works are clearly handmade, not professional or institutional. They are provisional—glue-gunned together and made out of things that one might have in their house already. In that, it's fair to mention that lenticulars aren't generally a material that individuals work with because the tolerances are so small, and it's very difficult to do 'well' without access to specialized equipment. Working with those supposed 'mistakes' in alignment was a big part of the portrait series and also the stickers and clocks on this wall. I was playing around with what I could do with lenticulars."

The short lenticular series *Disorientation* (2019), completed as part of my comprehensive exams, experimented with kinetic movement and colour effects through embracing what might be considered 'mistakes' in the lenticular images' construction. These text-based images and simple drawings experimented with misalignment as a way to communicate physical and temporal affects related to my experiences of disability. Using the visual language of contemporary art, they expressed intense, ambivalent thoughts and feelings about ability, health,

gender, speed, and communication itself. Together, the images in *Disorientation* provided an opportunity for non-directive exploration of lenticular materials' capacities to illustrate time and change, and a chance to further visually consider the work of scholars who think about and with the non-normative temporalities associated with experiences of disability and gender. All of *Time Warp's* lenticular elements were directly informed by the *Disorientation* series.

[Harley stands at screen left, beside a silver floating shelf with several framed objects; below and to its right, an ambiguous label-like white panel reads "never change" in messy cursive]

Harley(video): "A lot of things about the show are both playful and silly, and I think the idea of never changing is one of them. The phrase 'never change' was something that girls wrote in my high school yearbook. It's a surfacy comment that sounds supportive but is actually kind of a curse... I understand the sentiment behind it, but who would **not** want to change throughout their life?

[Harley touches the wall, underlining the words 'never change' on an off-white panel]

Harley: "This phrase looks like a lenticular, but doesn't change at all. It doesn't move—there's no dual image behind the plastic, so it lacks the capacity."

[Lindsey stands beside a pair of exhibition labels, near Grade 5. There is a small two-dimensional mirror rabbit jumping over the taller label]

Harley(video): "So around the space there are all sorts of small plexiglass mirrors. I love mirrors for lots of reasons: they add sparkliness and I love the way they can erratically reflect light. They're inviting, and when you look at a mirror, you're seeing yourself and your surroundings. Like with scorekeeper, you can see what's behind you. I'm using mirrors as a metaphor for the retrospective glance."

[Harley glances over his right shoulder, aligning his eye with the shape of a pair of cateye eyeglasses on one mirror's face.]

[Screen freezes and briefly shows Harley hands-in-the-air, before glitching into a screen mimicking the exhibition title on the second-floor landing. Harley smiles out from the corner and is joined by Lindsey after a three-second delay]

Lindsey: "It was so nice to be back in the show with you!"

Harley: "That was really great! I love that we filmed that! I've been looking at the chat and I feel really excited about some of the things that are coming up.

[Screen changes to a still photograph of Scorekeeper and its mirrors straight on, similar to the view from the entrance. Harley's talking head is still visible in the corner]

Harley: "*Scorekeeper* is a giant looming metaphor for the threat and the promise of social judgement. Certainly one's younger selves were subject to monitoring not only by institutions but by our peers and ourselves. The looking and the being looked at is coming from all directions, and when you're a teenager you can feel it so intensely."

Lindsey: "Because the title of the work is '*Scorekeeper*', it sort of anthropomorphizes this object a little bit."

Harley: "Digital scoreboards are typically big and expensive fixtures in schools. Where I was from, a school district would have to fundraise and their purchase would be tied to a major beverage corporation. But this scoreboard is plainly homemade. It has some plastic objects, some gendered remnants: Plastic tools, and curlers, and beads, and electrical components, and junk."

Lindsey: [Nodding, swooping her pencil across the screen in imitation] "This rainbow of objects above..."

Harley: "So it has clearly been homemade by someone, but why? What kind of a person would make something like this, so carefully crafted with mirrors rigged at specific angles? It is in reverse and intended to be viewed essentially in a mirror; while your back is turned it looks over your shoulder. It feels charismatic at a surface level by being colourful and friendly, but it's also more than a little bit paranoid and threatening."

Lindsey: "I wanted to ask a little bit more about binaries. I did point out some of them but there are lots that run through the exhibition like "sporty" and "bookish", stickers and erasers, old and young, male female, girl man, accessible academic, fun serious..."

Harley: "I often invoke binaries just to stand there as something that I can push over. The more we name them, like when you read the list, we think gosh they're just really silly. What seems silly about binaries is the idea that something can **only** be 'either/or' Some kinds of dichotomies can be really useful for opening up thought but they become bad when they trap your thinking in a pattern of either/or. For example, when we're thinking about concepts, it can be useful to try and imagine things that are as far away as possible from another thing, like an "opposite". Because in thinking that far, it stretches and creates conceptual space in the middle. When I talk about my work, I often talk about it being overtly, pointedly *fun* because I'm using

that fun and playfulness as a tool to sneak in, to trojan horse in, other 'harder' concepts."

Lindsey called out the exhibition for dwelling on binaries, for setting them up only to knock them down again. Yes, she's correct that Time Warp is chock full of pairs. At the surface, it has:

- Young vs old
- Male vs female
- Serious vs fun
- Winning vs losing
- Jocks vs nerds!
- Accessible vs academic
- Stickers vs erasers
- Sporty vs crafty/bookish
- Home vs away
- Scorekeeper's 0/1
- And the two images of the lenticular series *Never Change*

This is an easy reading for most audiences to pick up on and feel satisfied by after a short time with the show. It's a reading I am happy for gallery educational programs to encourage. I like calling out these binaries *because* it is easy and seems to be communicable. Talking critically about and challenging these and other binaries is a fundamental goal of both this work and my longer art practice. I want to make work that grabs people's attention (via humour, colour, play and nostalgic material construction) but then teaches them while they're distracted.

I have often been worried that my larger practice is "too didactic", but that's a charge that I have rarely had to face. But why? First, my practice generally relies on visual and affective communicative techniques rather than verbal ones. Even when working in and with language, I am still not 'direct'. I prioritize trajectories which reach their destinations via other means; looping, spiraling, parabolic shapes that rely on resemblance, proximity, and analogy. I can

hardly write a straight line. In a Western context, only the arrow's flight is recognizable as direction.

Second, my practice's communicative aims don't track as educational (or as political) when they aren't directly, visibly linked to a concrete 'goal'. *Time Warp*, following the trajectory of my larger practice since entering school a decade ago, is more concerned with suggesting techniques for thinking than with achieving particular ends. (It remains implied that certain ends are more desirable than others.) My practice's aims involve epistemological shifts—nudging audiences and importantly myself toward previously out of reach habits of thinking. Although one could hypothetically attempt to measure an exhibition's 'effectiveness' via a set of concretized metrics, to do so would be a misunderstanding of both time frame and scale. The enthusiastic words and smiling selfies of audiences are meaningful, and the teary parents of trans youth deeply moving, but my most significant gauge for these shifts is the changes which have occurred in my own thinking and life. Lenticular images make superb carriers of conceptual juxtaposition. In all of their senses, they embody the potential to think in/with different shapes.

In addition to the thematic pairings mentioned above, *Time Warp* rotates around many overtly theoretical pairings:

- Real/imaginary
- Paranoid/reparative reading
- Restorative/reflective nostalgia
- Striated/smooth

Conceptually, thematically, and materially, the juxtaposition of dualities and the 'binary' pairings above are important to the exhibition, so it seems important to name why some approaches to binaries are limiting, while others are not. *Binaries* are popularly understood as pairs of opposites, i.e. good/bad, up/down, left/right. Like the most basic computer code that

shares the name, these binary states are conceptualized exclusively **either** one thing **or** its other, but never otherwise. Trouble begins when pairs are conceptualized as being in a mutually exclusive orbit and that no other possibilities exist. This bad intellectual habit is sometimes called “black and white thinking”. It is one that higher education struggles to crack for both students and itself. Outside of mathematics-inflected disciplines, the characteristics of most attributed binary pairs are more like Weberian ideal types that do not exist in real life. The shape of a binary relationship is one shape among many. We talk about *false binaries* as those whose dichotomous relationship feels obviously incomplete and inadequate. Binaries can be useful conceptual tools, but they are the map not the territory. Teachers understand that asking thinkers to compare and contrast can be a powerful tool; in the same way, composing artificial pairings can be useful for differentiation and feeling out the contours and boundaries of an idea. But thinking with dualities becomes problematic if one cannot or will not move beyond them as a tool or exercise, mistakenly assuming that a proposed opposition between theoretical constructs is the Real, the entirety of what is and can be.

Thinking with opposites in this manner is a hallmark of Western thought. Making queer practices thinkable in a Western framework has required their narration inside very specific conceptual boundaries. In *We Are All Nonbinary*, Kadji Amin unspools a genealogy of Western categorical thinking in regard to sex and gender in service of a larger materialist argument regarding the contemporary proliferation of identity categories. Amin begins with a reading of Judith Butler’s “Afterword” to the collection *Butch/Femme*, in which Butler defends the lesbian terms from those who would argue that they amount to mimicry of heterosexuality (Amin “We Are All Nonbinary” 106-107). Citing Butler, Foucault, Katz, and Valentine, Amin writes that the history of Western gender and sexuality has been a history of the management of divergence

from fictive normative categories through the creation of even more finely grained categories and the burial of social practices under identification (116). Intentionally polemical, Amin waves us away from the idea that even well-intentioned fictive opposites can remain in the realm of the imaginary that birthed them. Our choices have real, often impossible to anticipate effects that move past us without regard to our initial intention:

“[A]ny problems with nonbinary identity and discourse are not the fault of nonbinary people alone. In keeping with the lessons of Foucauldian genealogy, they are the consequence of a slow avalanche of historical accidents. In sum, they are the fruit of 1) a turn to divergence as a means of managing the imperfection of identity categories; 2) the use of binary thinking to fabricate fictive opposites (heterosexual, cisgender, binary) whose uninhabitability then spawns further divergent identities, which then spawn new fictive opposites, and so on; 3) the idealization of these identities; and 4) the popularization of the (Western, Cartesian, sexological) thesis that gender is psychic rather than social.” (Amin “We Are All Nonbinary” 117)

Harley: “The material of lenticulars lends itself to exploring binaries but also to nostalgia. As a material, lenticular film’s use has been cyclical. ... It had a heyday in the mid-1980s. [Since the early 1960s] it will come back around every 15 or 20 years, then there’s a dip and you won’t see it as often and then people will remember again. Its [periodic resurgences] reference the material and content itself, but also its previous generations.”

Lindsey: “About that, yeah, I think maybe to talk a little bit more about materiality of the work. A lot of your work is made out of plastic and plastic materials. I know this is something that you have considered quite a lot.”

[View changes three times quickly. First, it shows a still photograph of a lenticular portrait displayed on the RBC New Works Gallery wall, and then a photograph of a lenticular portrait facing it on the opposite wall. It finally lands on a still photograph of a series of clocks and stickers which were part of the same display. Harley is still visible in the corner]

Harley: “A few years ago, I made a kind of commitment or rule—a helpful boundary for my practice—that the work that I would make going forward would use plastic as its primary material. I absolutely love plastic, not only for its color and malleability but also for conceptual reasons. My actual attitude toward plastic is that it is much too beautiful, long-lasting, and precious to be used for

applications that aren't taken seriously. I think it could be an ideal art material because essentially, with some types of it, it lasts forever. It doesn't go away, and it doesn't break down. What is plastic actually made of? Compressed strata of the deep past, liquified dinosaurs? Its production is deeply enmeshed with modernity; the problematic petrochemical processes that enable its industrial manufacture en masse were themselves once a miraculous replacement for other unsustainable exploitation. The concept [plasticity] has a fluid history that many people have theorized alone and alongside with racialization and gender. But I just love colorful little things and find plastic extremely compelling for its capacities."

Lindsey: "I appreciate your reframing of plastic and its preciousness. Of course, we've all been sold this idea that plastic is disposable and one-time use only. I think there's something lovely about turning that and saying, 'no, actually, it's not', and that there is value to it. Your consideration of it lasting, let's say, 'forever', is really interesting."

Harley: "A few years ago I was invited to give a fused bead workshop for undergraduate students at a university in Vancouver. One student said she felt moved by the idea that her portrait [of a culturally marginalized person] was probably going to be around forever."

Chapter 4: Interlude

*"Don't get strung out by the way I look
Don't judge a book by its cover
I'm not much of a man by the light of day
But by night I'm one hell of a lover
I'm just a sweet transvestite
From Transsexual, Transylvania" ("Sweet Transvestite")*

Lindsey, reading aloud from live chat: "So Stacey's saying 'I'm interested in the feeling-situation that you're describing as 'hypersurveillance', the sourceless feeling that something is constantly watching you. You mentioned you always had these little hidden but maybe not-so-hidden rainbows in what you were wearing...' Stacey's saying it is a familiar feeling to be terrified of being discovered and also want nothing else but to be discovered...."

Harley (Zoom): "When I was wearing those little rainbows in Grade 11 and Grade 12, I was technically out –and if there are any younger people watching this video they're thinking 'you only came out in grade 10?!' and yeah, this was 1994 and I was the only gay person that I knew. Covert signaling was my option."

As a project that depicts my current self in parallel with past selves, *Never Change* wrestles very directly with the happenings and stories which have come to be foundational to my art practice and my adult sense of self. My art practice has been thinking with these moments since before it even began. The emotions and challenges my younger selves faced in them are reflected in the topics and forms I have been drawn to as an artist. Like events in one's temporal past that still feel present and not 'over', these time-traveling moments can signal the situations where one's autotheoretical impulse is strongest. They are when and where one can feel the need for a new and different story, or a 'sticky' concept à la Ahmed, or a theoretical elaboration if one is particularly committed to the dig. With *Never Change*, these 'inspiring' personal histories feel closer and more visible than ever.

