University of Toronto
MVS Studio Program
Graduating Exhibition
April 17–May 18, 2019

Art
Museu

Works by

Dana Prieto
Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh
Miles Rufelds
Sahar Te

Essays by

Lauren Fournier

University of Toronto
MVS Studio Program
Graduating Exhibition

Cover: Sahar Te, Listening Appears Direct From, 2019. Installation detail, artist proof.

Right: Dana Prieto, *On how to note a window y nosotros con ella*, 2019. Installation.

Dana Prieto
Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh
Miles Rufelds
Sahar Te

Foreword

Worlds within worlds. Worlds under worlds. Parallel worlds. What are the limits of our worlds? How are worlds created? What happens when worlds eat each other? Jakob von Vexküll's early twentieth-century theories of biology diagramed how organisms interact with their environment via feedback loops. By sketching the dynamic engagements of experience, he in effect cast a net to define individual worlds that overlap and shift—sometimes symbiotically and sometimes predatorily. As a guest lecturer of the MVS program this year, philosopher of science Dehlia Hannah reminded us of the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. Born of a cataclysmic environmental event in 1818, the novel weaves together speculative science, literary inventiveness, and social critique in a story that seems as relevant today as when it was first penned under a cold, grey sky of volcanic ash.

The MVS graduating exhibitions, developed over the last two years in the studio and in research seminars across the university, ask what the fundamental forces that create worlds are. In doing so, they question further how these worlds maintain their limits and also how they leak. Most importantly, they challenge a status quo that takes for granted one world's authority over another. Miles Rufelds's work opens the exhibition drawing directly from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when *Frankenstein* was written, but focusing on the netherworld of spores, enigmatic tableaus by Joseph Wright, and ouroboros-shaped benzene chemical rings born in the fires of the Industrial Revolution. At the centre of his installation, an industrial shipping container (extracted from the cycle of the chemical industry) looms as an aseptic bubble, stacked and hermetically sealed just for the exhibition. Is the undead contained? The psychedelic, spiraling spores of Rufelds's project question the basic divisions between life and death, science and spirituality.

While Rufelds purifies and exorcises a container qua sculpture, Dana Prieto transubstantiates her organic material into sculpture. Seeking to address the museum's place in colonial history, Prieto was pre-empted from bringing into the museum a sample of soil from its own building site due to the museum's strict conservational rules. Her solution was to fire the actual soil to alchemically change the material into the acceptable status of a ceramic artwork. Framing the dust (soil now devoid of biological life but not necessarily spiritual life), Prieto traces the floor of the museum in copper wiring to electrically ground the exhibition space. Poetically and materially, Prieto completes a feedback loop in the spirit of *Frankenstein*'s galvanism as social critique and therapeutic release.

In the neighbouring room, wires crisscrossing the floor of Sahar Te's installation lay bare the coded infrastructure of the political forum. The political apparatus is a well-oiled machine, and, in the digital age, optimized to personal social media profiles and tweaked with every tweet. Te's cryptic teleprompters and glitchy loudspeakers articulate a failure in the spectacle of our politics.

Finally, if you've survived the sanitation of spores, killing of soil, and hacking of the king's speech, Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh's work in the last room of the exhibition gives you a place to heal. A challenge to Western medicine, the personal experience of Rohbakhsh's mother as a doctor in Iran is combined with several pioneering women's contribution to healthcare and synthesized into an intense red colour field—a perfectly cubed meditative space for healing and reflection. Surprisingly, Rohbakhsh's installation is the only one without sound, odd considering her compositional background in Deep Listening. But from her red room one can listen to the washing of soundwaves from other worlds—both in the museum and beyond.

Charles Stankievech
Director of Visual Studies

Dana Prieto
It's only invisible when it works

Dana Prieto, *You recurred, you restrained, you cared, and you kept me alive*, 2019. Installation.

Artist Dana Prieto thoughtfully engages with the politics of resource extraction, using a site-responsive practice to critique colonial institutions and power structures through material-based work. A conceptual artist and a trained electrician, Prieto integrates her interest in materiality with her knowledge of electricity and conductivity to create an installation that *unsettles* at the same time that it quite literally grounds you in the room of the Art Museum's west galleries.

