

# Large Text

## Homo on the Range

Curated by Logan Williams

May 11–July 30, 2022

University of Toronto Art Centre

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Works by Jess Dobkin, Richard Fung &  
Tim McCaskell, Jordan Elliott Prosser,  
and Evan Sproat

Art  
Museum

# Homo on the Range

Where the skies are not cloudy all day, the exhibition *Homo on the Range* is prompted by the childhood lawn, elucidating the dialectic of desire and violence inherent in the conception of home. In a theatrical mise-en-scene, Jess Dobkin, Richard Fung, Tim McCaskell, Jordan Elliott Prosser, and Evan Sproat present artworks that respond to the complexities of desire, personal mythology, and mementos from the past, deconstructing the picket fence in the search of possible futures. The exhibition positions violence as the residue left on queer desire in the creation of new definitions for home, combining existing, commissioned, and repurposed artworks as actors in the unfolding scene. The socio-political materiality of the lawn is reflected in the Art Museum, reorienting the visitor's body and challenging conventional modes of viewership by highlighting the architecture of the space. Attention to embodiment, affect, and performativity initiates a dialogue between queer ethics and home to ask whether embodied desire is possible within the frameworks of contemporary culture. *Homo on the Range* is the second installment of projects responding to the theme of pleasure through curatorial interventions exploring the aesthetic potentials of queer home.

This exhibition is produced as part of the requirements for the MVS degree in Curatorial Studies at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, University of Toronto.

## Our Supporters

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# Exhibition Essay

*Implicit in desire is an inevitable violence. If the real body is always in relation to its virtual potential, impossible to actualize without leaving what is, can we ever come close to embodied desire? After all—"nature and the earth have already told us that the object of desire is neither the body nor the thing—only the image."*<sup>1</sup>

## cast of characters

**real body:** flesh-bearing organism feeling hurt and pain and joy and rapture—the touching feeling—where the stakes of everyday life are elevated on an existence level. spending and earning money, eating to survive, time passing in an expanse, slow-motion; a life.

**virtual potential:** distance with palpable possibility but not here and now (and perhaps never!); the infinite task of finitude and the contentious freudian death drive. can it ever be achieved? *we want what we can't have.*

**leaving what is:** gravity-tethered no longer! the desire to be other, apart from here. of course, this is impossible (possibility slips through greasy fingers). how can you know *not here*: a free fall forever, out of the body, a hauntology of presence? the performance is not the thing as it is happening, when it's over, when the shutter closes.

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1. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 313.

**embodied desire:** like walking a mile in someone's shoes *again and again and again* without ever really knowing what that feels like—shoes aren't even an apt metaphor to really *know* an experience. that collective feeling of *if I were different* and then dreaming it up as if it had no body, no ache, no sense of heaving recklessness and the weight of sleepless nights. here its changing form, knowing the corporeality of not-you, flesh and blood and fingerprints.

*Lights up. A glowing green exit sign, an emergency door, a fire hose—inconspicuous exit strategies. From a landscape of abundant pastures and bucolic scenes of weathered barns springs a queer body in homemade costumes derived from discarded dresses, in choreographed dance performances with accompanying vocals to a pop-radio hit playing from an extension-cord tethered boombox. Endless expanses of fields are replaced with throngs of screaming fans, invisible but full of potential to materialize—these museum walls aren't so different, metaphorical green screen, an eruption of spectators chanting adorations. On this stage, constant patrolling, unending social performances in which desires are kept quite hidden, die a little death.*

*The lawn unfurls.* Glistening in its potential to become real, dominating conceptions of home, the birthplace of residual violence. Jess Dobkin's astroturf glistens green as a projection surface for desire, its artificiality tempts the formulation of dreams.

*A fag.* Shawn is unapologetically himself, problematically himself. His hopes of a prom queen title at the Triangle Program graduation, his breakneck monologuing, his white trash t-shirt: this is the nineties. Richard Fung and Tim McCaskell capture

the delicate layers of Shawn in simple, successive frames that elucidate queer potential—and complicate it, too.

*Another costume.* In a range of domestic-inspired materials, Evan Sproat deconstructs his mother's graduation dress into a glove, replete with tiny shovels and delicate lacing detail, complicating notions of labour and domesticity at home. Utility is superseded by a combination of fabrics and textures that embolden queer desire.

*Rolled up and obfuscated.* Sounds throb from an architectural pillar; Jordan Elliott Prosser's secret music practice, produced alone in the privacy of his bedroom, plays into the plush interior of carpets, like a protective membrane, negotiating the boundaries of vulnerability and transparency, with a brutish facade from the carpet's rough underside.

Can we ever achieve our desires? They come in orchestral waves, the expansive imagination rearranging scenery, inserting bodies into locations of unparalleled pleasure; a future unencumbered by survivance or even reality itself. We go on desiring these fantastical scenes, yet our lives are steeped in daily comings-and-goings, deep-rooted-regimen, a hand-me-down state of things passed through genetic strata into blood and skin. Desire is not embodied—it longs for embodiment, patiently waiting for its improbable fruition.

It seems so violent, the impossibility of the unfolding of the thing we crave and dream. A residue accrues on each new desire, like morning dew or a hose in hot summer, gripping on with fearless conviction, with a refusal to let go. There for beholding, this violence persists in its glorified visibility, taunting desire by fanning its flames; these out-of-reach desires grow palpably stronger, rooting deeper still—anything

to defy the constrictions of our bodies, our hierarchical arrangement. Like some proverbial Hydra growing exponential with each destructive attempt, desire is contingent on its violent residue for continuance.

Inherent in this dialectic is the homo on the range, enclosed in narratives of kept lawns and rock-hard masculinity. A desire to be otherwise, the soft and flouncy edge of a queer disposition, is unfathomable against a fail-proof backdrop of life on the farm, the gingham-clad drifter returning to sepia. Futile reorientations, a move from the ground, a theatre and its actors—violence and desire pulse through the queer experience in search of an alternate space.

## About the Curator

Logan Williams is a queer performancemaker, writer, producer, and scholar working in visual culture, theatre, and curatorial studies. Williams aims to relocate the drama of the theatre to alternative spaces through explorations in embodiment and intimacy. His research combines affect theory, queer ethics, and performance studies through curatorial projects that investigate contemporary conceptions of home. Williams holds a BA in Visual Culture and Performance Studies from Simon Fraser University and is pursuing an MVS in Curatorial Studies at The University of Toronto. (loganwilliams.work)

## Curator's Acknowledgments

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# Public Programming

## **Opening Reception: MVS Studio Program and MVS Curatorial Studies Program Graduating Exhibitions**

Wednesday, May 11, 5pm–7pm  
University of Toronto Art Centre

Free and all are welcome! For more information,  
visit [artmuseum.utoronto.ca/programs/](http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/programs/)

# 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

### **Hours**

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

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