The conflicted feeling to which Stacey alludes above was a particularly queer feeling. The need (or maybe desire) to disguise aspects of oneself while simultaneously going to great lengths to allow them to be recognized by the right people has sometimes been a necessity for queer and trans people. It describes the essence of the proverbial *closet*, if not contemporary mainstream assumptions about the closet's broader workings and affects. It is certainly a feeling that in the *here and now* of Canada in 2024, at least regarding sexuality, one might be tempted to describe as 'retro' or 'vintage'. This feeling-situation is one that, according to liberal imaginaries of linear time and progress, the culture is moving away from—or depending on an observer's own angle and proximity, has already moved past.

'Stacey in chat' is Stacey Easton, a writer, critic, and artist with a refined palate for the nuances of anachronistic gender feelings and the longing that accompanies them. Like its author, Easton's *Daddy Lessons* (2023) far exceeds the boundaries of any theorization that would be fool enough to wrestle it. Like Wark's *Reverse Cowgirl*, *Daddy Lessons* is a work of autotheory, and a hyper-literate assemblage of moments which have assumed denser meaning through affective proximity to the writer's non-normative gender. Wark's experimental text interleaves reminiscence with theory so that they become narratively inseparable. Both memoirs revel in the flesh, but the emotional stakes of *Daddy Lessons* feel fresher and higher. Where the exhausting cosmopolitan pace of Wark's bisexual drugging and clubbing could be mistaken for explicit braggadocio, so too could Easton's youthful encounters with Mormon missionaries, cowboys and priests.

Easton's ambivalently pornographic reminiscences could have easily been written as the dry legal testimony to which they run temporally parallel. As a youth Easton attended the Saint John's School of Alberta, a Christian wilderness boys' school in Stony Plain just outside

Edmonton. Founded by Ted Byfield, enunciator of Alberta's particular strain of conservatism and former publisher of the *Alberta Report*, the school was known for its focus on vigorous physical exercise, outdoor survival, and corporal punishment (Wakefield "Hidden"). In 2021, Easton returned to Alberta from their home in Ontario to participate in the well-publicised trial of their teacher and abuser, Paul Sheppard. Over the week-long trial in Wetaskiwin, Easton testified to the sex offences committed in 1993 while both were at St. John's. While Sheppard was eventually convicted on the strength of Easton's documentation and testimony, it was their third attempt; Easton had gone to police in both 1999 and 2007 regarding the occurrences in question (Wakefield "Six Years"). Now an artist and scholar in their 40s, Easton has developed an especially nuanced perspective on the imbrication of disability, sexuality, and power, which led to their request for the removal of the usual publication ban that surrounds cases involving minors.

Responding to Stuart Hall, Jordy Rosenberg writes in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* "writing the self is, at its root, a question of marking with language the places where history touches us. And Reader, it touches us *everywhere*". In *Daddy Lessons*, we get to see Easton performing a magic trick that feels more Catholic than LDS: the transmutation of shame and desire. In their resounding specificity of gender, religion, time and place, on their surface Easton's stories are nothing like mine. I'm glad of that. The specificity of their content makes Easton's words shimmer like the flickering projector at an adult film theatre; their detail declaws a topic whose grip might otherwise feel unbearable. For me, Easton's breathtaking memoir models how an autotheoretical impulse can help a person think through. It is an armature over which a person can stretch their own skin into a recognisable shape.

"Desire is a refusal to trade in damage; desire is an antidote, a medicine to damage narratives. Desire, however, is not just living in the looking glass; it isn't a trip to

opposite world. Desire is not a light switch, not a nescient turn to focus on the positive. It is a recognition of suffering, the costs of settler colonialism and capitalism, and how we still thrive in the face of loss anyway; the parts of us that won't be destroyed. When I write or speak about desire, I am trying to get out from underneath the ways that my communities and I are always depicted. I insist on telling stories of desire, of complexity, of variegation, of promising myself one thing at night, and doing another in the morning. Desire is what we know about ourselves, and damage is what is attributed to us by those who wish to contain us. Desire is complex and complicated. It is constantly reformulating, and does so by extinguishing itself, breaking apart, reconfiguring, recasting. Desire licks its own fingers, bites its own nails, swallows its own fist. Desire makes itself its own ghost, creates itself from its own remnants. Desire, in its making and remaking, bounds into the past as it stretches into the future. It is productive, it makes itself, and in making itself, it makes reality." From "A Glossary of Haunting" Eve Tuck & C. Ree (647-8).

Nostalgia becomes necessary when the present is hard to bear. As a feeling, habit, and stance, it tells you more about the present, the time in which it is experienced than the time that is yearned for—be that time real or imagined. Nostalgia is about the time in which its subjects find themselves, and its potential is tied to the time in which it is experienced, rather than the one it evokes. It is for this reason that present-day scholars, like their nostalgic subjects, look backwards. *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* dons a thick coat of nostalgia, but this doesn't reflect a desire to go back to a fantasy of the good—or bad—old days.

"Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history". From The Future of Nostalgia, Svetlana Boym (8).

Nostalgia is a habit, a feeling, and an emotional stance in relation to the past and its objects. Above, Boym offers a definition that seems to tie nostalgia to a conservative cultural politic. 'Homesickness' becomes a yearning to return to that which is lost...but *what* is lost and by whom? For queer and trans theorists grappling with the *where* and *when* of nostalgic longing,

‘home’ is often a more diffuse conceptual space and time surrounding a particular physical object or concept.

In 2004, University of Alberta English faculty Natasha Hurley coedited the volume *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* with Western’s Steven Bruhm. Their introduction lays out their perspective on the figure of the queer child. For them, the literary child becomes a metaphor that gets mobilized and manipulated by well-meaning adults. Using children’s literature including *Alice in Wonderland* and picture books aimed at the children of queer parents, they intend to counter dominant narratives of children’s inherent and precious innocence. They want the feeling of nostalgia to release its stranglehold on the children as figures, noting “utopianism follows the child around like a family pet,” (Bruhm and Hurley xiii). For Bruhm and Hurley, the child represents a fantasy of unlimited potential; but that fantasy belongs to adults, not children. Nostalgia is the twin of this utopian fantasy, the longing for not only an idealized past, but an idealized condition of being. If the child represents adult dreams for the unspecified future, nostalgia becomes the wish for the present-day capacity to enact that future. (Now that we are adults, we supposedly know better what we want.) “The child becomes the bearer of heteronormativity, appearing to render ideology invisible by cloaking it in simple stories, euphemisms, and platitudes,” they caution, raising the question of at what point nostalgia for children’s innocence becomes nostalgia for heteronormativity (Bruhm and Hurley xiii)

In *No Future*, Lee Edelman offers a Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of the figure of the child in regard to what he calls reproductive futurism, in an attempt to account for how fantasies of the child and childhood shape political logic. Edelman reaches backward to Jean Baudrillard’s reading of Freud. Baudrillard’s Lacanian reading harkens back to Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’, the stage in a child’s development there they recognize themselves (as if in a mirror). For Baudrillard,

because ‘the real’ no longer exists, nostalgia’s object is a time before individuation – which sounds a lot like ‘innocence’. He links nostalgia to conformity and repetition, and death (Edelman 61). In provocatively-titled essay “The Final Solution”, published in 2000, nostalgia is a move toward conformity among and between humans: a “regression toward a state of minimal differentiation among living beings, of a pure repetition of identical beings” (Baudrillard "Final" 6). Twenty years earlier, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, he linked nostalgia to a different object of conformity, this time to an imaginary recreation of the original, which has since been lost. For Baudrillard, in postmodernity, nostalgia is not for the ‘real’ object, actually located somewhere in our shared past, but to a successive generation of it. “When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (Baudrillard "Precession" 6).

Baudrillard’s dismissal of the necessity of a ‘real’ true referent for nostalgia deeply informed the context in which successive generations of scholars queer and trans scholars came to understand the topsy-turvy and seemingly backwards identification with figures in the past. Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time & Place* came out in 2005, nearly twenty years ago. In it, Halberstam excavates an archive of children’s films and toys and the then-recent death of Brandon Teena to discuss the ambiguity of masculine transgender embodiment. In its first chapter “Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geography”, he writes: “Queer time and space are useful frameworks for assessing political and cultural change in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (both what has changed and what must change)” (Halberstam 4). In *Queer Time & Place* we see the beginnings of Halberstam’s articulation of transgender as nostalgic yearning for a body we never had: a desire to return home to somewhere we’ve never been, and to be recognized as a resident. Through Halberstam, we understand that understanding nostalgia

isn't possible without also understanding time – and time doesn't run at the same speed for everyone.

One of the difficulties of nostalgia is that it is pervasive and often shared—an affect—yet is most often popularly referenced as an internal personal feeling. But it is everywhere: nostalgia haunts the discussions of desire and longing so characteristic of queer scholarship without ever being named. Critical race studies scholar Nishant Shahani wants to rehabilitate the reputation of nostalgia for disassembling in the name of queer reuse. Writing in the *Journal of Popular Culture* in 2013, he offers his own take on nostalgia in and after postmodernity in “Between Light and Nowhere: The Queer Politics of Nostalgia”. He notes that nostalgic reminiscing can help people create and remember shared affective community (Shahani “Between” 217), thereby strengthening social ties. Sedgwick might say his readings seem reparative in their forward-thinking generosity. He simultaneously emphasizes nostalgia’s exclusionary aspects, writing that exclusion, too, is a hallmark of nostalgia’s postmodern function. Shahani seems to feel that nostalgia’s wider potential is more positive than regressive or damaging. He argues that nostalgia can be generative and is interested in rehabilitating mid-20th century nostalgia’s negative reputation. Shahani is nostalgic for the lost potential of nostalgia.

Specifically, he critiques the view of nostalgia articulated by Marxist literary critic Frederic Jameson in 1993’s *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Jameson famously exhorted scholars to ‘Always historicize!’ He claims it as the only absolute, and a “transhistorical imperative” of thought (Jameson 9). But Shahani says that Jameson’s original critique stemmed from what he saw as postmodernism’s failure and transformation of “historical consciousness into a consumption of the past: an ‘indiscriminate appetite’ for all things ‘retro’”. Thus Jameson replicated the divide between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, which Shahani implies was

his intention (Shahani "Between" 218). Jameson is nostalgic for the real – the *actual* real, none of that cheap plastic garbage.

Shahani offers a reparative framing of the potential of nostalgic affects and feelings in cultural studies which can help unpack the “new forms of cultural production that emerge both in sync with and running counter to the logic of late capitalism” (Jameson 7). He accepts Jameson’s premise but disagrees about what it means for the aesthetic. In his 2012 book *Queer Retrosexualities: The Politics of Reparative Return*, Shahani theorizes nostalgia through the movement of repetition. Through music and film, he develops the idea of retrospection as always already queer. He begins with contrasting different forces or moods of nostalgia as they have been elaborated by Boym; *restorative* nostalgia is concerned with recovering lost origins, authenticity, and ‘realness’; it “dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss” (Shahani *Queer* 11). Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in the drive to create total reconstructions of and monuments to the past. Nostalgia in this vein takes itself seriously and is unlikely to welcome critiques. Meanwhile, its sibling *reflective* nostalgia is more concerned with affects and their effects than technical correctness. It “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time” (Shahani *Queer* 13). In other words, restorative nostalgia remakes its objects via contemporary technology with faultless attention to detail then gets angry when they aren’t exactly right. It is defensive, literally conservative; in its obsessiveness restorative nostalgia is akin to paranoia. Reflective nostalgia is happy making memes with the worn VHS tape it watched on repeat as a child. Reflective nostalgia is silly and joyful. Boym’s restorative nostalgia seems affiliated with cultural conservatism; Shahani advocates the queer potential of her second, reflective type. Reflective nostalgia is amenable to reparative readings.

Like Edelman and his contemporary Muñoz, Elizabeth Freeman notes the sense of community created by past experiences of marginality, legitimizing them as an object of longing. In *Time Binds*, released in 2010, Freeman develops what she calls ‘erotohistoriography,’ a genealogy that passes through literature and visual art, and attempts to foreground pleasure as a counterpoint to the emphasis on trauma that had become typical of queer theory. Her book opens with a 1915 poem about trench warfare during the first world war “It’s a Queer Time”, by Robert Graves,” With it, Freeman suggests that Graves sets up a counterpoint between the real-life horror happening all around, and the narrator’s giddy, suggestive hallucinations during unconsciousness. She argues that this kind of juxtaposition is characteristic of queer stances; queer time and lives are often asynchronous with the milestones of their normative heterosexual counterparts.

Freeman describes a queer cultural habit: a “counter-genealogical practice of archiving culture’s throwaway objects, including the outmoded masculinities and femininities from which usable pasts may be extracted” (Freeman xxii). Freeman calls this process ‘temporal drag’.

The queer ‘archival turn’ of around fifteen years ago (of which Freeman was a part and Shahani slides on the tail of) gestured toward unspoken longing. Besides a genuine desire to preserve the history of marginalized people and communities, it pointed toward a deep yearning for the solidarity that can result from collective experiences of marginality. Flagging hankies, uniforms fit for Tom of Finland, and ACT Up posters began cropping up among queer artists and activists, a way of reestablishing themselves as legitimate subjects of history just in time for the newest plague. (If that sounds cynical... well that’s what happens when one has seen history repeating itself before.)

In *Transgender Architectonics* (2013), Sedgwick scholar and poet Lucas Crawford writes about the gender transformation of human and architectural bodies. Crawford contemplates whether activist nostalgia is really a good idea, or just a tragically misplaced indulgence. Writing about historic racialized urban spaces in New York, he offers: “nostalgia for the ‘tranny hooker’ does not lament but instead depends on the absence of this figure” (Crawford *Transgender Architectonics* 156-157). Just what version of trans/gender are people nostalgic for, Crawford admonishes.