Prieto has explored the mining industry, Indigenous land politics, and gift-giving economies in her previous work. In *1:10000 Bajo la Alumbrera* (2018), for example, Prieto calls attention to the complicity of Canada in gross mining injustices in her home lands of Argentina (70% of the world's mining companies are based in Canada, the artist tells me during a studio visit). Working by hand, she created a small-scale, ceramic replication of the open pit that Vancouver-based company Goldcorp left behind in Catamarca Province, Argentina, in the wake of its mining for gold. The artist sent these sculptural replicas, made from soil contaminated by the mine, as wrapped gifts to Goldcorp's executives. Prieto never heard back.

Now, the artist extends her interest in matter, resources, conductivity, and land to the specific context of the Art Museum and the ground on which it is built. Prieto researched the history of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. She traced the building's infrastructure, making charcoal-on-paper rubbings and casting architectural elements in plaster and clay. She learned that, in 1890, a fire destroyed nearly all of University College's

museum (then an ethnological one)—both its architectural structure and its contents. The private geological museum (not open to the public), comprising then university president Daniel Wilson's collection, was also destroyed.

Early in the process of conceptualizing this work, Prieto knew she wanted to work with soil. When Prieto came up against the institution's rules and regulations, this became more complicated. The artist learned that she, like any other artist, would not be permitted to bring raw, organic matter into the Museum space—a protocol in place to preserve the collection (akin to climate control). Prieto would need to address the challenge of bringing in the soil without its invasive, active biomatter. She would need to, in a sense, *kill* the soil—to physically remove all traces of life—if she wanted to include it in the installation.

The ongoing negotiations that took place between Prieto and the Art Museum in the work's planning stages became an integral part of the concept of the work. As part of her process in the studio, Prieto wrote lyrical reflections as a way of metabolizing the institution's utterances, citing works of literature and theory as she reflected on the regulatory powers of those utterances, at one point reading me passages of Argentine writer Julio Cortázar's 1963 constraint-based *Hopscotch*, translated from the Spanish).

What must be deadened before it enters the space of an art gallery or a museum? What lives are welcomed in these spaces, and what lives are precluded?

Fire can be destructive. But fire can also be transformative, as when clay is fired in a kiln to become ceramic. By dehydrating the clay, which was once soil, the kiln transforms the material. Ceramic work is suitably sanitized (without water, there is not the possibility of bacterial life), and therefore safe to house in the Museum's permanent collection. With the collection buried underground, the artwork remains there until a curator brings it to the gallery above for display (curating a collection being its own kind of excavation work).

During Prieto's visit with Indigenous writer Lee Maracle at the First Nations House, Maracle asked Prieto: "Are you killing the soil, or are you transforming it?" This question became a provocation, challenging colonial conceptions of what is *alive* and what is, assumedly, *dead*. Maybe this wasn't murder at all, but alchemy. Prieto isn't killing the soil: she is transforming it.

Prieto places soil on display in different states of transformation. In firing the soil to turn it into ceramics, Prieto created handmade ceramic containers shaped like ordinary plastic pails, which were used to contain the soil in the kiln. The pails possess a kind of material irony that is potent and poetic. This ontological paradox remains richly unresolved: the soil is contained within the container's limits—adequately transformed as per the institution's requirements. But it is also, in a conceptual sense, contaminated, with the contamination made acceptable by being contained.

The gallery is separated from the external environment, the boarded-up window an architectural reminder of the aleatory

elements being shut out. This is fertile ground for Prieto, who activates the barrier wall using a copper-plated peep hole and a contact mic, a quiet intervention that invites visitors to attune to the ambient environment outside the gallery. Visitors can press them-selves against the wall and listen to the hum of extra-institutional noise.

In this way, the artist turns attention to the Art Museum as itself a container. Working with an electrician, Prieto traces the perimeter of the gallery with copper wire, grounding the current in the gallery. (Another grounding practice is to walk barefoot in the soil, Prieto tells me as we sit in her studio, my bulky winter boots on.) The ruddiness of the copper contributes to the warmth of this conceptual space, as it frames the room, the metamorphosed soil, and the ceramic pails.

Prieto's work finds community with other artists like the Chilean Agustine Zegers, who critiques the colonialist histories of anti-bacterial cultures. In Zegers' Fluxus-inspired *filthglycerin* (2016), the artist puts so-called contaminating organic matter—hair, pebbles, dirt—into a bottle of anti-bacterial hand soap, and encourages others to willfully do the same.

A pile of un-contained soil, treated at the lowest possible temperature the gallery would allow, sits, transformed, at one end of the space.

Prieto muddies the rules, even as she plays within them.

Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh
RED | 700nm
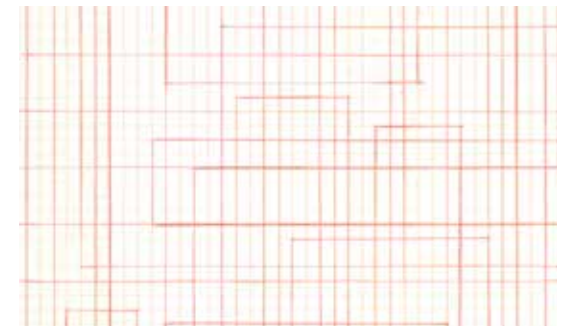
Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh, *Study of Light,* 2019. Coloured pencil on graph paper.

In *On Redness*, artist Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh turns her attention to light and the vibratory effects and affects of red light specifically, extending her conceptual practice of working with sound, colour, cosmology, notation, and space to the creation of a red-light therapy room. Here, quantum mechanics meets feminist science and speculative materialisms, the work resonating with global histories of medicine, myth, theory, and folklore.

Rohbakhsh is an avid reader. When reading on the topic of neuroplasticity in *The Brain's Way of Healing*, she came across a story of women nurses working in Essex, England, in the late 1800s, who had observed the restorative effects that exposure to natural light had for patients who were under their care. The women inadvertently conducted an experiment when they accidentally left a bag of blood with jaundice out in the sun. After exposure to sunlight, the blood had been *cured*. The nurses' belief that the sun's rays held curative power was subsequently tested in controlled conditions by the male doctors, whose consensus with the women rendered the hypothesis empirically sound.

The artist extends the concept of light therapy—or the exposure of beings (humans, animals, plants) to artificial light for therapeutic purposes—to the colour red and the many stories associated with it, looking to the longstanding association of red with *healing*.

Indeed, there is a long history of the significance of red in healing practices around the world. Many believe the frequency of the colour red emanates energies that, for lack of a better word, *heal*. In 1993, NASA tested the efficacy of red light to grow plants in space.

Earlier, in the 1970s, the artist's mother, a doctor in Tehran, commonly used red-light therapy to treat patients. Given its early association with the USSR and the Middle East, the US and the UK were initially reluctant to adopt light therapy, but this has changed in recent years. Currently, red-light therapy is being used to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, and some doctors are experimenting with its use as a morphine substitute for patients coming off of chemotherapy.

The word "healing" is fraught (what an easy word for paranoid scholars to problematize: "healing!"[1]), and Rohbakhsh approaches it with the cautious curiosity of a conceptual artist interested in the practical effects of post-conceptual artwork. She engages the curative possibilities of red-spectrum light even as she approaches the philosophies and narratives that circulate around *red-as-healing* with an affirming, critical attentiveness.

Rohbakhsh activates the physical and metaphorical energetics of red, working with red-spectrum light to create an immersive space where visitors can comfortably spend time and rest. The installation consists of two main elements: the first is the red-light room within the larger room, which has an approximate capacity of four to five people. In constructing the architecture, Rohbakhsh worked with materials like steel, aluminum, and recycled polycarbonate, and considered the physics of refraction and diffusion as she worked. The translucence of the walls deepens the ambient red glow; the red bulbs overhead have a vaguely kitsch, retro-futurist style, evoking the discordant eras that have influenced this technology.

Before they enter the red-light room, visitors are asked to remove their shoes, a shared ritual that prompts an awareness of transitioning from one space to another (as we move through the work, and we move through our lives). Now, with a shared sense of comfort and vulnerability, visitors may enter—where they will be awash in the vibrations of warm, red light.

In folkloric cultures (in places like Japan and Russia), caregivers wrap those who are sick in red quilts, and give them red toys to play with because of the belief in the restorative, even curative, capacity of *touching red*. In the second area in Rohbakhsh's installation, there is a transitory space where people can sit, stretch, sleep, meditate, and read. The artist has provided red cushions for visitors to sit on so that they can be *touching red* as they wait. The waiting room is not so much a clinical waiting room, but another cozy space for red-spectrum-based healing.

By incorporating reading into this environment, the artist gestures to the restorative capacities of books. The reading can be solitary or shared, with visitors lying on their backs or sitting closely together, held by the space and by each other.

This red-light therapy installation can be understood as a work of *practical conceptualism*—conceptually rooted, with potentially practical, potentially measurable, effects on visitors. The emanation of the light—and the touch of the colour red—moves through the skin, vibrating through the body. Is the light changing you? Can you feel it in your cells? Is there something that the colour *red* is resonating with inside of you, transforming you from within?

