Traveling to Austria (University of Innsbruck, June 1-30 2016)

In June 2016 “Visual Appropriations and Rewritings” travelled to the University of Innsbruck, Austria at the invitation of the Canada Centre where Ursula Moser, Director and her assistants welcomed us in the heart of the Alps. Before my departure, Shawn Serfas, co-curator, and I had selected additional, more recent works from our students and I left Canada with the following pieces:

AA. Untitled (*Restlessly*).

AA. Untitled (*Cover-Under*).

Sueda Akkor. Untitled (*A Dead Tone in a Picture*). 2015.

Sueda Akkor. Untitled (*Craving colours*). 2015.

Melissa Broderick. *Doughnuts (Veterans Who Had)*. 2016.

Melissa Broderick. *Sink*. 2016.

Melissa Broderick. *Windowsill (Flat Backgrounds)*. 2016.

Faith Brown. *Bird near Window (A Cross-Light at 5:30 in the Afternoon)*. 2016.

Faith Brown. *Bright Window (Little Paintings)*. 2016.

Faith Brown. *Cracked Corner (Painting's Revenge)*. 2016.

Courtney Bruzzese. *Untitled (Distortion)*. 2015.

Nicola Ciaramella. *OK*. 2015.

Nicola Ciaramella. *Text*. 2015.

Michelle Demay. *Brown Window (Have the Skeleton)*. 2016.

Michelle Demay. *White Window (To Be Autobiographical)*. 2016.

Kirsten Heinonen. *DeCew Falls (Two Kinds of Light)*. 2016.

Kirsten Heinonen. *Fence Post (Forced to Trust)*. 2016.

Montana Highley. *Christmas Lights (An Immigrant Speaking)*. 2016.

Montana Highley. *Warm It Up (A New Phenomenon)*. 2016.

Clameng Jamme / Armand Falq. *Gold 1, 2, 3*. 2015.

Jenn Judson. *Bag Head*. 2015.

Jenn Judson. *Lemonhead Evolution*. 2015.

KC King. *Demons Run*. 2015.

KC King. *Lifeblood*. 2015.

Alysha-Lynn Kooter. *Lighthouse*. 2015.

Alysha-Lynn Kooter. *Untitled (Hypnotize)*. 2015.

Chelsea Macsai. *Flooded Forest (A Solid Assembly)*. 2016.

Chelsea Macsai. *Frozen Lake (A Sizable Light)*. 2016.

Chelsea Macsai. *The Beach (Credit Good Luck)*. 2016.

Rebecca Marshall. *Forest (Auratic and Referential)*. 2016.

Rebecca Marshall. *Paint Jar*. 2016.

Rebecca Marshall. *Window Box*. 2016.

Rebecca Marshall. *Yellow Tube*. 2016.

Katie Mazi. *Untitled (Unusual Angularity)*. 2015.

Kevin Minow. *Columns Pass*. 2016.

Kevin Minow. *Desert Ruins*. 2016.

Kevin Minow. *Double Moon Wheat*. 2016.

Kevin Minow. *Gold Canyon*. 2016.

Kevin Minow. *Ice*. 2016.

Kevin Minow. *Mountain Pass*. 2016.

Kylie Mitchell. *Clipboard*. 2016.

Kylie Mitchell. *Dirt and Snow (Ignored Aspects)*. 2016.

Kylie Mitchell. *Living Room Chair (Perpendicular)*. 2016.

Kerryann Murphy. *Untitled (Chameleon)*. 2015.

Catherine Parayre. *Awkwardness of the Bigger Things*. 2015.

Kelly Pierce. *Aboveground Pool*. 2016.

Kelly Pierce. *Cozy Bed (Intimate Small Drama)*. 2016.

Kelly Pierce. *Snowy Lawn Chairs (Correctly Developed)*. 2016.

Kelly Pierce. *Stove & Oven (Every Single Picture)*. 2016.

Kelly Pierce. Melissa Broderick, Alex Craddock. *Just Flop It Over*. 2015.

Melanie Prentice. *Untitled (Nurture)*. 2015.

Stephanie Rodgers. *Eden*. 2015.

Stephanie Rodgers. *Macaroon (Dynamic)*. 2015.

Dianeia Ruiz Morales. *Mosaic Still Life*. 2016.

Dianeia Ruiz Morales. *Niagara White House (When I With Something)*. 2016.

Dianeia Ruiz Morales. *Toasted*. 2016.

Sydney Sauriol. *Dark*. 2016.

Sydney Sauriol. *Path*. 2016.

Sydney Sauriol. *Yard*. 2016.

Shawn Serfas, Catherine Parayre. *Armature of a Body, Part 1*. 2015.

Shawn Serfas, Catherine Parayre. *Armature of a Body, Part 2*. 2015.

Caterina Stambolic. *Branch*. 2015.

Caterina Stambolic. *Circadian Rhythm*. 2015.

Bria Surtel. *Untitled (He Reads to Find Things Between the Lines)*. 2015.

Aaron Thompson. *Automatic Transmission*. 2015.

Aaron Thompson. *Bushes and Wines*. 2016.

Aaron Thompson. *Dimmer (Pair of Doubles)*. 2016.

Aaron Thompson. *Path to the Lake (A Wide Difference)*. 2016.

Alyssa Tiangco. *Black Dress (The Question of Your Style)*. 2015.

Alyssa Tiangco. *Sunday's Best (Shot in Colour)*. 2015.

Marissa Tomlinson. *Breathe*. 2015.

Kaia Toop. *Leftover Calf*. 2016.

Kaia Toop. *Leftover Chimpanzee*. 2016.

Taylor Umer. *Downtown (I Have Millions Of)*. 2016.

Taylor Umer. *Night Porch (Turning Nastiness Into Beauty)*. 2016.

Taylor Umer. *Park (A Model for Taking More)*. 2016.

Taylor Umer. *111 Westland Street (Terrible Equipment)*. 2016.

(Faith Brown, Aaron Thompson)

The nine yellow creative-writing pieces that accompanied the exhibition at Rodman Hall, St. Catharines also made the trip and served as nine bright anchors around which the visual pieces found a place:

1.

Upstart crows perched above us watch our every move. They snicker inside glass-walled rooms.
They get to pick and choose.

A young woman sits with her father in the backyard of their suburban home. She points to something in front of her: “Doesn’t this just make you sick?” He looks, and nods, but doesn’t understand what she is talking about.

Exertion is vital to the survival of salmon.
Two men sit on a park bench and admire the scenery. One looks left, one looks right.
The room is filled with a whimsical energy. Then the music ends.
(Alex Craddock)

2.

Under shadows where the willow gets no sun, our glass legs we teeter.
Let us not forget what is unwritten and sublime.
Our timid, filtered visions are painted.
We taste the ink of black and white and see the sound of the past, to be.
Let us lose our youth amongst the flowers, and swallow as our throats get tight.
(Anjelica French)

3.

Three hands reach up from a graffiti to a cloudy atmosphere, a space-like background taking
over the center while geometric leaves fall.
We claw the vast beauty of translucent patterns and manipulate small dimensions.
A cage is an object that keeps the inside engulfed in a blank space away from the rest of the
world.
(Ashley Keller)

4.

Tape is an infrastructure, a maze through which we traverse space and connect dots.
Symmetry and chaos, oblivion in pools of colour: a void.
(Tyler Adair)

5.

Haze has set in; the viewing pleasure begins.
Innocence is subdued by strategically placed blotting.
Censorship has been compromised with transparencies.
The child's mind is a bomb. Temptation becomes too much to bear.
Former negative connotations wash away. Pink is purity.
Wisps of smoke branches overlap to muddle creations into hybrids.
Music is not always uniform.
(Dylan Perego)

6.

Markings seem obsessive and crazed; the paper is not damaged enough to reflect the full
emotional appeal.
The non-symmetrical body is expressed through cartography; more jagged, its jigsaw shape
could resemble geographic locations.
We will shade specific words and layer the materials, blending them almost too well.
(Kevin Murray)

7.

Every waking moment can be categorized into easily digestible status updates.
The artist is seamless and seems less on the bleeding edge of the real.

We have lost the narrative thread in the absurdity of something whole.
The middle names of our best friends are deceptive riddles. We are confronted with the feral, the untamed.

Our inert gaze is detached yet intrusive.
Infrequencies of the art wander where they may; the futility of desire does not require a compass.
(Asta McCann)

8.

A white marble crumbles the future.
Numbers 010020045392 tighten the noose and hope to stifle creative composesures.
Nightly trepidation bleeds tepidly; there is nothing left but the arches of mangled trees and a wound in a fragmented story.
The nuclear family is as nuclear a bomb as the American dream.
The eye is the perforated, splattered, and pecked mirror to the soul.
Logic overcomes a singsong superstition.
(Bria Surtel)

9.

My brain pulls at wires and brushes swiftly as I head to the clouds.
Four men stand side by side, waiting. Curiosity fills a concrete jungle. We anticipate seven years of awful luck, soon to be filled with secrets of teenagers in full bloom.
(Emilie Gowrie)

(Aaron Thompson)

Very different from the exhibition room at Rodman Hall in January and February 2016, the room reserved for “Visual Appropriations and Rewritings” in the Bruno-Sander-Haus in Innsbruck is flooded with direct light and is very bright. The back wall is painted white; the three other walls are made of glass. Close to the entrance of the building, this space functions occasionally as installation room, but is first and foremost a passageway leading visitors to the inner court of the university. Hundred of students, staff, professors and visitors walk through it everyday.

On site, four volunteers joined me to install the exhibition. If we put together the hours we spent planning and installing the show, we reach a total of about thirty hours of work. We sorted the works by themes (winter, kitchen, windows, houses, trees, etc.) and organized them according to colour and line patterns. In other cases, we purposely interrupted a logical connection.

For instance, we created a series of three same-size images including two small representations of a lake in faint, very delicate nuances of blue and white, and in third position the representation of neatly arranged very small doughnuts (one is decorated with a light blue glaze).

(Chelsea Macsai, Melissa Broderick)

In a different series trees multiply exponentially: the first image shows a leafless branch, the next one a single tree in a yard, the following one a thicket, the last one a deep forest in which one may disappear or hide oneself. Again, pale, greyish blue illuminates the series.

(Sydney Sauriol, Chelsea Macsai)

On one panel, works are displayed so that the bright yellow tones in different pieces suggest the shape of a triangle. Rather than looking at the details in each work, the spectator is first attracted by the general movement of the overall composition.

(Sueda Akkor, Alysha-Lynn Kooter, Emilie Gowrie, Kelly Pierce/Melissa Broderick/Alex Craddock, Bria Surtel, AA, KC King, Stephanie Rodgers)

As a whole, the exhibition shows a majority of small artworks; the visitor needs to get close to the piece in order to observe and enjoy the paintings. The decision to select smaller works expresses the curators' wish to exhibit a show in a large open space through which people often walk quickly in order to reach classrooms and offices. Our intention was to encourage passers-by to stop on their way to a different part of the building and take the time to enjoy a break in their busy life. Large-size formats do not impel visitors to interrupt their walk in the same simple yet decided way. In the Bruno-Sander-Haus passers-by are solicited to take a moment and look at art, but may equally prefer to ignore its presence on continue their way. Art is, so to say, optional, an invitation, a gentle call for calmness, a background and a way to play hooky for a few seconds or minutes before hurrying to a seminar room, an amphitheatre, the library, an office or to the exit and into the busy city.

Art theft/treasures

The opening reception took place on the first of June 2016. Everyday strangers came by; many stopped, at times only for a few seconds; others stayed longer, scrutinized the works, and deciphered the different logics of the exhibition. The space was warm, sunny, pleasant, a glasshouse in a house of knowledge. Eighth artworks were reported as missing on Monday 6 June. The police was called, a complaint filed, an investigation opened. The amateur photographs below show the works before they were stolen. They are posted together with a description on the website of the Tyrolean police:

Two works by Taylor Umer

Six works by
Kevin Minow

Mitfahndungsersuchen nach Kunstdiebstahl in der UNI Innsbruck

Fahndungsgrund: Schwerer Diebstahl

Tatbegehung: Gelegenheitsdiebstahl

Tatzeit: 04.06.2016, 17:00 Uhr bis 06.06.2016, 12:30 Uhr

Tatort: UNI Innsbruck, Foyer des Bruno Sander Haus, 6020 Innsbruck, Innrain 52 f

Die folgenden Werke aus der Ausstellung "Visual Appropriations and Rewritings" wurden gestohlen:

Kevin Minow. Mountain Pass, 2016, acrylic, 2x1.5 inches

Kevin Minow. Desert Ruins, 2016, acrylic, 2x1.5 inches^[SEP]

Kevin Minow. Double Moon Wheat, 2016, acrylic, 2x1.5 inches

Kevin Minow. Gold Canyon, 2016, acrylic, 2x1.5 inches^[SEP] Kevin Minow. Ice, 2016, acrylic, 2x1.5 inches^[SEP]

Kevin Minow. Columns Pass, 2016, acrylic, 1x1.5 inches

Taylor Umer. Park, 2016, oil on stone paper, 16x10 cm^[SEP]

Taylor Umer. 111 Westland Street, 2016, oil on stone paper, 16x10 cm

Der Wert jedes Werkes kann auf ca. € 700,00 eingeschätzt werden!

Die Ausstellung fand im Rahmen des Forschungsabkommens zwischen der Universität Innsbruck und der Brock University (Kanada) statt. Organisiert wird die Ausstellung vom Zentrum für Kanadastudien der Universität Innsbruck unter der Leitung von Professor Ursula Moser. Frau Prof. Catherine Paraye ist Co-Kuratorin (der zweiter Kurator, Shawn Serfas, ist nicht in Innsbruck anwesend).

Hinweise erbeten an:

Landespolizeidirektion Tirol^[SEP]Landeskriminalamt^[SEP]EB06 - Diebstahl / Einbruch^[SEP]6020 Innsbruck, Innrain 34

<https://www.tirol.gv.at/kunst-kultur/kulturportal/museumportal/kultur-fahndung/>

What does art theft mean when a young student and aspiring artist in training is the victim?

- The missing art pieces suddenly receive monetary value, as the police requests a price estimate.
- Images and descriptions are broadly disseminated on Internet.
- The art pieces can no longer be sold, as they are officially declared as stolen.
- The organizers and curators of the exhibition need to work extra hours of work in order to protocol the theft. Universities take theft very seriously and cooperate diligently with the authorities.
- It is a blow to the student-artist suddenly deprived of pieces s/he may have wanted to include in her/his portfolio in order to find a job or make her/his beginnings in an artistic career.
- It is an insult to the vast majority of people who are eager to learn about, appreciate, view, enjoy, and reflect upon artistic creation and expression.
- It is a sad day for the student-artist, the curators, the organizers, and their friends.
- It is an act of recognition coming from a stranger murmuring to an art piece: “I love you so much that I want you for me alone.” Such admission is deserved; stealing reveals this stranger’s appreciation of art; it is a moving thank-you to the student-artist. The answer to this illicit declaration of love comes from the most colossal machine – justice – on behalf of the one who is loved too much.
- It is, we hope, an encouragement for the young student-artist to produce more and feel more confident in the quality of her/his work.
- It is a story worth telling, something big that must be said, a burgeoning narrative that has authority; its report is a testimonial. When visual art disappears, becomes invisible to the public eye, there remain words, even if we do not and should not trust these. Words are solid, lasting, unstolen.

Kevin Minow’s pieces are tiny, precious, fragile yet superbly planted in imaginary landscapes that remind of old paintings of mythical or legendary scenes. The radiance and abundance of details in his miniatures evoke enigmatic, ethereal depths as well as the alluring vertical flatness of digital landscapes. Taylor Umer’s two stolen works – a house and a playground – feature red lines graciously separating objects from their background while highlighting the beauty of small things and the well-being they provide in everyday life. They project harmonious glitters.