What vision of gender transgression are we hoping for? In poetry monograph *The High Line Scavenger Hunt*, Crawford likes it both ways. *Scavenger Hunt* both traffics heavily in nostalgia and deals a harsh rejoinder to people who romanticize images of (very real) marginalized bodies. The poem “FOUND: The Mineshaft’s Dress Code” is an example of this complexity:

“FOUND: The Mineshaft’s Dress Code

*Approved items in the Mineshaft Dress Code
as originally adopted are:*

- *leather cycle styles*
- *western gear*
- *levis*
- *T-Shirts*
- *tanktops*
- *official uniforms*
- *plaid and plain shirts*
- *some rugged workpants*
- *cut offs*
- *gymwear*
- *jockstraps*
- *and*
- *just plain sweat.*

*Those items
not approved are:*

• *those which do not fit in a man's club
where visions of leather, cowboys, uniforms
and jocks are a reality and not just
sugar plums at Christmas*” (Crawford High 33)

The text continues with a list of all the fabulous, feminine or too-normative outfits the Mineshaft's list forecloses. Crawford's text balances on a wire between nostalgia and realism, supposing nostalgia as both itself imaginary and objectifying. Where does his text pass between nostalgia as objectification and nostalgia for objectification? Crawford doesn't pretend not to be complicit; he lets himself yearn for the bad old days. For me, the questions Crawford's work begs in considering nostalgia's complex relationship with objectification are critical. What sorts of feelings are stuck to my objects? What is my heart secretly nostalgic for?

Tour with a Drag Queen

As a part of the preparations for *Let's Do the Time Warp Again*, I had the opportunity to ask someone outside the AGA's staff to lead a tour of the gallery in order to animate and interpret the show. The following excerpt is from the condensed transcript of a public tour of *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* led by Jonathan Busch as his drag persona Lourdes the Merry Virgin. Lourdes' performance and tour happened live at the AGA on January 27, 2022; the event was simulcast via Zoom, and later made available (sans music) on YouTube.

"#AGALive: Tour with a Queen of Let's Do the Time Warp Again by Harley Morman with Lourdes the Merry Virgin"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eatCTioRp_I&list=FLsnOY0BkMrNePtVWAU3vLMA

Tour guide: Lourdes the Merry Virgin

Date: 27/1/2022

Location: RBC New Works Gallery, Art Gallery of Alberta

Exhibition: *Let's Do The Time Warp Again* organized and curated by Art Gallery of Alberta

Transcription: Nayan Velaskar

Lourdes: Jonathan Busch performing as Lourdes the Merry Virgin

Announcer: Lindsey Sharman

Announcer: "Maybe we can get started, so without further ado:
Lourdes!"

[recording begins, echoing "What is art? What makes it good or bad, and who decides?"

[Lourdes' performance happens in the foyer between the two second floor exhibition spaces, framed by vibrant orange and the words 'Soak Stripe Splatter Collecting Colour at the AGA', text for Time Warp's neighbouring exhibition. Lourdes emerges quietly from inside the gallery as her music begins. Her platinum blonde hair falls in waves past her shoulders and contrasts with dramatic smokey eye makeup. She is wearing head-to-toe sparkly black: enclosed-foot platform heels merge with tight leggings and gloves. Like usual, Lourdes isn't wearing 'body', the silicone underpadding that creates a polished illusion of feminine body curves. On top, her high-neck sequined bolero jacket is visible to the camera mostly as a change in the texture of her sparkles, cropped to emphasize a dramatic shoulder silhouette. As she performs, she removes the jacket, revealing the top

of a mesh bodysuit bedazzled with stripes and bursts of silver rhinestones. Her tan bra is visible under its spaghetti straps]

[Lourdes lip-syncs to Lady Gaga's 'ARTPOP', 'Masterpiece' by Madonna, and a montage of spoken word pieces]

Announcer: "We are now going to enter the exhibition. So if you want to see the tour, come follow us!"

[Announcer introduces Lourdes off mic, mostly indecipherable.]

Lourdes: "You guys are a tough crowd!" [Laughs] "So I guess I want to establish why I'm the one queen doing this tour. It's because I've known Harley for a very long time, over 20 years—oof! But we lost touch until recently. So when I knew Harley before, he was Megan. I'd seen through social media but it didn't really hit me until I came in to talk to [the AGA's public programmer] about the show."

Lourdes: [Gestures toward the row of *Never Change* portraits] "I saw these photos ...that's when it hit me that shit was real. This was a very good friend of mine and I hadn't been in touch with them since they made this huge shift. We eventually talked again over Zoom. I asked, 'Is it okay if I refer to you as - if I mistakenly [call] you Megan, or use she/her pronouns?'. I said it might happen by accident but he had said that would be fine. Just so you know, I've got a permit!"

Reader, a note because tone is invisible here: he did have a permit, although he would not have needed one. I could anticipate the kind of talk he was inclined to give in face or out of it. When we chatted during the weeks before his tour, Jonathan expressed concern that he would use a wrong name or pronoun while in character. My advice to Jonathan was to default to the name/pronouns I used in whatever time he was talking about, unless there is a reason to do otherwise. This is my own tendency when talking about *Never Change*. I tried to reassure him that talking about an old friend who one hasn't seen recently is bound to get a person mixed up, especially in this explicitly timey-wimey context. Jonathan is a thoughtful and perceptive librarian; his drag persona is also irreverent in the tradition of the carnivalesque. I should have anticipated that, as usual, cis people in the audience were likely to be discomforted by gender-swapping reminiscences and had trouble interpreting his candor.

[Audience laughs politely]

Lourdes: "I'll probably end up talking mostly about myself tonight."

[Audience laughs]

It is bad trans etiquette to call someone by a birth name they no longer use. A seemingly minor contemporary offence against the social, the discomfort and awkwardness of using a wrong name—frequently called deadnaming—are only its most visible stakes (Lenon et al. 12). Especially when combined with differentials in power, persistently using a former name is a kind of disrespect and invalidation that discursively writes a subject out of existence. To be addressed by one's previous name is disorienting, as one is dislodged from a proposed, happier trajectory (Ahmed 10).

To be deadnamed is to be hailed in the past instead of the present. Deadnaming is an anachronism:

- It calls to a version of the self that is not or is no longer present;
- It is an offence against liberal time;
- It is insufficiently progressive;
- It is something we don't do anymore.

Jonathan and I met in late 1998, which makes him one of very few people who knew me as a youth with whom I am still in contact. Back then, we were both volunteers at the freshly established Lesbian & Gay Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. By the time I was hired there a year later it had become the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Centre, then a few years later the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Centre and finally the Pride Centre. Does pointing out its changes make me sound like a grumpy old man?

In the short essay "My Undead Name", published in *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, Jules Gill-Peterson addresses her choice to, when *Histories of the Transgender Child*

reached its third printing, keep the name it was originally published under rather than updating it to the name she uses now. After all, 'Julian' isn't dead—it is just not her name anymore. Names already brand us with weighty racialized and classed inheritances, and histories we didn't get to choose. Thinking like a historian, Gill-Peterson, the child of Punjabi Sikh immigrants to Canada, considers the way class, gender, ethnicity, and colonialism refracted through each other in order for her to receive the name she once went by (Gill-Peterson "My Undead Name").

Lourdes' performance in *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* recounted a story of our interwoven mutual trajectories through gender, art, and higher education. In his telling, jealous gendery daydreams became compulsions until I finally became an artist and a man, and he a drag queen. It was a loving take on our shared history as friends as well as the messy and habitual projecting that unmoored us. His words were both a retelling and a mirror—one that I hoped other people could see reflections in. Afterwards I felt stunned, like I had been given a momentous gift which would need time to unwrap.

"Some sneak into the gay world; others burst in" (Newton Mother 31).

Esther Newton's *Mother Camp: female impersonators in America*, was the first ethnography related to homosexuality to emerge from the United States. Published in 1972, it was based on Newton's own PhD fieldwork during the mid-1960's at the University of Chicago. The book came to me from the University of Calgary, its neon green, laminated bookmark wrapped about the cover reminding me of the two-week loan period. The version I retrieved from the library was the 1979 Phoenix edition from the University of Chicago Press, the most common and available printing. I sat cross-legged on my couch to begin reading, perching the thin, dog-eared volume on my usual reading pillow, which is polyester fabric in the rectangular shape and photographic print of an old-fashioned ice cream sandwich. *Mother Camp* smelled sweet and

dusty, but with the edge of vinegar that one might expect of newer ink. Possibly the smell had transferred from one of its newer shelf-mates, and perhaps its own smell had rubbed off onto them. In my right hand I held a 5H pencil picked from a drawing set because the graphite's hard texture and light colour made it easier to erase. I knew I would mark the library book up; a 5H was harm reduction.

The 1979 edition of *Mother Camp* was 6" x 9", just slightly too large to fit into the automatically 100% sized Scan-to-Me function on the university's Toshiba's. On its cover is a photograph of a feminine-presenting person applying make-up using a hand-held mirror. Her face takes up the entire top left. The cover is black and white, punctuated with dramatic, transparent red where it looks as though someone has coloured in makeup somewhat carelessly, like a bored child with her parents' newspaper. In the top right corner, the woman's polished fingers hold a mirror in one hand; the title is written on the mirror's light grey back. The book's title is spelled in feminine calligraphic script like a sign painter might have lettered a sign for your mother's beauty shop. The woman's lips, eyebrows, eyelashes, and fingernails are coloured red, as is a 'beauty mark' on her cheek. The subtitle 'Female Impersonators in America' is below, in a round, more contemporary sans-serif typeface. This text is center-justified. 'With a new Preface' is below in a smaller version of the same font. On the left, her other hand holds a mascara brush; her eyes flutter closed. She wears small rhinestone drop earrings, a pearl necklace, and a pinky ring. In the lower right, over the peter pan collar of her white shirt, is the author's name. Immediately below, the quote "Fabulous" in red is attributed to art historian and queer studies scholar Jonathan Katz.

The gender of the person underneath the red colouring of *Mother Camp*'s cover is ambiguous. It is all campily 'too much'. This person is clearly trying too hard to be glamorous,

but the effect (to my eyes) is not outrageous, shocking or tacky, but nearly wholesome. The cover underscores the performativity (or ‘put on-ness’) of gender effectively. If I would have found this book as a 10-year-old, in my parents’ musty basement, I would have immediately and definitively known that it was for me.

Midway through the book, while discussing performers’ professional role models, Newton moves on to the meat of beginning to unpack the semiotic meanings of drag’s coded, symbolic language and pervasive binaries.

“Ultimately, all drag symbolism opposes the ‘inner’ or ‘real’ self (subjective self) to the ‘outer’ self (social self) For the great majority of homosexuals, the social self is often a calculated respectability and the subjective or real self is stigmatized. The ‘inner’ = ‘outer’ opposition is almost parallel to ‘back’ = ‘front.’ In fact the social self is usually described as ‘front’ and social relationships (especially with women) designed to support the veracity of the ‘front’ are called ‘cover’. The ‘front’ = ‘back’ opposition also has a direct tie-in with the body: ‘front’ = ‘face’ ‘back’ = ‘ass.’” (Newton Mother 100)

Here, Newton lays out the beginnings of the gender discourse that influenced Judith Butler’s writing on gender performativity, which (for good and bad) have come to be accepted as normative in much queer and trans discourse. She goes on to argue that camp arose out of specific material and temporal circumstances, which are inseparable from its roots in the stigmatization of homosexuality.

In *My Butch Career* (2018), now an eminent anthropologist, Esther Newton finally wrote candidly about her experiences during the fieldwork for her PhD. Coming from the University of Chicago, she was encouraged not to pre-research. She was instructed to have as few preconceived notions as possible, and to go in ‘blind’. At first this was difficult, but the queens seemed to accept her presence readily because they assumed (correctly) that she was a lesbian, i.e. marginalized like they were although not one of them. Necessarily, she wrote from an

‘outsider’ perspective, even if that perspective itself was assumed and its own kind of performance. While her subjects knew of her orientation, her academic colleagues remained in the dark. Newton was wary about being associated with homosexuality even in an academic context: “no one, I hoped, could publicly accuse me of being a lesbian because I chose to study male homosexuals” (Newton *Butch* 114).

Newton’s retrospection offers a completely different perspective on her subjects as well as her personal life. Her voice here is informal and conversational, far from the self-absent and authoritative tone of *Mother Camp*. Twenty-four years after completing her dissertation, Newton recalled a joke she heard from former advisor, now friend, David Schneider. “A postmodern anthropologist and his informant are talking; finally the informant says, ‘Okay, enough about you, now let’s talk about me’ ” (Newton “My Best” 3).

Mother Camp is remarkable today for many reasons, but particularly for the deep and vivid descriptions of performers, audiences, and spaces that give life to its particular moment. Newton “transforms thick, rich ethnographic descriptions of drag shows and the day-to-day brutality of queer street life into a theorization of what drag does as a social phenomenon” (Valentine 851). And like so many other gay cultural texts from *Rocky Horror* to *Paris is Burning*, it is *of its time*.

Calling something ‘of its time’ is a polite euphemism for it feeling outdated. Despite all its compelling description, a surface reading of *Mother Camp* cannot tell its whole story because that story is not visible—being doubly hidden by the conventions of its particular time and place, and by Newton’s own aspirational imperative to perform the version of academic professionalism to which she was subject. That opacity seems deeply appropriate to *Mother Camp*’s female-impersonating subjects. Opacity, rather than visibility, may be a more apt and historicized visual metaphor for queerness.

“What ‘queer’ signals is an ontological challenge that displaces bourgeois notions of the Self as unique, abiding, and continuous while substituting instead a concept of the Self as performative, improvisational, discontinuous and processually constituted by repetitive and stylized acts” (De Villiers 16).

Media studies scholar Nicholas De Villiers considers the aesthetic meanings and consequences of textual opacity. De Villiers, like Newton and her subjects, insists on non-transparent camp performativity as a specifically queer strategy of resistance (Anna T. 7). Camp performativity is a queer technique of resistance that emerged from specific places and times. Places and times like Newton’s. Metis artist David Garneau reminds us that incomprehensibility has been an important anticolonial aesthetic strategy for indigenous communities for many years. Beauty obscures but doesn’t blunt critique. Prettiness and pleasantness render underlying opposition more acceptable, while incomprehensibility scrambles the ability of dominant structures to repel coded resistance (Garneau 16). So, if a text’s subjects’ complex contextual and historicized lives elide visibility, where does that leave us?

“Q: What kind of donut best describes you?”

*“A: For many years my favorite donut was ‘old fashioned plain’... from like Tim Horton’s or any supermarket -- and that sounds like a boring answer! But I loved them as a kid because the texture was so amazing when samples just had been left sitting on a counter, freshly baked, but had been allowed to dry out slightly. The nutmeg-y flavor with the crustiness and creamy inside was absolutely perfect.”
("Fun Moments with Harley Mormon: Part 3")*

Chapter 5: *Don't Dream It, Be It*

*“Whatever happened to Fay Wray?
That delicate satin draped frame
As it clung to her thigh, how I started to cry
'Cause I wanted to be dressed just the same
Give yourself over to absolute pleasure
Swim the warm waters of sins of the flesh
Erotic nightmares beyond any measure
And sensual daydreams to treasure forever
Can't you just see it. Whoa ho ho!
Don't dream it, be it
Don't dream it, be it” (“Fanfare/Don't Dream It”)*

Exhibition Information

Don't Dream It, Be It, Harley Morman
Southern Alberta Art Gallery

Important Dates:

May 11 - June 22, 2024

Installation period: May 1-10, 2024

Articulations Artist Talk 2pm, Saturday, May 11, 2024

Opening Reception: 7pm, Saturday, May 11, 2024

Paint Colour:

Benjamin Moore Swiss Blue 815

RIGHT (NORTH) WALL:

Mirage (2021/2024)

Never Change series (2021)

- *Grade 5*
- *Grade 6 (h)*
- *Grade 7*
- *Grade 8*
- *Grade 9*
- *Grade 10*
- *Grade 11 (h)*
- *Grade 12*

CENTER (EAST) WALL:

Another Megan (2019)

Scorekeeper (2021)

A Megan (2015)

LEFT (SOUTH) WALL:

Timekeepers (2021)

A Harley (2024)

Climbing Rope (2024)

ENTRANCE (WEST) WALL:

Plays (2024)

FLOOR:

Untitled (Floor Lines)

SAAG Associate Curator Adam Whitford and I have been in frequent contact regarding pieces from a public project, *“Downtown Lethbridge”*. Originally intended as temporary punctuation on downtown facades, several transitions in gallery leadership led to the project’s pieces falling through metaphorical and literal cracks. Ten years on, some of the brushed steel elements are still in excellent condition while others had been vandalized or become unsafe, necessitating removal. After a new Executive Director, Su Ying Strang, was hired, I heard that staff had begun going through the gallery’s storage space in preparation for still-upcoming renovations, and I asked if I could have the extra pieces that were never used. SAAG agreed. After deaccessioning paperwork was signed in early fall 2023, Adam asked if I was interested in a meeting. He was specifically interested in lenticular work; that spring the Timekeeper *Lucky Sticker* had been the object of a bidding war at SAAG’s annual art auction. Adam and I talked about the show at the AGA and the work I still wanted to make coming out of that exhibition experience.

Adam offered me the spot across from Art’s Alive and Well in the Schools, SAAG’s annual show of art by K-12 youth. This slightly shortened 5-week exhibition slot is typically filled by group shows of recent University of Lethbridge graduates, and those who want an expanded installation period. Artists filling this space recently have included April Matisz (2023), *The Chisel and the Oak Beam*, a group show curated by Whitford featuring emerging artists Eva Birhanu, Lauren Chipeur, Star Crop Eared Wolf, and Grace Wirzba (2022); *Of Surroundings* curated by Kylie Fineday (2019), and *Body Collective* curated by Courtney Faulkner (2018).

The following was the Southern Alberta Art Gallery’s promotional blurb for *Don’t Dream It, Be It*:

“Harley Morman’s inspirationally titled Don’t Dream It, Be It looks to fun and campy childhood material culture that, combined with self-portraits of the artist,

signifies how identity and gender are constituted over time. Within the schoolhouse atmosphere of the Upper Gallery, Morman combines a series of lenticular self-portraits and “stickers”, assemblages of small toys and erasers, gaffer tape gym lines on the hardwood floor, a sculpture of a climbing rope, and Perler bead self-portraits in various sporting poses. Morman’s material choices are deliberately nostalgic, making the gallery feel something like a junior high school gym. References to the gym and the theatre stage meld together, as the games and sports of childhood are places where gender becomes a learned performance.” (“Harley Morman Don’t Dream It, Be It”)

Artwork Descriptions

A Harley

A bald, bearded figure wearing a plaid shirt and cuffed jeans rides an upright bicycle. A *Harley* is the final fused bead self-portrait in its trio. I lean forward slightly and gaze ahead into the distance. Both knees bent, it is unclear if I’m sitting or standing on one pedal. The suggestion of my bike, beaded in flat periwinkle blues, blends into the blue wall behind before disappearing.

A Harley is composed of just over 25,000 beads in 27 colours. It is based on a photograph taken by Miguelzinta Solís of me riding my bike in an alley. The pose’s casual tone belies how many gliding passes I made before hitting a good, unobscured-by-overhead-lines angle with the photo’s natural lighting. Like the others in the series (and unlike the lenticular portraits), I look like I would if encountered in the represented situation — precisely like myself at the time the photo documents. That’s my favourite blue and orange flannel. My dyed hot coral t-shirt, though rendered illegible by downsampling, is a screenprint by artist Sheri Osden Nault reading ‘Disrupt Settler Colonialism’.



Figure 27: *A Harley* installation view, Southern Alberta Art Gallery

Climbing Rope



Figure 28: *Don't Don't Dream It, Be It* installation view, southwest corner

Climbing Rope is a non-functional sculpture of a thick rope meant to mimic those seen in school and fitness centre gymnasiums. It hung from SAAG's vaulted ceiling, directly to a viewer's left after entering the gallery.

The climbing rope in my elementary school gym was traditional manilla. Its heavy weight hung permanently from exposed steel joists at the roof; a series of pulleys allowed it to be hoisted to one side and out of the way, as it stayed all but a few weeks a year. The highest I ever climbed was to sit on a knot at the bottom—roughly at hip height. My early memories of attempts are linked with pubertal awkwardness and an inchoate sense of gender injustice. I was

outraged at the teacher's insistence that I should be able to shimmy to the top as easily as boys a head shorter than me and less than half my weight.



Figure 29: *Climbing Rope* at Southern Alberta Art Gallery



Figure 30: *Climbing Rope* knot detail

Climbing Rope was knit on a 2.25” circular hoop using two strands of worsted weight yarn. I used my old stash of plastic canvas needlepoint yarn with a mix of primarily synthetic fibres; most of this yarn was thrifted, which accounts for its variation in texture and sheen. Colours already on hand were mixed and alternated to create the rope’s variegated ombré coloration. The rope’s main knitted tube was approximately 18’ long when measured straight. Inside its soft sculpture casing, three doubled lengths of polyester rope provided structure and the point of attachment for a carabiner. The finished rope was approximately 1.75” in diameter. Hanging

from a ~14' high ceiling with two overhand knots at around 2.5 and 6.5 feet above the floor, it trailed in a faux-dusty curl. The yellow rope is dark ruddy brown at the centre, as if years of greasy hands had clung there. Toward the top its colours get brighter until they reach an excited tomato orange. Underneath, the gallery-gym floor is covered with a thin layer of multicoloured fishtank gravel. There are no soft landings here, only noisy failure that leaves inflamed purple impressions on your skin.



Figure 31: Climbing Rope

Architectural floor plan of a rectangular room. The overall dimensions are 50' 9" (15465) in width and 25' 1" (7650) in depth. The plan includes a yellow rectangular area on the left, a red rectangular area in the center, and a purple rectangular area on the right. A central staircase is located between the yellow and red areas. The right side of the room features a large window or glass partition. Dimensions for the internal areas are provided: 6430 (21' 1") for the yellow area, 6275 (20' 6") for the red area, and 6170 (20' 3") for the purple area. The plan also shows a door on the right wall and a small alcove at the bottom center.

Preparator David Hoffos and I approximated the diagram above, adjusting as we went based on what felt and looked right in the space. Although sizes and proportions were largely

improvised, our tape application was careful and exacting; corners were perfectly square, and measurements were aligned to themselves and to the walls. This high level of precision felt necessary for the illusion of the lines' institutionality.

Instead of being permanently painted on the wooden floor, these lines are marked with gaffer tape. Gaffer tape is a type of non-reflective fabric tape that is a staple on film sets for securing loose cords. It has unique properties that make it a generally popular option for temporary patching and marking in media and performing arts. Gaffer tape is not stretchy at all and releases easily without leaving residue; it tears neatly by hand, keeps its shape, and is less slippery than shiny synthetic tapes. The five colours used for the drawing were all rich, saturated matte. Most lines were laid with 2" tape, with some details on the purple courts in 1".