Who is really to know?

Constructed by the artist, the red-light room is a nourishing receptacle of vibrational waves—like the pre-symbolic semiotic space that Julia Kristeva describes in a lesser-known passage of her *Powers of Horror*. The French philosopher writes of the *chora*—a rhythmic and vibratory space that exists before signification or representation. The mother's body, Kristeva writes, is the ordering principle of the chora, which is a kind of extra-gendered maternal receptacle. The chora is energetic, outside of language—womb-like, the chora is in excess of language.

Rohbakhsh's installation amplifies the folkloric aspects of medical technologies in a way that troubles the line between science and speculation. It is this liminal space between different kinds of knowledge that Rohbakhsh's work sits in—reflective and content, emanating with *red*.

[1] I borrow from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's distinction between "paranoid" and "reparative" scholarly practices of reading in *Touching Feeling*.

Miles Rufelds
Two or Three Saprophytes

Miles Rufelds, *Two or Three Saprophytes*, 2019. Video Still.

In *Two or Three Saprophytes*, artist Miles Rufeld extends his parafictional practice to saprophytes—fungus, plants, and other microorganisms that stay alive by feeding on dead or decaying organic matter. The work turns around the symbol and body of the mushroom, a well-known saprophyte, with the artist's reflexive cycling of references—Romantic painting, the origin story of coal, the Spiritualism movement, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*—making strange, somnambulant sense through the interrelationship of video, sculpture, and slides.

Rufelds' exhibition is rooted in the history of the industrial revolution, with the artist taking up the complicated dynamics that exist between saprophytic life and scientific, technologic, cinematic, and artistic developments since the early 1800s. The revelation in 1860, for example, that industrialists could transform their waste into a *product* brought the pernicious logic of capitalism full circle (like an ouroboros—the serpent curled up, ready to eat its own tail).

Today, armed with the knowledge that mushrooms are able to neutralize noxious wastes (arsenic, uranium, lead, benzene) through digestion, capitalists and environmentalists have mobilized this biological capacity of fungi as a useful, marketable technology. The politics of bioremediation technologies, and the concomitant patenting of mushrooms for dutifully cleaning up pollutants, presents moral quandaries—quandaries that seem all the more pressing at a time when the agency and affects of non-human species are matters of serious consideration across disciplines.

Like the revolution, the benzene ring is a radial refrain in Rufelds' work. The discovery of the benzene ring in 1865 marked a major shift for chemical science; that the chemical structure of benzene—where carbon and hydrogen molecules form an architectural, ring-like structure—resembles a hex nut is a visual relationship that Rufelds extends to playful, parafictional effect.

In this work, parafiction becomes a way for the artist to activate the space between science and speculation (seen in theoretical turns like speculative realism), with the mushroom standing as a biological being particularly conducive to magical thinking. Indeed, mushrooms inspire theories, be they fantastical, empirical, or something in between—take, for example, Terence McKenna's *Food of the Gods*, which presents an evolutionary theory predicated on the role that psilocybin in hallucinogenic mushrooms played in the development of human consciousness. Rufelds digests historical and modern-day materials, stories, and theories by imaginatively assimilating them in this three-part exhibition, which moves between the three cabinet galleries of the Art Museum.

In the first room is displayed a single-channel video of the same name, which spans a series of sporic tales that exist in tangential relation with each other. The vignettes, some *truer* than others, are like mushrooms popping up around the root of an old-growth tree—or the microscopic spores that those mushrooms release into the air. Rufelds plays with synchronous time and intentional anachronisms, generating a narrative that is dreamy and extra-rational. More cyclical than linear, the video has multiple points of entry for viewers, who can find their own trail through it.

Influences of the video essay genre and experimental doc work by artists like Hito Steyerl and Harun Farocki are present, where the narrator attempts to communicate something even as they are aware of the contingency of their own perspective, the questionable authority of their own speaking voice; this is extended to the context of parafiction, with Rufelds' deep historical research folded into a factually suspended, polysporous realm. The form of the video embodies a larger politicized tension between *production*—the act of making new work as an artist, working with materials and technologies that have fraught histories—and *decomposition* or decay of interest to the artist in this work. Rufelds' practice of re-working and re-contextualizing appropriated footage, and then folding this footage into new footage that the artist himself shot, becomes itself a remediation practice akin to the remediating capabilities of mushrooms.

In the second room is the installation *Spiral Economy*, which centres on two large containers used for transporting bulk materials to manufacturers. "Intermediate bulk containers," more specifically, their function is to deliver "transitional substances" to where they are packaged for sale. Prior to their new life in the gallery, these plastic tanks were used to hold bulk *mango pomegranate body wash* in transit: when the artist received them, there was still a bit of sparkly goop left in the bottom. When I met with Rufelds in his studio, the tank was tipped so the bright-pink ooze could drip from the giant tank into a small plastic bucket below. As we spoke about the aesthetics of alchemy, I could faintly smell the familiar, cloying scent of synthetic fruit.

Rufelds also displays the industry-standard certificates that certify the containers have been sufficiently sanitized so as to be recycled, resold, and reintegrated into the circular economy of global shipping and storage. By displaying these vessels under the cold light of fluorescents, their sterility is in ripe tension with the artist's invocations of spirality—an ancient symbol with sacred resonance in goddess mythology, for example, as reclaimed by 1970s neopagan ecofeminisms (the spiral—the shape of a labyrinth someone might walk, barefoot, to root themself in the knowledge of the ground). Meandering and meaningful, this parafictional work serves as an intervention into the circular economy, rendering the circulation spiral instead.

In the third room is Rufelds' installation *The Grave Contains Nothing But Dust and Ashes*. Here, two carousel slide projectors become another circuitous site for parafictional storytelling. The projector is on display as both an image technology and a sculptural object, resembling a kind of benzene ring itself, with its circular form displayed vertically. With the haunting mood of the space, the artist invokes phantasmagoria shows, the relation between magic lanterns and slide carousels haunting the work. Images from art history—like British Romantic Joseph Wright of Derby's painting of the early days of the industrial revolution—are recast in light of this para-normal, mycological meta-verse: what if, when Miravan, the young nobleman of Ingria, opens the sarcophagus shown in Wright's painting, he finds a rare species of fungus? With the title, Rufelds' installation simultaneously invokes and negates the possibility of the spirit world.

In *Two or Three Saprophytes,* Rufelds reveals parafiction to be a *recuperative* practice—one that spirals outward, and back in again, like an eternal return, still turning…

Sahar Te
Listening Appears Direct Flow

Sahar Te, *Listening Appears Direct Flow*, 2019. Installation detail, artist proof.

Artist Sahar Te has often worked with sound and performance, musical scores and notation, text and translation, language and materiality, and in the exhibition *Listening Appears Direct Flow* her interests converge on the subject of political speech and oration.

What is the shape of democracy? What is its structure? Is the history of speech teleological? Regressive? What forms does speech take when democracy is in crisis? Te takes the *apparatus*—a way of thinking about the discursive architecture of political structures—as a way into these pressing philosophical questions, exploring these through her art practice.

Early on in the process of conceptualizing this work, the artist made a compelling observation: the negative space contained by an *amphitheatre*, if rendered solid, becomes a stage. Te rendered these as two 3-D models—both semicircular in shape, each a kind of "reverse" of the other, fitting into each other like a puzzle. The objects sit on a low plinth in the artist's studio, elegantly simple and suggestive, invoking questions on the evolution of democracy and the future of the polis. That the amphitheatre (a space where many people gather together and listen) can be rendered as the negative space of a stage (on which a single person stands, speaking from on high) is a provocation for what would become this new installation by Te.

In this installation, Te focuses on *form* to isolate the structure or "understructure" of political speech from its *content*, however illusorily. Here, structure refers to the architectural and political (structural or systemic) sense, in contrast to the linguistic-based structuralism of mid-century semiotics. The artist's considered, conceptual attention to *form*—as distinct from, at least in the conceit of this work, the content that form typically holds—becomes an oblique way of considering the workings of political speech, oratory performance, and the persuasions therein.

The artist looks to twentieth- and twenty-first-century presidential speeches as a consequential form of capital "P" political communication. But instead of focusing on the political actor giving the speech, Te considers the infrastructure that *supports* that political actor. The artist works with the physical objects and apparatuses of modern-day oration, placing the visual language of political speech on display. There is a weight to this infrastructure, from the heaving analog speakers held up by an industrial crane, to the spectral, anthropocentric proxies of the standing teleprompters that display in the language of code on their semi-translucent screens.

An engine hoist holds up a stack of five speakers stacked atop each other like an unseen micro-architecture, visually reminiscent of construction scaffolding through which the droning soundtrack of distorted political speeches plays. The speeches are played on a loop by five Raspberry Pis, stacked atop each other: another layer of unseen micro-architecture, visually reminiscent of construction scaffolding. The crane is an ad hoc architectural object (or intervention or apparatus) that quite literally supports the dissemination of political speech, propaganda, and music—as in the case of large outdoor rock concerts.

Te's use of materials was inspired by news footage of an anti-coup rally in Istanbul, where Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the crowd from a 200-foot stage, surrounded by giant national flags and banners bearing his image; giant cranes held speakers stacked sixteen, or more, high to allow the sound of the speech to travel. Te reconstitutes elements of that image on a different scale, creating an installation that engages the apparatus of political speech in a way that is responsive to the museum as its own media and infrastructural context.

What does political speech sound like? It sounds like the teacher on *Peanuts*, the garbled, monotonous voice of authority coming through the speakers. Te listened to speeches across ideological borders and was struck by the similarities in cadence and intonation. Appropriating digital recordings of historical speeches and processing them to form the soundtrack of the installation, the result is a looping drone in which all content (in the form of words) has been abstracted, rendered virtually unintelligible.

The exhibition's title *Listening Appears Direct Flow* reads as *Listening Appears Direct Flow* when viewed on a teleprompter. That the text is only legible when reflected back to the viewer on the inverted, mirroring mechanism of the teleprompter invokes themes of legibility and literacy, communication and understanding, and the politics and aesthetics of making-meaning in a contemporary context in which all speech is, in a sense, political. Generated by code, with the artist's thesis paper serving as the requisite "data set," the title embodies the algorithmic under-structure of the larger exhibition. That the aural *listening* is something that *appears* engenders a sense of synaesthesia resonant with Te's interest in the materiality of speech and sound. The teleprompters display a speech written in code, algorithmically generated and based on a hypothetical listener's psychometric profile (mined from their Facebook page).

Beyond the crane and speaker is a semicircle of five presidential teleprompters, bringing to mind the arrangement of Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet*. Functioning as cheating apparatuses for political actors, teleprompters tend to be hidden in plain sight (photographic documentation of presidential speeches show the teleprompters, almost ghostly, framing the body of the speaker). Now, the *frame* becomes the actor—the form a theatrical element in an installation that is itself a mimetic reimagining of the stage on which the theatrics of political speech are played out. In the background hang long, draping flags in a shade of blue commonly used around the world (with some exceptions, like China, where red is used) to give an air of political authority; excessively long, they accumulate on the floor below. In the absence of human actors, the backdrop frames the teleprompters, underscoring their presence as uncanny "actors" in the *set* of the installation.

Te paints the various apparatuses in the installation—the crane, the teleprompters—in the same creamy, matte white of the Art Museum's walls. In doing so, the artist puts the theatrics of political speech in conversation with the setting of the Art Museum. Making these objects of technology and industry in the image of contemporary art has the effect of distancing them from their contexts and viewing them, instead, as apparatuses for performance in the context of another apparatus for performance and political speech—the contemporary art gallery.
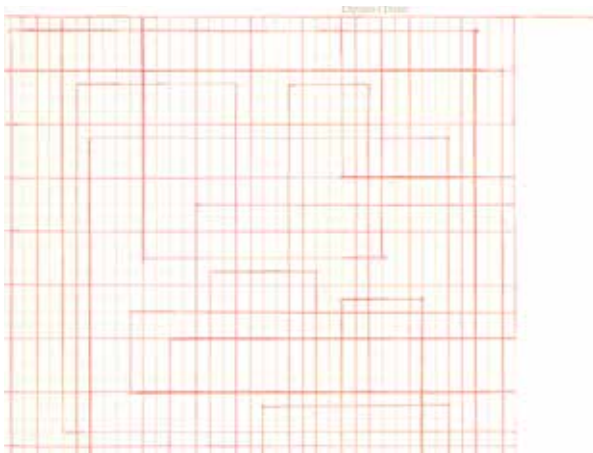
Miles Rufelds, *The Grave Contains Nothing but Dust and Ashes*, 2019. Slide projectors, tripods.

Left: Sahar Te, *Listening Appears Direct From*, 2019. Installation detail, artist proof.

Right: Dana Prieto, *An alphabet of correspondence*, 2019. Installation.

Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh, *Study of Light*, 2019. Coloured pencil on graph paper.

From the Artists

Dana Prieto: Deep thanks to the MVS faculty, the Art Museum, and AGB staff for their immense inspiration and care. Eternal gratitude to Will Kwan for his incalculable support. And special, heartfelt shrugs to my partner, my family, studio colleagues, and friends who have guided me through these scorching investigations.

Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh: My deep gratitude to Marla Hlady, Kristie McDonald, Mitchell Akiyama, Charles Stankievech, Lisa Steele, Kim Tomczak, David Lieberman, my fellow cohort, teachers, friends, and family who encouraged me throughout. Vida and Siavash, and finally, all the women I encountered from both past and present during the creation of *RED/700nm*.

Miles Rufelds: I'd like to dearly thank the MVS program, the Art Museum team, the Daniels faculty, my panel, and my supervisor for all of their energy and generosity throughout these years. Special thanks, as well, to the wonderful cast of colleagues, peers, and friends, inside and outside the institution, that continues to buoy this process at its every moment. This project was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Sahar Te: Thanks to the students and faculty in the MVS program as well as the Art Museum team. It would not have been possible without Alex Moon's generous help and support. A special thanks to Craig Fahner, Mitchell Akiyama, Rouzbeh Akhbari, Julia Paoli, Lauren Fournier, Fabio Dias, Tomas D. Abromaitis, Hoda Farahani, Pamella Moon, Mira Avarzamani, Ghazaleh Avarzamani, Aaron Ronan, Marc Couroux, Matthew Allen, and Christophe Barbeau. Also, to my family, for their endless kindness and encouragement.

From the Faculty

MVS Studio graduate faculty who served on thesis panels this year include (in alphabetical order):

Mitchell Akiyama, Marla Hlady, Luis Jacob, Jean-Paul Kelly, Will Kwan, Sue Lloyd, Kristie MacDonald, Christine Shaw, Lisa Steele, Joanne Tod, Kim Tomczak, and MVS Program Director Charles Stankievech.

Thanks once again go to Lisa Steele for her continued support in making this MVS Thesis publication possible—both editorially and through sheer will. Much appreciation goes to Lauren Fournier, whose essays have wonderfully articulated the depth of the students' research. Continual thanks to all the administrative staff in the Daniels Faculty, especially Dean Richard Sommer, who demonstrates his strong commitment to Visual Studies and to studio practice in the visual arts in many ways. Finally, thank you to Barbara Fischer—and her entire team—at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto for their continued collaboration with the MVS program in providing an incredible experience and platform for interdisciplinary research that draws from the breadth of the university.

A special note must be made to draw attention to the retirement this year of Lisa Steele, Kim Tomczak, and Joanne Tod. All three have contributed years of amazing pedagogy and mentorship to an entire generation of Canadian artists. Lisa Steele founded the MVS program in 2003, and it is to her credit the program is as strong and vibrant as it is today.

Opening Event

Reception
Wednesday, April 17, 6-8pm
University of Toronto Art Centre

Public Programs

Drop-In Tours
Malcove Collection Tour
Last Wednesday of each month, 12 noon
University of Toronto Art Centre

Hart House Collection Tour
Last Wednesday of each month, 2pm
Meet at the Hart House information desk

For program details visit
artmuseum.utoronto.ca

Staff

Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/
Chief Curator
Sarah Robayo Sheridan, Curator
John G. Hampton, Adjunct Curator
Seika Boye, Adjunct Curator
Rebecca Gimmi, Program Coordinator
Maureen Smith, Business Coordinator
Heather Darling Pigat, Collections Manager
Esther Simmonds-MacAdam, Exhibition
Coordinator
Chiara Cavaliere, Gallery Attendant
Sam Mogelonsky, Communications Assistant
Theresa Wang, Curatorial Assistant
Erica Stocking, Exhibition Technician

Underline Studio, Brand Design
Flash Reproductions, Printing

About the Author

Lauren Fournier is an artist, writer, and
independent curator. She holds a PhD from
York University, where she wrote a history
of autotheory as feminist practice across
media. Her writing has been published in such
journals and books as *Comparative Media*

*Arts Journal, Contemporary Women's Writing,
West Coast Line, CSPA Quarterly, C Magazine,
a/b: Auto/Biography Studies, Canadian Art,*
and *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist
Art in Canada*. She has curated exhibitions,
performances, and screenings at a number of
public and private galleries, museums, and
artist-run centres, including the Blackwood,
the Medical Museion, Vtape, Access Gallery,
and Zalucky Contemporary.

