

Laboratory Landscape Course spring 2017

1. OVERVIEW

Colonial Site Table

Laboratory Landscape presents their archival-based work, which seeks to uncover the traces - tangible and intangible - of colonialism in our everyday lives. For this reason, we embraced Miwon Kwon's definition that a site might be more than a location. The images presented were created, found and selected by students in an attempt to expand the archive and archetypes of what might be considered a colonial site. Bringing these traces to the table addresses and subverts the archive of the Canadian colonial project and its persistence into the present.

Participating art students: Trevor Bonas, Roxanne Charles, Joni Cheung, Jessica Chu, Fabio Miranda, Krystle Coughlin, Stephanie Gagne, Michelle Gougani, Elly Habibullah, Carli Howden, Phoebe Huang, Andi Icaza, Lori Lai, ByeongSung Lee, Oscar Lira Sanchez, Jacky Lo, Emily Marston, Taylor McGibbon, Rachelle Tjahyana, Sophie Vandenbergelaar, June Yeo, Nico Yu and the audience of the BFA Project exhibition at the Audain Gallery held during early April 2017.



2. RESEARCH AND PROCESS

In her book, *One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity*, Miwon Kwon discusses artists who engage in site-specific works. Crucially, she says that site should not be seen only as location. She writes: "And in projects by artists such as Lothar Baumgarten, Renee Green, Jimmie Durham, and Fred Wilson, the legacies of colonialism, slavery, racism, and the ethnographic tradition as they impact on identity politics has emerged as an important "site" of artistic investigation". "In this way different cultural debates, a theoretical concept, a social issue, a political problem, an institutional framework (not necessarily an art institution), a community or seasonal event, a historical condition, even particular formations of desire, are now deemed to function as sites" (Kwon).

LandMarks: Art + Places + Perspectives is a network of collaborative, contemporary art projects across Parks Canada places during the 150th year of Canadian Confederation. The curators explain that 2017 marks an occasion to reflect on a much older land, and to address our relationship with nature in the face of present-day environmental and climatic crises, the legacies of colonialism, and the complex relationship between nationhood and cultural identity. Using art as a catalyst for discourse and social change, *LandMarks* looks forward, and provides an opportunity to imagine, to speculate, and to invent our futures through the eyes of artists, art students, communities, and through the spirit of the land.

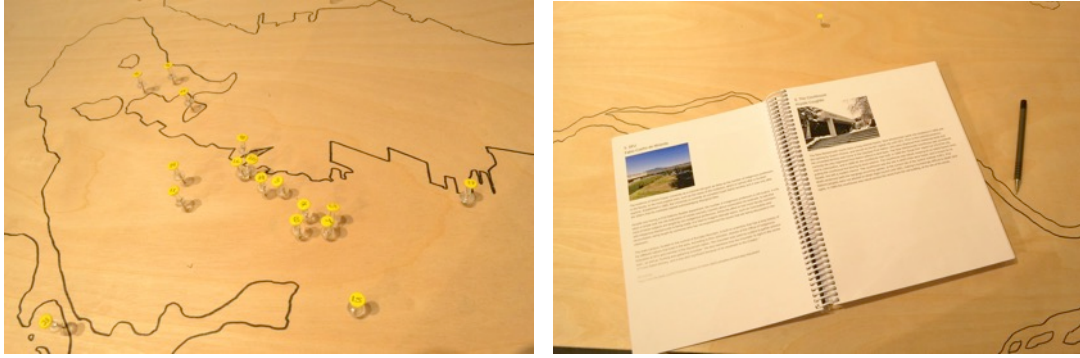
With this in mind, each student identified and researched a colonial site on their usual way to work or school. This colonial site manifested in different ways: as a space, a monument, a graphic, or an image.

3. CONCEPT

The chosen colonial sites celebrate colonial history, memorialize histories without a comprehensive and inclusive context, heroicize the exploration and settling of Canada, and show settlers myths, all the while contributing to the perpetuation of the erasure and obscuring of indigenous peoples of Canada, their history and experience. The research came together with an exhibition premise featuring counter-archives of vernacular images and micro-histories. As such, the research is displayed to reflect on the archive's theoretical and aesthetic significance.

This is comprised by a table with dimension of: 8ft l x 4ft w x 2.5ft h. A map of Metro Vancouver is directly etched onto the surface of table. The identified colonial sites are pinpointed with numbered thumbtacks, and are catalogued in an accompanying booklet with description or comments about these sites. The table invites the audience to perform the same identification process. This is facilitated by providing extra numbered thumbtacks that await a new corresponding entry in the booklet. A set of prints of the documentary photographs of the sites initially identified by the class will accompany the findings and research presented by the Laboratory Landscape.

This table will be displayed in the A-Frame Artist Residency building from June 21st – 23rd. Alongside the table, the class plans to use the A-Frame space to promote the individual group projects held during that period in the park. This is stipulated to take the form of informational maps, posters, archival photographs, amongst other material.



4. CONTEXT

Colonialism is a general term signifying domination and hegemony, classically in the form of political rule and economic control on the part of a European state over territories and peoples outside Europe. The earliest forms of colonialism in this sense (not all empires were colonial empires) were exhibited in the New World by Spain and Portugal, although classical colonialism only flowered later in conjunction with the rise of global capitalism, manifested in the rule by European states over various polities in Asia and Africa. There were exceptions to these rules, as in the case of Japanese colonial domination over Korea and parts of Southeast Asia in the 20th century.

Imperialism is sometimes seen as an interchangeable term with colonialism, even as it has often been used to focus on the economic, and specifically capitalist, character of colonial rule. Colonialism itself has sometimes been reserved for cases of settler colonialism, like Australia and New Zealand, where segments of the dominant population not only rule over but settle in colonial territories. The roots of the term in Latin *colonia*, meaning farm or settlement, *colonus*, meaning settler, and *colere*, meaning cultivate, lend support to this connection. This history of colonial settlement has also left its mark on many aspects of earlier and contemporary usage: colonial architecture, for example, or colonial experience to describe periods of work and residence in settled territories, just as colonial frontier applies to the contested zones between occupying and indigenous populations, and colonial-born marks a new distinction within the dominant population.

However, most scholars agree that colonialism was in fact a form of rule that was most often not accompanied by European settlement, and that the term colonialism entails sustained control over a local population by states that were interested neither in settlement nor in assimilation. As a term of comparative scholarship, “colonialism in all cases directs attention toward the colonies themselves, whereas the rubric of “imperialism” typically directs attention to the metropole and the global system, in which political and economic imperatives worked to make empire a constitutive condition of the West’s global dominance during modern times (Dirks).

When it comes to Canadian colonial history, specifically Vancouver's, we were guided by artist Cease Wyss's in-class lecture as well as her guided tour of Stanley Park. She shared her perspective as an Indigenous artist on the ongoing grips of the colonial project on traditional Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh territories. A lecture by Selena Couture, who was discussing her upcoming book *Performing History and Land* (2017) book, also provided scholarly insight into the colonial history of Stanley Park, and the construction of Vancouver's settler history through the making of the city's official archive.

5. IMAGES

Emily Marston, *British Columbia Sugar Refinery, also known today as Rogers Sugar*



Phoebe Huang, *Twenty Dollar bill (CAD) with portrait of Queen Elizabeth*



Andi Icaza-Largaespada: New Brighton Park, 2017



Fabio Coelho de Miranda, *Simon Fraser University*



June Yeo, *New Mitzie's Diner*



Oscar Alfonso, *Can P23.1 - [Exterior of the Canadian National Railway station on Main Street] c. 1932*



Lori Lai, *The Sappers Were Here*



Elly Habibullah, *Main Entrance of UBC Library*



ByeongSung Lee, *Japanese Interment camp in Slocan, BC 2007 / 1945 (archival)*



Rachelle Tjahyana, *Abandoned House Across from Thompson Community Centre*



6. REFERENCES

1. Couture, Selena. "Chapter 3: Reiterations of Rededications: Surrogated Whiteness." *χ^wαχ^w# AND STANLEY PARK: PERFORMING HISTORY AND LAND*. Selena Marie Couture, September 2015.
2. Bennett, Tony, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris. *New keywords a revised vocabulary of culture and society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publ., 2014. Print.
3. "Best Before: Archivised – BFA Project 2017." *SFU Events Calendar*. N.p., n.d. Web. May 2017.
4. Dirks, Nicholas B. *Colonialism and culture*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2001. Print.
5. Kwon, Miwon. *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004. Print.
6. "LandMarks2017/Repères2017." *Landmarks 2017*. N.p., n.d. Web. May 2017.