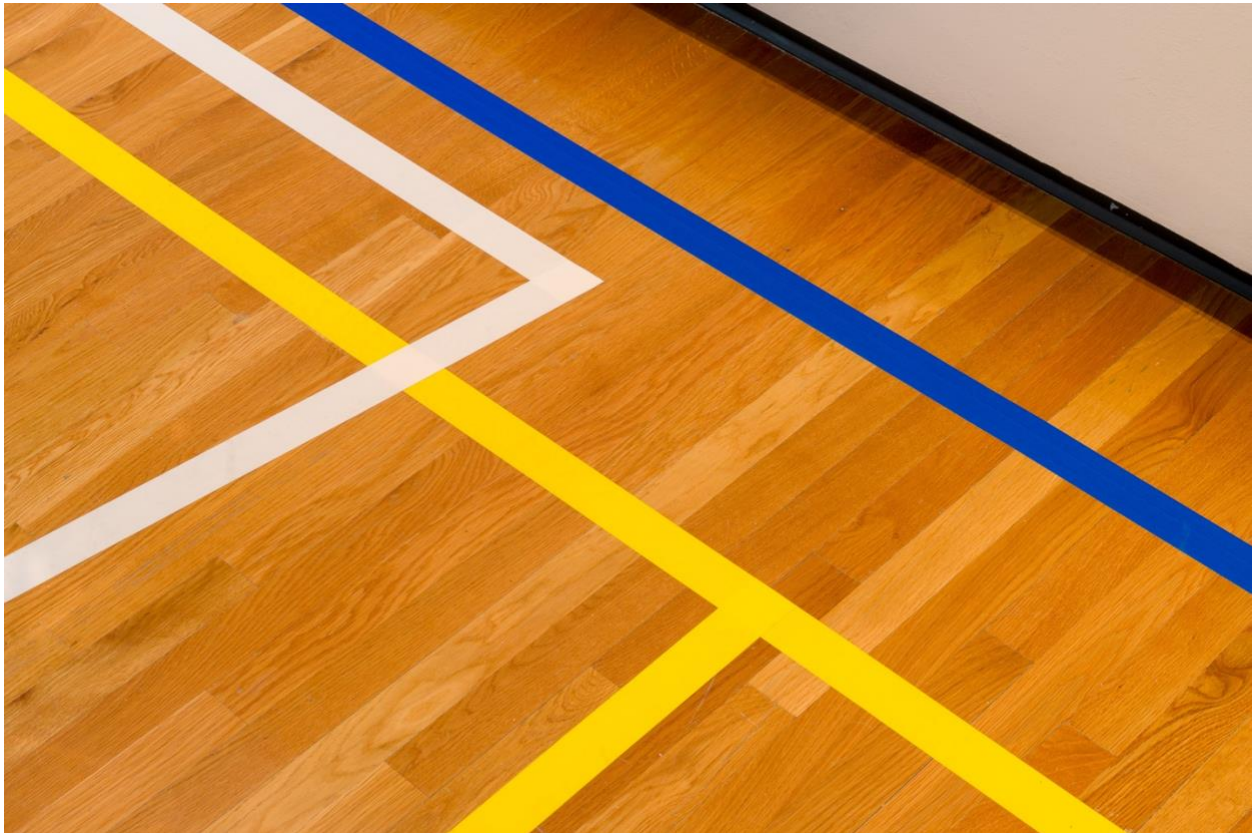


Figure 33: *Untitled (Floor Lines)* detail underneath *Scorekeeper*

Plays

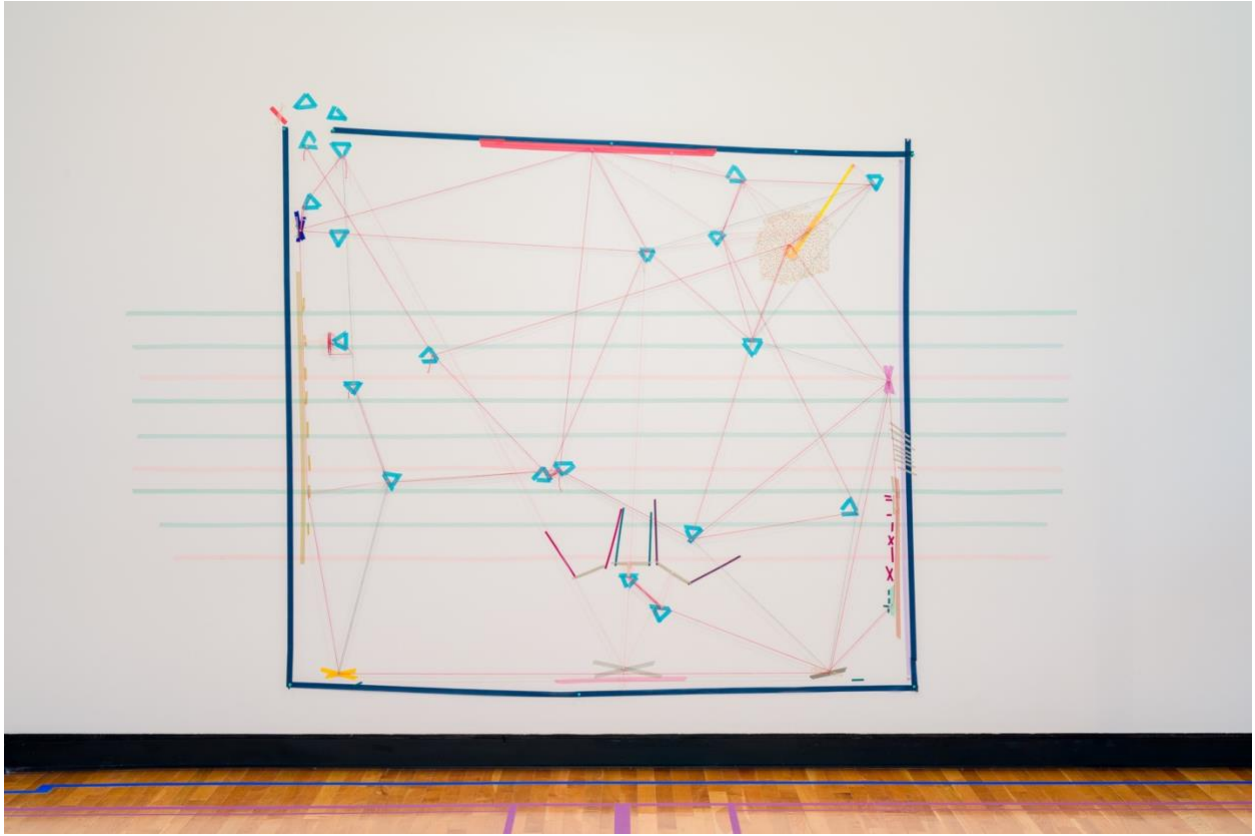


Figure 34: *Plays*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery

Plays was a drawing with paper (washi) tape, cotton string and tacks on the east wall of the space. *Plays* referenced the style of a coaching diagram, suggesting a number of possible plays on the field of the gallery space.

As a ground, long blue and pink lines extend beyond the main field bounded by a dark blue outline; the lines' colour and spacing are based on penmanship practice paper for young children. A nearly-unnoticeable background, this element of the drawing was carefully leveled, unlike the lines and forms which were added on top of them. After leveling these lines, drawing *Plays* happened very quickly.

Although creating some version of a large wall drawing with paper tape had been in my plans or the exhibition for months, I didn't have a concrete plan for how to proceed, much less for what it should look like or result in, until partway through installation after the floor's court lines were finished. As a drawing, *Plays* was intuitive and process driven. The size is scaled to my body, its height was determined by how high I could reach. The main area of *Plays* was approximately 7' square, inside of which are simple tape marks (lines, crosses and triangles) and string lines. Pastel thumb tacks hold tape lines in place and provide points of attachment for string. In its style and execution, *Plays* is nearly the opposite of the other drawing in the space—the exacting tape drawing on the floor. Working quickly and imprecisely as if outlining an idea on a bar napkin, I sketched with tape. *Plays* proceeded from my assumption of the gallery as a kind of playing field.

The tape I used, often known as washi tape because of its Japanese origins, is typically translucent and made from rice paper. It is similar in texture to masking tape, but thinner and narrower with a more gentle adhesive. Since its wide popularization after the turn of the millennium, washi tape has become popular for papercrafts like scrapbooking and wrapping gifts. It is available in a massive variety of colours, prints, and patterns.

Late on the second Thursday afternoon of install, and without regard to the specificities of its shape, I delineated the gallery's borders with thick navy-blue tape. I arrived the next day to find the navy tape sagging, having unadhered from the paint. Instead of replacing it, I tacked it into place. Next, I used more tape to mark the locations of each of the artworks in the space and major gallery features. Blue tape triangles represented viewers or places from which to view. Last I ran lines of string between tacks. String lines represented both potential movement/physical trajectories and lines of sight among and between markers.

Recalling some parts of my thinking process is a challenge because I was very deeply ‘in the zone’, but I remember intending for the lines to both suggest certain interactions and depict the sorts of interactions that I expected viewers to have. Following the string’s line of flight, a viewer sees that it runs between triangles and artworks, and from triangles to other triangles. Some triangles have thick string wrapping, appearing to be deeply engaged with a single X. Other especially social triangles don’t seem to be paying attention to the Xs at all. I imagined a few of the triangles as representing specific people—but I’m not telling.

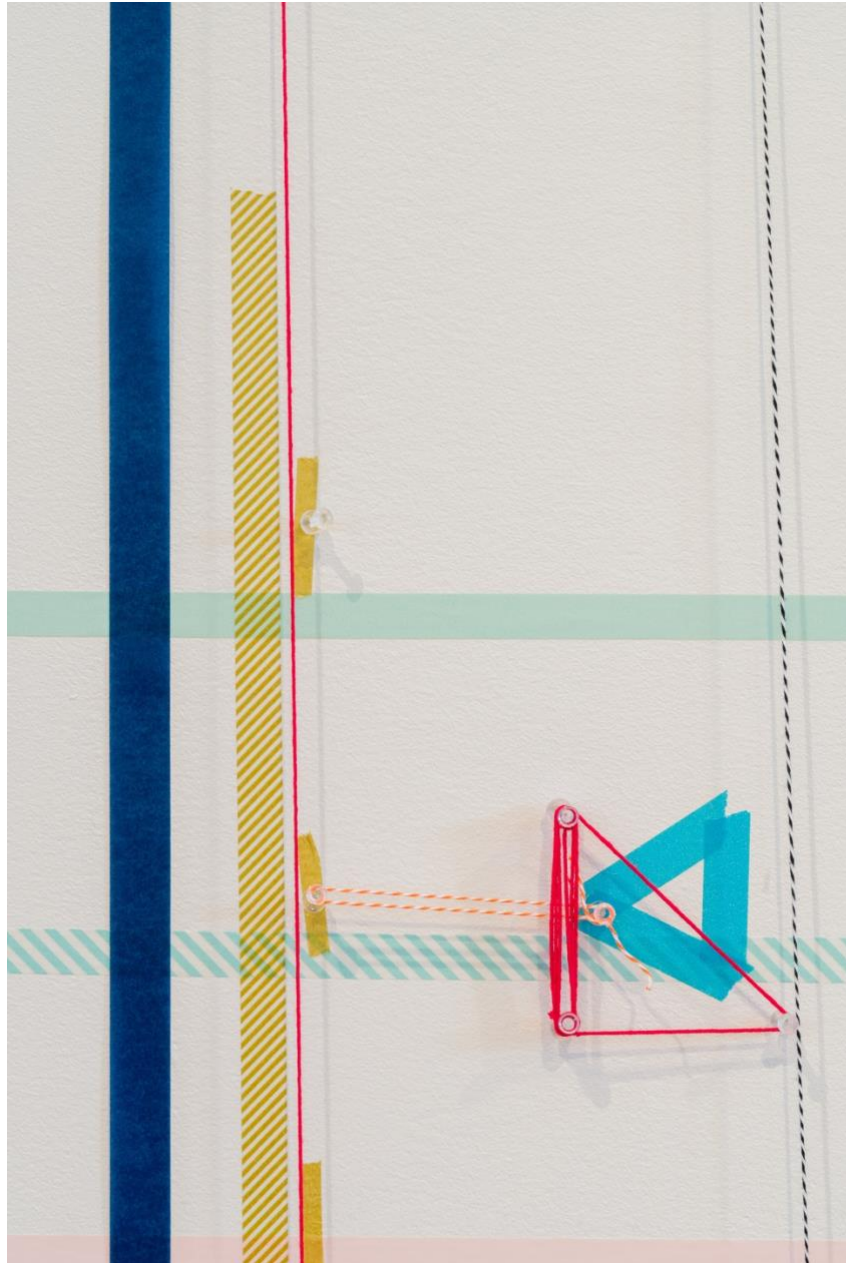


Figure 35: *Plays* detail

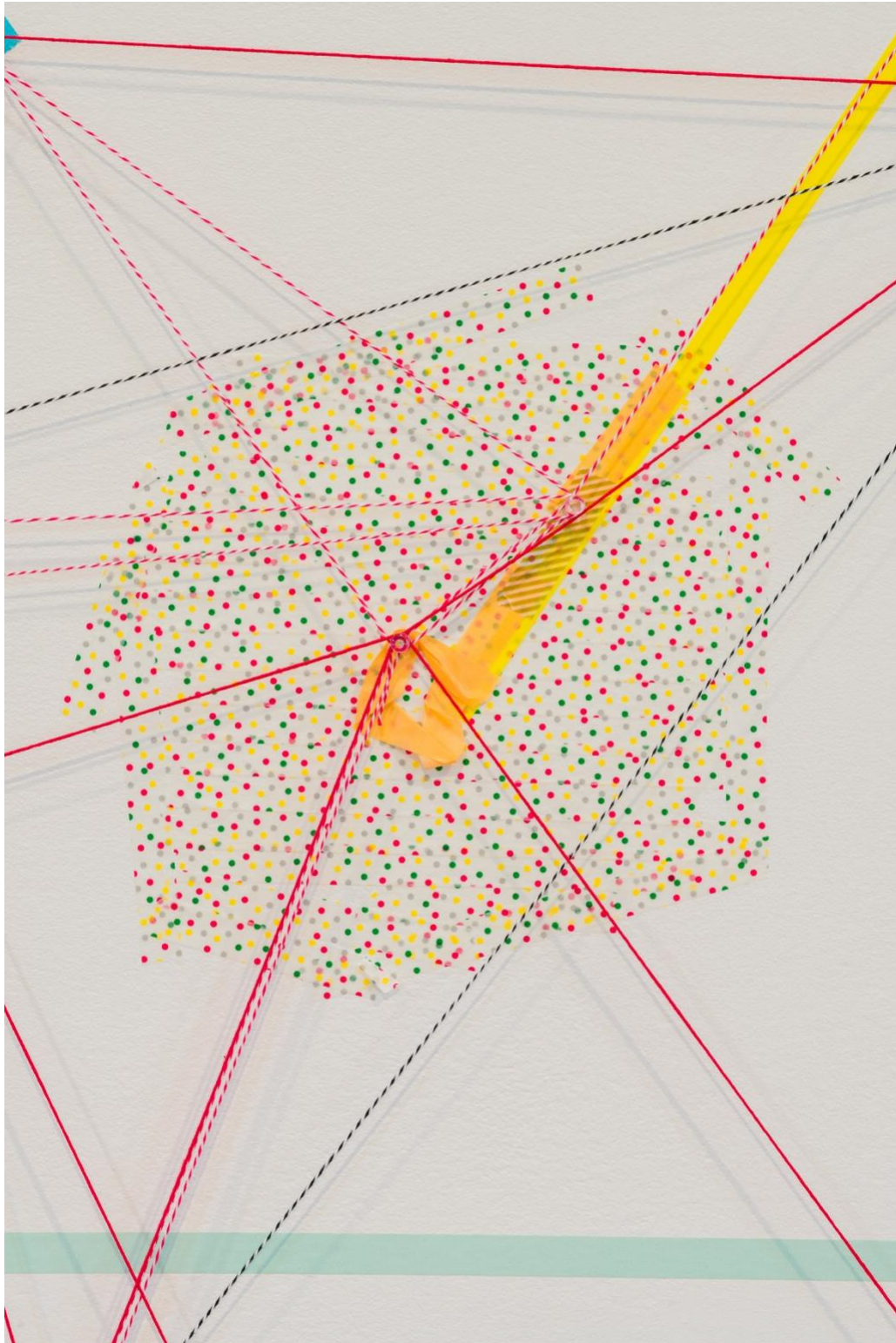


Figure 36: *Plays* detail

Mirage



Figure 37: *Mirage*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery

At the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, *Mirage* and the erasers were displayed in a glass and metal cabinet, 45” high by 31” wide and 12” deep. Items were spread over two glass shelves and its metal bottom. The cabinet’s glass top enabled bright lighting over all the small objects; viewers could peer directly down at the illusion and items. This freestanding cabinet was significantly larger than the painted glass-topped plinth at AGA; similar plinths are used to display delicate artifacts and documents; the deep blue cabinet from Ikea read more as a faux-industrial or institutional vintage display. In a heavier-duty version, it would have looked equally at home in a machine shop or high school science classroom.

Because of the ample space I was able to include more of my eraser collection and a variety of other objects on the bottom shelf. These included toys, games, novelties, and assorted bits and pieces leftover from elsewhere in the show: a candy-coloured enamel ‘Skill Ball’ game board; the metal box from a toy ‘Fix Master Tool Set’ piled with plastic chains; a disc-shaped enamel top printed with a tight black and white spiral; black and yellow cotton hankies, assorted decorative metal chains, and plastic beads and glitter.

Never Change

Layout of *Never Change* was similar to the way it was at AGA; the portrait series lined the centre of the gallery’s north & largest wall, youngest closest to the entrance. However, minor changes encouraged subtly different readings. First, the series was hung on a traditional matte white wall instead of bright green. The wall’s (lack of) colour made both the entire space brighter and more open. Being the standard wall colour for modern exhibition spaces, the white paint supported interpretations of the portraits as singular art objects, rather than an installation. Again, the light boxes were flush mounted with decorative plastic-&-paper-clip chains and oversized nailheads.

At SAAG, the light boxes' cords were hidden by cord channel. I have used similar frames for several projects in the past mostly at smaller public galleries and their long, bulky cords always present a challenge. This is the first time my light boxes have had a large enough exhibition budget for the costly product that is specifically designed to do that job. This sounds like a minor detail, but was satisfying because it eliminated any need to worry about them. Often my practice draws attention to small exhibition details on purpose (like with the mirror shapes at AGA), but there is a big difference between things that appear messy and unfinished on purpose and those that just *are* messy. The cord channel let me draw viewers' attention to the elements I wanted to highlight (lenticular effects and the light boxes' fake hanging hardware) by deemphasizing extraneous details.

Timekeepers



Figure 38: *Timekeepers*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery

Timekeepers at SAAG included most of the same pieces but in a different configuration. One exception was *Lucky Sticker*, the lenticular rainbow pony with a golden horseshoe, which was sold. Formerly-recalcitrant clock *Wow, Mom...* which had been such a problem at AGA, had some time to think and decided to shape up. *Wow, Mom...* appeared at SAAG denuded of its moody black overlays, revealing the pleasant teals and pinks of its once-hidden lenticular base layer. Because the alarm clock was with *Another Megan*, its place on the glass shelf with *Best Boy* was taken by a vintage strawberry-print coffee mug from SAAG's kitchen.

Two white wooden benches also sat against the Timekeepers' light blue wall. These benches functioned as seating for visitors...while also representing the proverbial 'bench' to which players may be sent as punishment.

Scorekeeper



Figure 39: *Scorekeeper*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery

At SAAG, the *Scorekeeper* transmitted affect very differently than at AGA. Hanging high on the west wall underneath a large, bright window, *Scorekeeper* appeared neither threatening nor threatened. Rather, its mirrors sparkled and the encrusted toys seemed almost playful. Physically, *Scorekeeper* and its mirrors were installed in a nearly identical configuration, but the spaciousness of the space resulted in different forms and trajectories of viewer reflection-interaction. *Scorekeeper*'s changes and their effects are explored in detail in the walkthrough section.



Figure 40: View facing gallery entrance with display of tiny erasers

SAAG bought miniature erasers for patrons to take home as souvenirs. An assortment of a dozen extruded animal and fruit shapes were piled on a plinth on the 2nd floor landing outside the gallery entrance: smiling multicoloured cats, bears, bunnies and frogs with flowers behind their ears. Watermelon slices were the first to disappear, leaving a pile of loose grapes and tropical fish.

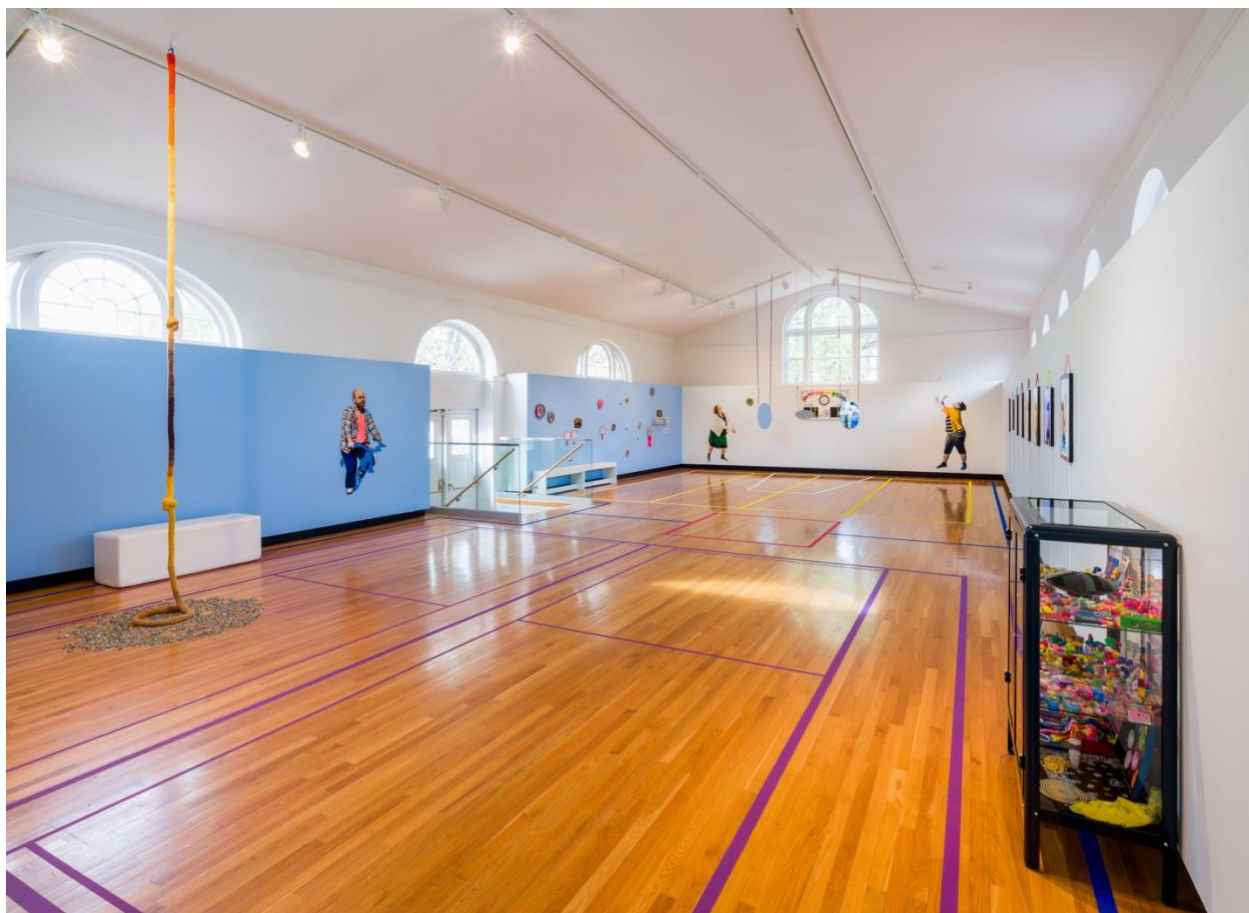


Figure 41: *Don't Dream It, Be It* wide view

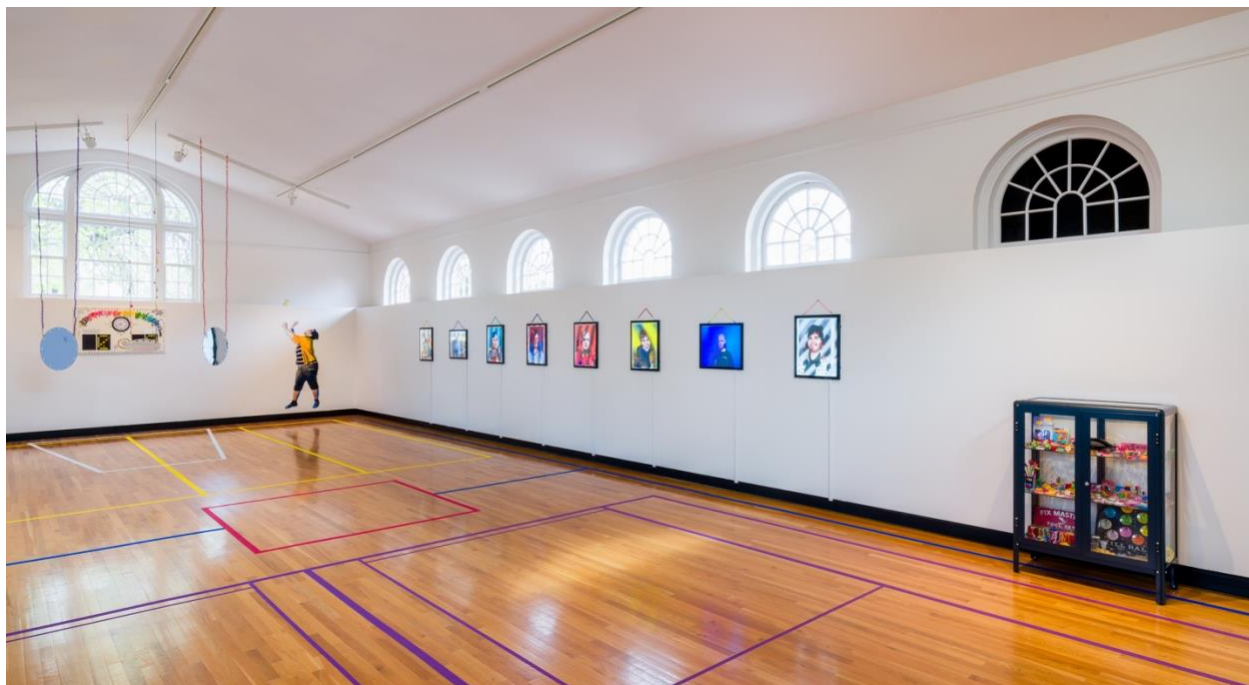


Figure 42: *Don't Dream It, Be It* wide view



Figure 43: *Don't Dream It, Be It* wide view

Walkthrough

The third transcript which follows records a conversation with Miguelzinta Solís on Saturday, June 22, 2024. It was independently worked into an article he wrote about *Don't Dream It, Be It* for the journal *Femme Art Review*. Here, a further take on the exhibition as installed in the Southern Alberta Art Gallery is presented as part of a dialogue. Several voices and many characters make an appearance here, interacting with artwork and each other (just like wall drawing *Plays* seemingly directed).

Miguel and I made plans to meet at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in the late afternoon following the Pride parade. It was the last day of the exhibition. As the festival's designated quiet area, SAAG's cool and shady main floor was bustling around circular tables which had been set with stations of fusible beads. While waiting for Miguel and recorder/transcriber Nayan to arrive, I entered the washroom and was recognized immediately as the artist from upstairs. I guess there were a lot of me up there. Back in the foyer, gallery staff Heather Kehoe offered us wedges of savoury homemade cornbread. Miguel finally arrived, Nayan and friend Kainai photographer Terrance Houle in tow, and we clustered around the cornbread near the gallery's front desk reminiscing and gossiping. When Houle eventually left for a patio, Miguel, Nayan and I headed upstairs.

Interviewee: Harley Morman
Interviewer: Migueltzinta Solís
Date: Saturday, 24/6/2024
Location: Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge
Transcription: Nayan Velaskar

Harley: Harley Morman
Miguel: Migueltzinta Solís

Harley: "There are a lot of different Harleys here. There's the one that is me, that is my body—"

Miguel: "That I'm talking to."

Harley: "Yes, that is speaking. But there are a multiplicity. [Gestures expansively around the room] The most recent one is called *A Harley*. It's the fused bead piece behind me that I had been making in W871. It took up most of my time during April after classes ended, before install."

Miguel: "What was so time-consuming about the work?"

Harley: "There are three fused bead works in this show, and each one of them represents me at a different stage of my transition, which wasn't the plan at first. When I made the first *Megan*—the one that looks like it's trying to catch something, or diving for that clock—that *A Megan* was made during my MFA for another project called *All My Faculties* that was essentially me bouncing around the volleyball- or balloon-like heads of teachers who I had worked with during my MFA. I had worked with Perler beads often before, and at the time I made that [*A Megan*] in 2016 it represented a new direction in terms of size and complexity of the pieces, and in terms of the way I was using and interpreting color information. I wanted to make more of them.

"Later, the second one is from 2019. It was made for the Dunlop [Art Gallery in Regina, SK] for an exhibition of queer art on the prairies. I made it because I wanted to have a set that incorporated the other large one. Each pattern I make of these gets bigger and more complicated. *A Harley* took a long time, much longer than they normally do, because of the detail of my plaid overshirt."

I began using fused beads for portraiture in mid-2012 as a comparatively faster, easier craft medium than needlepoint, my previous favourite. Fused beads sold under the brand name Perler are the most commonly available in North America. Swapping media fundamentally affected

how I work: I can't curl up with a portrait on my couch, or easily bring a portrait to a friend's house in a tote bag. Laying out fused beads requires spacious tables that can remain undisturbed. As sizes and complexity grow, so do my work's needs in terms of infrastructure and support from institutions. *A Harley* clocked in at over 25,000 beads and 27 colours and is the largest and most complex of the series. To compare, *Another Megan* was around 21,500 and the first (*A Megan*) around 19,000. Previous fused bead series *Art Party's* (2012-14) queer performance artists averaged around 17,000. The University of Lethbridge Art Department's generous technicians let me use space in the classroom W871 during late April to complete *A Harley*.

Miguel: "This idea of increasing complexity over the course of multiple iterations of Harleys correlates to the complexity of embodiment across these different replications of self. But because of the temporal and kinetic elements it becomes more than just about gender. I'm curious about the gestures or actions that the figures are doing."

Harley: "Each of the fused bead figures represents an evolution of complexity in how I'm working with material, but also in terms of the stances that each of the figures assumes. Each one plays off the others and could be understood as a direct response to the ones that came before. In the first self portrait of the trio, *A Megan* made back in 2016, I'm pictured in a diving-like action pose."



Figure 44: Snapshot of fused bead working process for *A Harley*, University of Lethbridge W871,
April 30, 2024



Figure 45: Installation shot of *A Megan* (2016) in *Don't Dream It, Be It*

Originally, I had wanted *A Megan* to look like my beaded simulacrum was attempting and sometimes failing to return balloon-like fused bead faces that were coming toward me. In my MFA exhibition, *Assume the Position*, the smiling faces of faculty with whom I had worked during my degree were bouncing all over the place: up high, on the floor, some very large as if flying directly at the viewer. I wanted it to look like I was actively interacting with them; this larger work from which *A Megan* was excerpted illustrated the challenges of ‘keeping balls in the air’ in academia but also represented a social perspective on epistemology.

The origin of referring to my bodily positions in this trio with volleyball terminology is rooted in *A Megan*’s origin as ‘idea-balloon-bouncer’. If you look at my posture, the ‘diving’ pose is very much a responsive one and a bit hesitant. My hands are clasped together and with wrists flattened, in the way that I was taught you’re supposed to hit a volleyball... But I am watching; that figure is looking up toward the clock on the wall but my pose is very much a ‘ready’ one, but not a ‘go’ stance yet. My body never really understood how to hit a volleyball.

Volleyball was a highly gendered sport that, as a girl growing up in the midwestern United States, I was called upon to play in school. Because of how my vision is, it’s also a sport that I am basically hopeless at and always have been. I’m just incapable of seeing things that come at me fast...saying I have no hand-eye coordination is an understatement.



Figure 46: Installation shot of *Another Megan* (2019) in *Don't Dream It, Be It*

Harley: "In the second self-portrait [*Another Megan*], my hands are up. For its source photo I was trying to mimic a 'set', so it looks a bit more active. Here in this exhibition, I'm reaching up toward an alarm clock that is sitting on the top of the wall.

"For the third, initially I wasn't sure if it would 'go' because it is such a different sport—I'm riding a bicycle—but eventually I decided that it was appropriate. A *Harley* is set away from the others. The first two, located on either side of *Scorekeeper*, are a symmetrical set, but this is something else. Although it is physically separate, you can tell from the eyeline that *A Harley* is watching what's happening with the other two. This self is the only one that appears to be acting of its own volition"

In other words: the more feminine selves appear to be frantically reacting to things happening around them, while the more masculine one stands back. These layers of gendering in the physical relationships among selves were not intentional choices on my part, but I'm happy that this is one possible reading. In all, this presents a rather obvious example of the extent to which reading artwork in situ can change viewer interpretations.

Miguel: "Part of what delights me about the positions and the setting of the whole show as a space, is this hypothetical engagement with sport." [Laughs]

Harley: "The lines on the floor seem to be fooling people, and that's what they're supposed to do, but they're not based on any specific court or diagram. I feel like they have the potential for many hybrid games, underneath the *Scorekeeper*'s mirrors there is a 'basketball key', a phrase which I only learned after I [had a desire] to make one. The allusions to sport and activity in general are not references to actual practices, it's more a field on which actors play. (laughs) ...I just love it though--the lines on the floor are definitely my favorite part of the exhibition."

Miguel: "They look incredible on the hardwood."

Harley: "People who aren't familiar with the space come in and think that it is or was formerly a gym. Most of the time, the references that are most integral to my thinking about a show are not visible in it. Obviously, I don't expect personal stories to be discernible in the work; it's not necessary. But I wanted the gallery to look and feel like a school gym. In school, I only participated in physical activities when I was forced by teachers. I would sit on folded-up bleachers or benches doing crafts. [gestures at two white benches

along blue wall] During recess in grade 3 I made a really *really* long ball of finger knitting."

Finger knitting is an easy yarn craft that doesn't need needles or other special implements. Similar to spool knitting, it makes use of the fingers on one's non-dominant hand as the 'pegs' around which one loops yarn. Over the school year I sequentially used 5 skeins of sport-weight acrylic, each variegated white and a different pastel colour. Pink >blue >yellow >purple >green, wrapped into a tight ball.

Miguel: "So you knitted as an athletic activity as you sat in a gym..."

Harley: "I was doing a repetitive activity with my body. I was *practicing*—just playing a different game." [Laughs]

Miguel: [Gestures toward the confetti-coloured pool under *Climbing Rope*] "...is that aquarium gravel?"

Harley: "Yes! It felt important for this knitted rope to *look* as threatening as the original object felt to me. The aquarium gravel would be very uncomfortable. If you attempted to climb this and fell, you'd land hard on a jabby, unforgiving surface."

Preparing for the show, I was unsure about how best to delineate the climbing rope's space on top of the larger floor drawing. I considered a few different things: interlocking foam floor tiles, a pillow, some sort of tumbling mat situation...But those things provide cushioning so they didn't feel dangerous enough. I packed up tubs full of options hoping that one would feel right, but after the first two days of install none did. That night I went home and began looking for inspiration in the bins of random materials that I have amassed over the years during my practice but never used. Underneath tufts of Easter grass, between containers of unsorted lead type and vintage 1/4" tiles salvaged from a bathroom renovation, I found a bag of dusty aquarium gravel that intuitively felt right. It had been rescued from the Art Department's bins for repurposable 'garbage'.

Miguel: "That would probably stick to your skin and leave those little indents."

Harley: "Oh yeah, it would be messy for sure"

Miguel: "And noisy..."

Harley: "The gravel is its own security in that it makes noise if you step on it. You can hear it easily outside of the gallery."

Miguel: "When I saw the map on the wall of the space, the thing that made me realize that it was a diagram—a bird's eye view of the space—was the gravel in the upper right corner."

At *Pride*, a friend told me about using the map as instructions. This was a use I imagined while I sketched it, but didn't know if anyone would think to—or be able to—interpret it that literally. He told me that he stood in the space between the hanging mirrors and the scoreboard because he understood the map as directing him there. At AGA, the small space and dramatic lighting invited viewers to stand in between. At SAAG there is much more maneuvering room; people give the mirrors a berth because between them isn't an obvious open space to stand.

Plays is also a surprisingly accurate representation of my visual dizziness. The whole square of the 'field' is rotated like a spiral in precisely the way things are spinning for me all the time.

Miguel: "Previously you described *Plays* as the most important work here, as well as uncomfortable and I'm curious about those seemingly different things are related."

Harley: "The floor and wall drawings feel exciting because they are new. Fully intuitive making can be scary. I was just throwing tape up on the wall without being concerned with having things be accurately to scale. The process of making the drawing on the wall felt completely different from the floor's process. *Plays* was hypothetically meant to represent a real thing that's all around of us but the drawings on the floor feel like a very careful representation of something imaginary. That feels like an important dichotomy here."

Baudrillard begins *Simulacra & Simulation* by referencing a fable from Borges:

Cartographers make a map so huge and perfect that it exactly covers precisely the territory it

supposedly represents. When the country underneath the map ceases to exist, shreds and bits of the map remain (Baudrillard "Precession" 1). Writing in 1981, for him this fable functioned as an incomplete metaphor for the present day and the paradox of representation. The original or 'real', Baudrillard famously claimed, no longer exists. Its replacement, the hyperreal, is continually produced through its own reproduction. No longer enveloped by the imaginary, the hyperreal is a copy of a copy that becomes 'reality' (2).

Miguel: "I want to go back to the game, again. What is this game? Our friend Nayan who is helping record the interview has been wandering around the room, dancing, flitting, floating... is he playing the game right? [Laughs]

Harley: [Giggles nervously] "Yeah, he's definitely playing the game right. A lot of my past work has been concerned with galleries and institutions and their rules and conventions. Anyway, I didn't imagine any one specific kind of sport or game happening in here within the boundaries of these lines. What I expected—and what happened to some extent—is that people would take them for granted as being natural. [The lines are] obviously there, but are something that doesn't necessarily require attention. They blend into the background. The exhibition actively encourages you to ignore the tape on the floor because everything is happening on top of them. The work is placed essentially without regard to the drawing on the floor. [*Mirage's* cabinet is] right on top of the lines, as is the area of the climbing rope."

There is no correct way to play the hypothetical imaginary game suggested by the drawings. That is their point. If one incorrectly assumes that the gallery space really was a former gymnasium instead of a library, the lines become analogies for old, outdated use-structures. In that sense the lines on the floor become like leftovers, old infrastructure that has been there for so long that everyone ignores it (or thinks that they do). Taking *Untitled (Floor Lines)* as new more directly produces the question of purpose. *Untitled (Floor Lines)* remained unrepresented in *Plays*, largely because I anticipated that including them in the second drawing might feel too direct or instructional. Its ambiguous courts more referenced the idea of games and competition

rather than specific sports themselves. In my MFA research, I suggested play as a kind of remediation for the stress of being in close proximity to institutions. One might interpret *Untitled (Floor Lines)* as taking my advice regarding a playful stance.

Miguel: "Yeah, totally. Maybe the last question in relation to the game if we go back to the scoreboard..."

Harley: "*Scorekeeper* is one of the things that I have shown before. It was in the iteration of the show that was at the AGA. There, it was much more prominent because of the lighting, the colour of the walls and the way the space was set up. It was the focus of the entire room there, but it's not necessarily that prominent in this space. It reads not as the single most important thing a viewer sees, but as one among many."

Miguel: [Walks over to the 'inside' of the mirror-bounded space] "This is actually kind of stressful. I'm visually implicated in the question of *Scorekeeper*, which I wasn't when I was looking at it in reverse."

Harley: "Yeah you are! I love when people take selfies with the reflection. On one hand, it is colourful and full of glittery beads, but in its ambiguity I think of it as another possibly-threatening piece, similarly to how the dirty climbing rope might be unsettling just by its presence in the space."

Miguel: "It's a looming metric."

Harley: "Alongside references to time, mirrors visually involve a person and their body at a specific moment. In this space it's hard to not realize that you're a viewer, which I keep insisting on hitting people over the head with. Much of my work plays with implicating the viewer in unusual actions or situations. Looking into a mirror can feel like going back in time, in a way."

Pragmatically, so much looking at and comparing different versions of my body may make viewers extra aware of their own body's appearance. Mirror scenes have long been a trope of trans autobiography. "[T]he split of the mirror captures the definitive splitting of the transsexual subject, freezes it, frames it schematically in narrative" (Prosser 100). Mirrors emphasize the split between felt and embodied gender. In Lacan's mirror phase we come to know ourselves as

subjects through seeing ourselves reflected by and through others; but rather than validating a social identity, the trans mirror scene reveals what we aren't...yet.

In his book on the Wachowski sisters, Cael Keegan considers how *The Matrix* uses mirror reflections to analogize its stylized cinematic choices with trans affects and subtle messages about the gender binary (Keegan *Lana and Lilly Wachowski* 34). In one of its most famous scenes near the beginning of the film, the protagonist Neo (Keanu Reeves) meets Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), who offers him a choice. As Morpheus holds out his hands, one with a red the other with a blue pill, we see two subtly different Neos reflected in each of the lenses of Morpheus' round mirrored sunglasses. In one lens, Neo reaches for a red pill, in the other a blue pill remains. From this point on, Keegan writes,

“Neo will be doubled—simultaneously alive and sensing in two different registers. ... he is both visually reflected (in mirrored surfaces and across genders with Trinity’s) and narratively duplicated across the virtual/actual border between cinematic worlds. ... [T]he mirror will become a sensorial transition—on the other side of which Neo will find yet another of his bodies, waiting for him. As he sits anticipating the red pill’s effects, Neo notices a mirror in which his reflection first appears shattered, referencing the amalgamated, cut-up mode of transsexual aesthetics.” (Keegan *Lana and Lilly Wachowski* 35-36).

The first thing many people ask about the show is what *Scorekeeper* is tracking. Audiences, not seeing an immediate referent, may sneak a glance around the room's edges in search of tendrils. I should confess to being excessively complimented by viewer wariness. My practice revels in minor trickery.

The 'threat' of *Scorekeeper* is largely in the idea that someone or something faceless might be watching and accounting for you. Tracking your performance — it makes sense that the first question engaged audiences have often regards its subject.

Early in developing *Time Warp* I considered including aluminum/acrylic domes of the type that once disguised security equipment in department stores. Also useful for seeing around the corners in large, crowded spaces, they would have blended seamlessly with the architecture at the AGA. Materially the shape of the domed safety mirrors would have had interesting resonances with the other mirrors and as well as the similarly shaped lenticules overlaying the portraits. I decided against this direction because I wanted to discourage readings that would focus on the culture of security and surveillance. (As a topic it has the wrong gender!) Both *Scorekeeper* and the Timekeepers are paranoid, but ultimately, surveillance in both shows was bidirectional. A Foucauldian sense of implication as both watcher and watched, looker and looked-at, is central to both exhibitions.

To me, the question of what *Scorekeeper* might track is less interesting than *why* or *to what ends*. As it was craftily ‘homemade’ rather than professionally produced, what does that mean about the person who made it? (Did they consent to being accounted for? Is it some sort of hobby? How into it are they?)

Finally is *Scorekeeper*’s ultimate incapacity. It is functionally incapable of keeping track of anything, and seems to actively work against anyone attempting to read it. The clock runs backward, its text is reversed and needs to be seen in a mirror. Its lenticular “numbers” confound. Even when you manage to position yourself for a solid glimpse of a score, the lenticular numbers just alternate between 0 and 1. This refusal to be read feels defensive, rather than offensive. Presented under bright natural light at the SAAG, *Scorekeeper* is no longer in the shadows. It isn’t cowering anymore so might not be preparing to target anyone.

Harley: “Transition which was a huge [consideration] when I was making *Scorekeeper* in 2021, and still an easy way into [the work]: competition as a bodily metaphor but also tracking in terms of the timelines of transition and the physical changes, but also of growth

and of change in general."

Miguel: "We both know that within trans experience and trans communities, there is a narrative [strain] that is weirdly competitive: 'Whose transition is the best?' and 'who's doing it right?'"

Harley: "And who is **not** doing it right! It's one of the things everyone knows and nobody really likes... but also that you end up participating in anyway because it is such a ubiquitous part of intra-trans discourse."

Miguel: "I definitely see the sinister side—it's funny because this is why I wanted to talk to you... A lot of people are like, 'It's playful!', 'It's a game!', and 'It's a fun thing, kids will love it'".

Harley: "Yes it is those things, and kids do absolutely love it. And I love that they love it, but [playfulness] is only one reading and it's not the most interesting one. As I'm standing [across the gallery] through the arc of the mirrors, I'm looking at the lenticulars over there and thinking about how the stripes look like bars.

"I've heard from the occasional trans person that the lenticulars made them uncomfortable. It's not feedback I hear often, but I'm not surprised by it at all. Because I started hormones as an adult and had already been practicing for years, it was not even a thought that I could or might want to be secretive,. But I realize that this is a very different desire than the one which is sometimes reflected by younger trans people and their families."

Miguel: "We've talked before about how transness has different generations that are not necessarily attached to chronological time. The ways in which I feel you and I are of a similar trans generation even though you started your transition later in life than I did and our transitions happened within distinct decades of trans history and discourse. But [because of shared cultural reference points] it's very different than the other generations that are simultaneously unfolding but are distinct."

Harley: "You're always teasing me by saying how my gender is anachronistic, my gender is a time period. Which is pretty accurate, I have to say."

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This support paper documents two solo exhibitions in public galleries in Alberta. It mobilizes the lenticular as a formal analogy, where its unique lensed, parallel-yet-circular shape enables a looping retrospection. It argues that as a conceptual shape, the lenticular can convey unique affective relations to time and memory.

Over the course of my degree, I have used research-creation and autotheoretical methods to explore the aesthetic capacities of the lenticular to convey change over the passage of time, particularly with reference to trans genders. This research began with knowledge emerging from my embodied social experiences of episodic physical and sensory disability. Critical phenomenologies of disability and trans genders are an implicit aspect of my methodology, as well as subjects of aesthetic inquiry. At the AGA, *Let's Do the Time Warp Again* allowed me to explore lenticular imaging at a time immediately post-top surgery, when I was still getting used to being read socially as a man. *Time Warp* responded to and reflected these shimmering anxieties. Several years later, *Don't Dream It, Be It* felt like a retrospective. These two exhibitions foregrounded one subject's personal experiences of both aging and undergoing shifts in the shared perception of gender. In speaking directly to intimate, sometimes-messy aspects of social embodiment, they insinuate a shifting, plastic version of self and hint toward a deterritorialization of trans identity. In other words, the exhibitions advocate for a more complex, nuanced understanding of social gender. Particularly in *Never Change*, the artwork's *lenticularity* forwards an aesthetic argument about simultaneous and sequential temporalities of perception. This support paper, "Feeling Time and Change Through the Lenticular" documented the processes and products of my research and facilitated its exploration of trans aesthetic forms. The narrative scraps and threads interleaved throughout were consciously chosen. My multifold

intentions for them are literary rather than explanatory. In other words, they convey affect; they foreshadow proximal social, conceptual, and scholarly contexts. In this, I suggest an interlaced autotheoretical form inspired by lenticular as an effective formal vehicle. In its capacity as a shape, I understand ‘the lenticular’ as constituted by juxtaposition, perpetual change and ever-resolving betweenness.

In *Reconstructing Dixie*, white settler scholar Tara McPherson uses flipping lenticular images as a metaphor for the style of binary imaginative logic that she argues is pervasive in 20th century representations of the American South. McPherson’s 2003 book is the only example of which I am currently aware, in which an academic text engages substantively with lenticular images as an analogy. For McPherson a ‘lenticular logic’ is “a schema by which histories or images that are actually co-present get presented (structurally, ideologically) so that only one of the images can be seen at a time” (McPherson *Reconstructing* 7). Such representational ordering cloaks and represses connections between concepts that are actually intertwined and co-arising. For McPherson, this matters because it allows the unmooring of whiteness from blackness and from their historical and material connections—thus obscuring the real workings of race and power. Importantly, she argues that the lenticular as she understands it is not just a visual strategy, but “a way of organizing knowledge about the world” (25). Disciplinarily, *Reconstructing Dixie* can be described as within a framework of American cultural studies and cinema studies. Ethically, the book’s larger project is one of “antiessentialist racial critique that investigates how race, an unstable category, gets fixed, particularly in relation to gender, in specific landscapes and temporalities. Put differently, this project explores how race is made via narrative and image at precise moments in place and time” (27).

In the introduction, McPherson lays out her terms. She glosses lenticular images as using a unique lens which allows a viewer to see only one of two views at a time; “shifting the postcard slightly brings the second image into focus, displacing the first” (26). She describes one representative specimen from her personal collection of lenticular postcards: an antebellum mansion “with a hoopskirted young lady in the foreground” (26), which tilted to reveal its darker twin, a stereotypical fat mammy figure with a broad smile. Choice of image juxtaposition aside, McPherson notices the card’s structural logic. Even as the two figures are conjoined, she claims, the card’s internal logic makes it difficult or impossible to view both images together. She associates the lenticular with a bevy of intellectual sins—foremost its obscurantist *separation* of images and subjects from their contexts (253).

McPherson is looking for a word that can capture and describe nuanced facets of racial representations. She prefers ‘lenticular’ to ‘covert’ in describing the economies of visibility at play because the latter implies conscious sneakiness rather than structural overdetermination. She claims “lenticular logic is capable of representing both black and white; but one approaches the limits of this logic when one attempts to understand how the images are joined or related. Such a positioning naturalizes images and their possible meanings, erasing context and connections” (McPherson *Reconstructing* 26). In other words, by using lenticular film as a material analogy she can better describe the buried discrepancies and tensions among the ideologies that fix race through images.

Writing in 2003, McPherson makes important and still-timely arguments about the systems of thought underlying rationalizations of whiteness and racial difference. I do not argue that her conclusions about Southern American media texts and their tropes are wrong. Her claims about the effects of the ‘structural logic’ which she terms *lenticular* are themselves reasonable. They

make logical and affective sense following from the description of her understanding of her own analogy. But the problem with her instrumental analogization should be obvious to readers who have come this far—her understanding of the actual visual tendencies of lenticular images is basic at best.

While it is true that at a surface level, flipping lenticular images are often explained as starting with an image pair, that status quickly disintegrates. McPherson seems to take promotional material surrounding lenticular images at face value—as showing their images precisely when and how they are supposed to. Her claim that flipping lenticulars’ image pairs are either on or off is a gross simplification that describes what a viewer may expect to perceive more than what is actually visible. It is true that commercial lenticular printers often claim to optimize image outputs to show the *clearest image* with the *highest apparent printing resolution*, *smoothest transitions*, and *least show-through*; this is because these image ‘problems’ are the norm. Lenticular printers’ websites are full of technical tips and design tricks, as well as rules and disclaimers for what is acceptable to print....these are necessary because achieving what customers view as good results is so challenging even for experienced professionals. For example, under normal viewing conditions lenticulars with areas of flat colour will almost unavoidably have some level of ghosting of the other image(s).

Contrary to McPherson’s assertion, it is harder to *not* see multiple images at once. As I have discussed throughout the chapters of this document, flipping and animated lenticulars explicitly depend on their capacities to affectively convey multiple images simultaneously. Lenticular film’s half-cylindrical plastic lenses scatter and bend light in a way that can be regulated but not fully controlled in their real-world practical context. The striated lenses which produce lenticular images’ effects must remain flat in order to achieve optimum transitions. But a variety of

processes intervene, not to mention that the malleable physical properties of the lens sheet itself. It is rare to encounter a lenticular image that hasn't acquired some kind of bend or curve as a result of production processes or handling. Like for most plastics, temperature fluctuations and compression are the enemy of flatness. In practice, it is normal for lenticular images to exceed their own capacity; technologists, artists and designers push the material to its limit, until stray light spills out.

Part of the visual magic of lenticulars is the way their light-bending qualities lead to a proliferation. While flipping-style lenticular images are often described and intended as pairs, that intention in itself represents a constraint on their capacity. Is it not possible for an image-idea to exceed the boundaries of its creator's original intentions? The choice to use lenticulars for two-image flips is a choice to ignore how the material exceeds that intention. In practice, lenticular images as objects are not overdetermined by their binary structuring logic, because that logic is itself an analogy.

It feels as though McPherson overattributes dualistic qualities to lenticularity in service of her larger point, because it is the interpretive challenges she identifies as being related to binary thinking which her research intends to expose. Part of what rubs me the wrong way here is the lack of theoretical positioning and historical contextualization of the objects at the centre of her simile. But it is as if McPherson's very insistence on lenticulars' binarity reveals her own unarticulated dualistic thinking. She leaves her normative assumptions about how lenticular images work and what they can visually convey unexamined, and that partial understanding became a new ideological frame. Ironically, her analogy was developed in service of a close reading-into of visual media. This is a common pitfall of communication via analogy; maps, after

all, are not territories. A science-adjacent and sufficiently obscure comparison is unlikely to attract critiques even if it is somewhat sloppy.

In the 2003 monograph *Reconstructing Dixie*, McPherson's structuralist interpretation of lenticular capacity is the converse of my own. Although I argue that her take on lenticular images engages them only superficially, she does so in support of using them as an analogy for white southerners' particular mode of engagement with race. McPherson is likely aware of the complications to her metaphor but has chosen to stretch it as far as she can anyway, aided by how few people have written seriously about lenticulars. Does the critique I offer matter to the integrity of McPherson's argument in the book? Probably not, as she simply defines her chosen terms differently, and references a different aspect of lenticulars' capacities than do I. Because of its wide strength in addressing Southern American aesthetic logics in the representation of race in historical context, the book was very well-received by McPherson's peers and won the Popular Culture Association's John G. Cawelti Award for outstanding book published on American Culture in 2004.

Today, McPherson teaches at the University of Southern California as a Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at USC's School of Cinematic Arts and holds a Chair in the Study of Censorship in Media endowed by the Hugh M. Hefner Foundation. In the 20 years since *Reconstructing Dixie* was published, both she and others have reused and referenced the concept of lenticular logic she elaborated in *Dixie*. McPherson still tends toward a paranoid reading of lenticular images, as she did when she wrote the book that was a revised version of her dissertation. In 2012, she uses the framing concept even more broadly to describe post-civil rights era intellectual habits regarding race (McPherson "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?") Perhaps it is time for her to return to past analyses? It is possible that another take on

the visual work of lenticulars would productively complicate her conceptualization. After all, lenticulars are always already ready to transform with a flick of the wrist.

Critic and curator Abigail Solomon-Godeau is Professor Emeritus of Art History at UC-Santa Barbara. Writing generally about the lenticular in George Legrady's catalogue for *Refraction* in 2011, she considers, "because of the non-fixability of the lenticular image and its optical fluidity, refusing to settle or congeal, it mimics both the fugitive evanescence of memory and the radical instability of meaning itself" (Solomon-Godeau 4). If one were to attempt to ascribe an ontological logic to a material rather than to the humans who make use of it, a lenticular logic would not be binary, but refractive and prismatic.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*' 14th plateau, Deleuze and Guattari articulate the theoretical pairing of 'striated' and 'smooth' as conceptual frameworks for describing both social discourse and the empirical world, and the movements those frameworks enable (474-500). Developed by its authors through analogy, striated spaces are those that are shaped through accumulation. As if geologically, gradual sedimentation of a society's habits, norms, and practices creates layered strata where water flows and pools naturally through grooves in the surface. On the other hand, smooth spaces are areas that lack determining features formed over time. The movements of water on a featureless smooth space are governed only by water's own internal qualities and tendencies (density, surface tension, etc) rather than a molar context. The conceptual pair is interlinked and mutually constitutive, and the topology of a space can shift over time—striated spaces giving way to smooth and vice versa. It is the escape from a striated space to a smooth one that Deleuze and Guattari called *detrterritorialization*. While useful for describing dynamic

relationships between contexts and subjects, they warn readers to “never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us” (500).

In closing, I argue that the images and meanings conveyed through lenticular film are not in fact overdetermined by lenses’ physical structure. Not despite but because of the tendencies of its flickering striations, lenticular film provides a material analogy for play, spillage and trajectories of escape. Through my artistic research’s continuing exploration of lenticular images, I suggest that the concept of *the lenticular* can be understood in several related senses. Slide with me down a lenticular image’s groove, as I review and propose a few ways of thinking with lenticularity suggested by the understandings developed through this research. The concept *the lenticular* might best be understood multiply, both as a physical material that produces particular kinds of images, and more broadly as an analogy based on its shape and the movements that shape enables.

In its first instance, ‘lenticular’ describes a technology: the plastic sheet of parallel lenses or like means of producing similar effects (such as barrier screens). The physical images resulting from lenticular film’s perceptual intervention display dimensionality, animatedness or both. As described by Timby, lenticulars as historicized image-objects have a history that is prior to and which runs parallel with the development of optical technologies. But lenticulars are more than the modern curiosities they emerged into popular consciousness as. As evidenced by their broad adoption, lenticular images can be novelties and interesting and affective communicative devices. Lenticulars’ analogue capacity to represent depth and motion has been mobilized in service of fast profit on one hand, and on the other in imaginative service of illustrating spatiotemporal relationships and visual metaphors. Moreover, lenticular film’s well-known ability to portray a ‘flip’ between images has led to their shape’s adoption by McPherson as an

analogy in itself for binaristic logics of representation. But is lenticulars' shimmering capacity as a conceptual shape that I argue holds rich potential for further aesthetic exploration and theorization. First, lenticular lenses combine many individual lenses into highly structured, parallel assemblies. The grooved structure of lenticular film suggests particular uses and capacities both physically and in metaphor. Second, lenticular images are inherently reliant on a viewer's perspective; in that, they are always ready to become unsettled. Misalignment between an underlying image that has been interlaced for a flipping effect, and its lens sheet generates other unique effects, a la moiré patterns, and a particular slipperiness of colour and movement. This kineticism and apparent unpredictability seems to counter the striated structure which generated them.

Lenticular lenses' shape and the effects they produce serve as a multisensory analogy for the overdetermined linear trajectory that Deleuze and Guattari describe as striated. Simultaneously, it is this striation that causes and enables a misaligned lenticular's potential for wild shifting and play. The lenticular, as image and object, embodies a unique and productive mode of perpetual becoming. By portraying a self as *simultaneously* disjunctive and continuous, the portrait series *Never Change* confronts mainstream discourse around trans people's self-narration.

Deterritorializing juxtapositions between portraits of the subject as multiple genders and ages challenge viewers to resolve both changes and similarities.

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