About the Artists

Dana Prieto is an Argentine artist and
educator based in Toronto. Her work explores
intimate and socio-political entanglements
of mundane objects and rituals, manifesting
through sculpture, installation, performance,
and writing. Prieto's interdisciplinary practice
inquires and invites to unsettle our ways of
relating, thinking, making, and consuming in
the Anthropocene.

Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh is an interdisciplinary
artist residing in Toronto, who focuses on
drawing, sound, light, and performance. Her
practice follows the philosophy and poetry of
science, namely through astronomy. She has
exhibited her work in Canada, the US, Italy,
and Japan.

Miles Rufelds is an artist and writer based
in Toronto. Rufelds' interdisciplinary work
weaves historical research with fictional,
speculative, or narrative structures. Often
working backwards from contemporary
political-economic anxieties, his projects
probe the technocratic systems connecting
industry, science, ecology, and aesthetics.

Sahar Te is a multidisciplinary artist whose
practice mobilizes methods that open up
alternative realities and confront convention.
Exploring the role of past narrativization as
it shapes the future, Te's interventions range
from language and semiotics, social dynamics
and ethics, to media studies and oral histories.
Te's projects engage in socio-political and
techno-political discourses to understand
hegemony within different power structures.

Visiting the Art Museum

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery ♿
7 Hart House Circle
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H3
416.978.8398

University of Toronto Art Centre
15 King's College Circle
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H7
416.978.1838

Wheelchair access to University College, and
therefore the Art Museum's University of
Toronto Art Centre location, will be closed due
to University College building revitalization.
Accommodations for accessibility are available
upon request.

Tuesday	Noon–5pm
Wednesday	Noon–8pm
Thursday	Noon–5pm
Friday	Noon–5pm
Saturday	Noon–5pm
Sunday	Closed
Monday	Closed

Closed on statutory holidays. Class tours and
group bookings by appointment.
Admission is FREE.

artmuseum@utoronto.ca
artmuseum.utoronto.ca
@artmuseummuoft
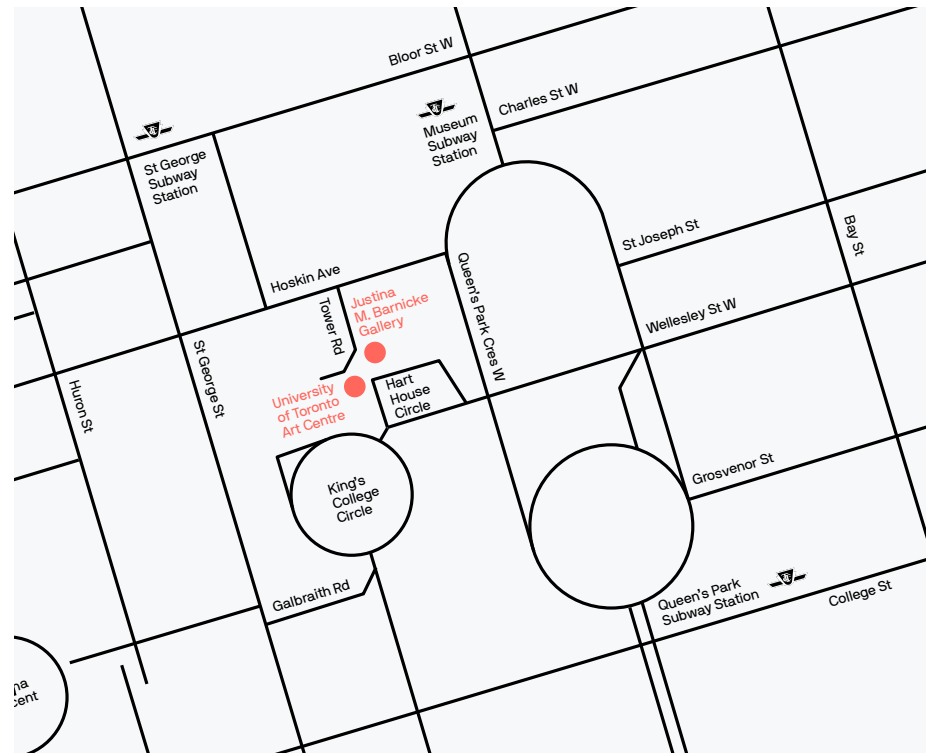
Art Museum
University of Toronto
—
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery
University of Toronto Art Centre

7 Hart House Circle
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H3
artmuseum.utoronto.ca

UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO   HartHouse   UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE