

M**** is the first institutional solo exhibition in Toronto by Vancouver-based artist Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill.

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill: M**** is co-produced by Mercer Union, Toronto, and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver.

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fORUM

Justine A. Chambers

fORUM: Justine A. Chambers
17 August 2024, 1 PM

The movement-based practice of Justine A. Chambers explores collaborative creation, close observation, and the idea of choreography as a living archive. Her interest in the choreography of the everyday often informs the performances she develops through periods of gestation and iteration. Responding to artist Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill's reflections on berry picking as an intergenerational and familial activity, Chambers will activate the transmission, traceability, and transformation of such rituals as embodied forms of knowledge and record keeping. Register to attend at mercerunion.org.

Justine A. Chambers is a dance artist and educator living on the ancestral and traditional territories of the S̫w̫x̫w̫7mesh, x̫m̫əθk̫əy̫əm and səilwətał Nations. Chambers's work has been hosted by Art Museum at University of Toronto (2024); Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery, Montreal (2023); Libby Leshgold Gallery, Emily Carr University of Art and Design (2023); Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2023); Teck Gallery, Simon Fraser University (2022); Western Front, Vancouver (2021); Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia (2021); National Arts Centre, Ottawa (2020); Artspeak, Vancouver (2019); Hong Kong Performing Arts Festival (2019); Sophiensaale, Berlin (2019); Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College (2018); and Agora de la Danse, Montreal (2017). She was long listed for the Sobey Art Award (2023), and is the recipient of the Chrystal Dance Prize (2017, 2023), and the Lola Dance Award (2017). She is currently on faculty at the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University and completed a MFA in interdisciplinary art in 2024. Chambers is Max Tyler-Hite's mother.

fORUM is Mercer Union's ongoing series of talks, lectures, interviews, screenings, and performances. Admission to our public programming is free, and all are welcome.

This event accompanies the exhibition Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill: M****

BIOGRAPHIES

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill is an artist and writer. Her practice explores the history of found materials to enquire into concepts of land, property, and economy. Recent exhibitions include the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2023); Le Magasin CNAC, Grenoble (2023); the 59th Venice Biennale (2022); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2021); the College Art Galleries at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon (2020); and Gallery TPW, Toronto (2018). She is a member of BUSH gallery, an Indigenous artist collective that seeks to challenge Eurocentric art models, and to centre the land and Indigenous epistemologies. Hill is Cree and English, with maternal roots in the Michel Band and Papaschase. She lives on the unceded territories of the S̫w̫x̫w̫7mesh, x̫m̫əθk̫əy̫əm and səilwətał Nations.

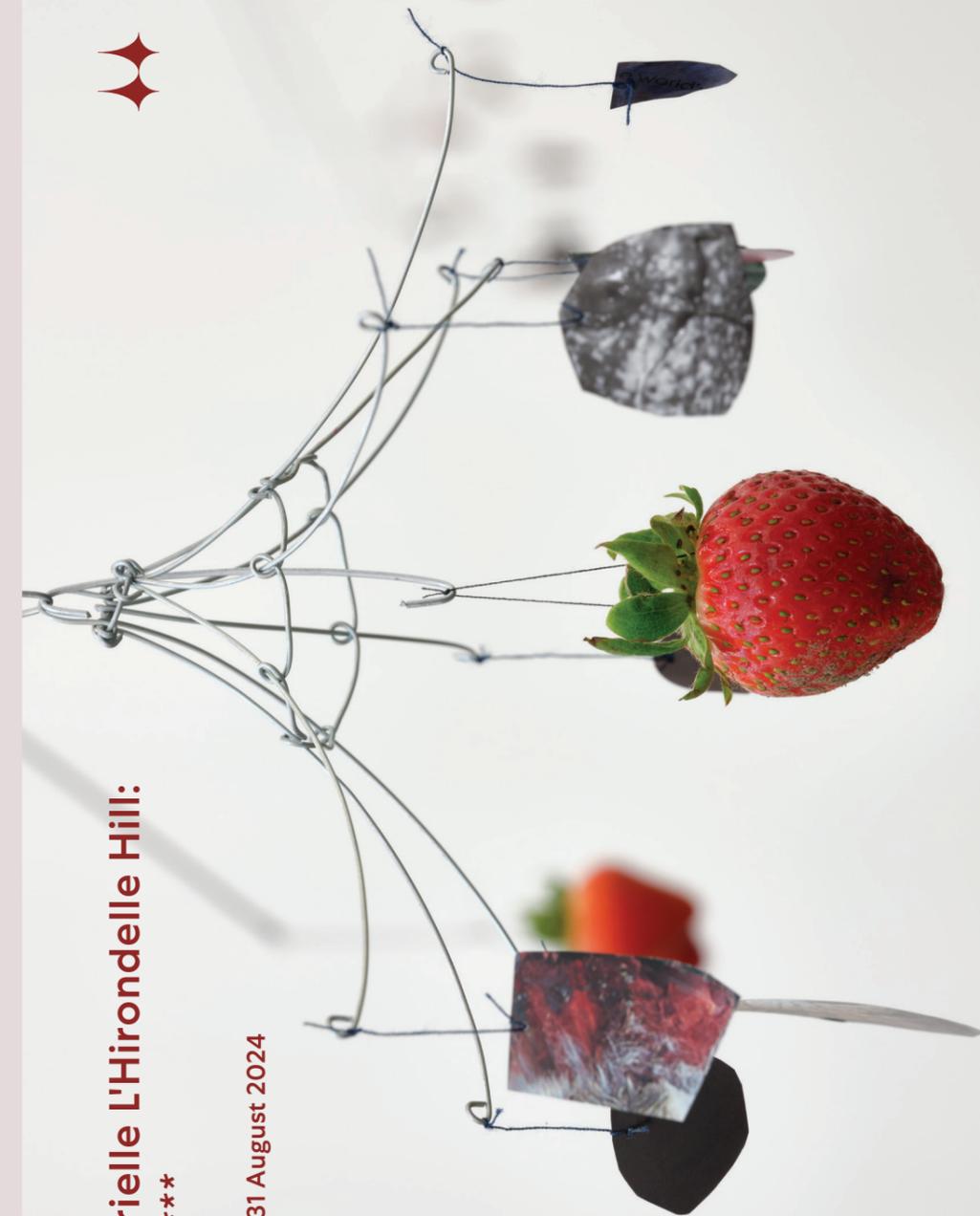


Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, *Counterblaste*, 2021. Courtesy the artist and Cooper Cole, Toronto.

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Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill:
M****

6 July - 31 August 2024



I will read you a story

by Tania Willard

A stack of chairs is a waiting ground for a hall full of community; it is respectful to help clean the community house: stack the chairs, discard the leftovers, get the kids to carry the bags for recycling while they run around playing. You should know that this is a community hall—it requires everyone to take care of it, of each other, while everyone catches up with aunties and uncles and grandparents, and maybe also talks politics. And there are prayers with every *moke: a prayer is made and a vinyl table cloth is scorched, making a mark, a re:mark and a record. A series of burn marks are strung together on a blackberry surface in Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill's cameraless film *M****** (2023) along with a film made with hair recalling community or classroom film showings of flickering 16mm light, stories are marked through the spiritual nature of keratin strands and prayers linger upon the disintegrating celluloid berries. The sensorial and grounded works in Hill's exhibition, also titled *M******, are about economies of care and anti-capitalist punctuations within Indigenous acts, where blackberries replace silver gelatin and record actions not images, but they are still marked by light. Umbrella-like mobiles, *Site Parasite Dice Paradise* and *Octom*** (2023), become vision board collages dangling with strawberries that slowly become fungal. One blackberry drawing work is called *Curtains* (2023) and another *Echo Body* (2023) and another *Out of Time* (2023). This text is also an echo, of caretaking: of stains, food squished and smooshed, bodies loved, smaller things, visions of time slipping in a film loop of existence that is mesmerizingly mundane and esoteric and incredible all at once
... all at once
... all at once.

A shoe got left behind—or a bag, or an old broken umbrella—maybe a dream was tangled in that hair. You can't miss the small moments, caught in the passing and looping of time are moments of complete exhaustion, joy, grief, and celebration, passing thoughts become water droplets on a spider web as life and children and communities are stitched together and frayed simultaneously.

Himalayan blackberries are one of the most invasive and widespread plants in the Vancouver area, in x^wməθk^wəyəm, Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh, and səliłwətət territories. Some naturalize, some continue to threaten native species. Blackberries can grow in marginal places; they can flourish with poor soil and disturbed sites. Despite being invasive they are as ubiquitous as umbrellas and gentrification on the wet coast.

In the blackberry works Hill emphasizes the finger painting strokes with small collage bits that reflect life like how dew drops reflect tiny worlds. Collaged elements of small parasites, suckling mouths, eggs, spores spreading the anxiousness of bodies growing within bodies, the post-partum transformations that transmute body and mind. These collaged bits that sunlight grew, the tree that became the paper that became a glossy magazine that became a projector bulb that became a blackberry that became a kid that became a parent that became a grandparent that became a dream. That keeps looping and fruiting and multiplying. Where is the ceremony? Stuck in the silver gelatin, extracted like minerals, industrialized and residential-ized, the silver that was mined and then recorded the mining. The colonial frame rate of oppression is on fast forward. Hill's work might propose playing that film in reverse, putting back the ceremony and knowledges swallowed up in fast forward, returning in verso. The cut edits of this film strip where hair gets cut and then grows back, framing the resiliency wherein the hair is always growing and also always being cut. These drawings have 16mm lines and you can follow the story in any way you want. Like a rope that is frayed, there is still a tether holding it all together.



Hill's works in *M****** propose new ways to read film, to read the story of life and light not only through the lens of a progressive frame rate in a linear coil lit by electricity made to make us all work in factories, but, perhaps this sequence also has multiple arms like an octopus. Each arm delivering a new storyline, each sucker holding on to the story over time. An octopus is a good mother, living only to die when the young are born, swatting away crabs and predators as thousands of tiny octopi, like little upside-down umbrellas, propel themselves through the brine that marks the start of time. Umbrellas were once made with whalebone ribbing. It seems appropriate, this shield to protect from this coastal rainforest, is no longer made of bone but of thin metal collapsible ribs, is repurposed in Hill's work into sculptural canopies that are vulnerable in their thin tether to the ground, leaning and dangling with stories, more drops, more rain, more dew, each watery orb a pin point reflecting the world, like a child's tear or snot or vomit. There are always stories of snot baby, the primordial mucous of creation and earth and tenderness, and you learn in the end that the child was not yours, it was always shared with the earth.

Back to stacking: stacking objects dressed in the clothes of mothering and grandmothering, walking the path in the running shoes of the moment that are also moccasins from the past. These shoes that support the stack that animate the chair bodies that represent ancestors and generations of time, working and walking, forward and backward; we change the future and heal the past simultaneously through our care, carrying. We carry the grief and that medicine and transmit through time messages for the coming generation: learn/continue to pick berries, learn/continue to find the traces, learn/continue to put back what was taken. Continue to loop your story as tentacles of time and light, light that burns and grows and dangles and births new time. This umbrella term for bearing children, motherhood, carries so much, including the heaps that are put upon it. You will be judged, you will be scared, you will be tired, you will not know how to continue... and you will find out how to do exactly that. Continue to loop, continue to stack, continue to birth through the trauma, holding, with all your arms and all your heart. A canopy of love shelters the rain that circulates through all the pores and atmospheres of earth and suffuses all into light again, flickering with life, being told in new ways, a bedtime story for each new generation of the winged, those that swim, the four-legged, the insects, the spores, the parasites and us. I am a *M******.

Tania Willard is a mixed Secwépemc and settler artist whose research intersects with land-based art practices. Her work activates connection to land, culture, and family, centering art as an Indigenous resurgent act, though collaborative projects such as BUSH Gallery and support of language revitalization in Secwépemc communities. Willard has received the Shadbolt Foundation's VIVA Award (2020), and the Hnatyshyn Foundation's Award for Curatorial Excellence in Contemporary Art (2016). She was part of the Future Studies cohort for Ruth Foundation for the Arts (2023), and named a Forge Project Fellow for her community-engaged artistic practice (2022).

Cover and Left Image: Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, *M******. Installation view: Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Unit 17, Vancouver. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography.

Right Image: Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, *Fade-out*, 2023. Installation view: Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Unit 17, Vancouver. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography.