



1. *Speak & Spell*, 2024–25
series of 4 telegrams on paper, framed

2. *Roncesvalles Avenue, Toronto, 'The Tangled Garden'*, 2018
b/w inkjet print, mounted on Dibond, framed

3. *Moving the Museum (What Then Remainz)*, 2023
series of 4 b/w inkjet prints, framed

4. *The Stenographer (SOS)*, 2025
two annotated seismograms with annotated document, framed

5. *The Red Room*, 2025
oil on burlap, stretched over primed canvas

6. *The Fireflies*, 2025
series of 14 drawings, typewriter ink on paper, framed

7. *What Can a Body Do? (In All Directions)*, 2025
mannequin with printed hoodie

* *What Then Remainz*, Duane Linklater, 2016
(Details on reverse)

groundwork

Luis Jacob: *The Order of Canada (I'll Be Your Mirror)*

Viewing Duane Linklater's *What Then Remainz* (2016)
within the context of *groundwork*

In 2016, Mercer Union presented *From Our Hands*, the first institutional solo exhibition in Toronto by artist Duane Linklater (Omaskêko Ininiwak from Moose Cree First Nation; lives/works: North Bay, Ontario). Working across installation, performance, film, and photography, Linklater excavates histories to unearth folds and knots addressing cultural loss, recovery and sovereignty. For his exhibition at Mercer Union, Linklater explored the structural language of the institution to develop a series of works that considered the internal language of walls, spaces for the Indigenous body, and how spaces of inclusion can be extended. One of these works, *What Then Remainz* (2016), is a large-scale structural intervention in the East wall of the gallery, introducing a sentence questioning Indigenous sovereignty of land and law, and legacy. This work has remained a part of Mercer Union ever since, living behind the drywall.

Organized under the *groundwork* program, artist Luis Jacob's project, *The Order of Canada (I'll Be Your Mirror)*, offers an exercise in close looking. For over a decade, his artistic practice has critically examined Toronto's relationship with its past, observing the city's tendency to reproduce and then mask its settler colonial history. He traces this behaviour across different forms of infrastructure, from the way museums are managed to the way private interest is privileged in urban development. At Mercer Union, Jacob focuses on recent departures in the Art Gallery of Ontario's curatorial department, searching for the signals that such events leave behind. He presents a series of new paintings, photographs, and works on paper that follow a process of excavation and disclosure, drawing our attention to images such as the seemingly empty museum wall or the vacant lot.

These works are presented in dialogue with Linklater's site-specific artistic intervention: a cutout in the gallery's east wall that partially reveals *What Then Remainz*. In uncovering the installation, which speaks to a relationship between institutional structures and Indigenous sovereignty, Jacob conceptually engages with the art gallery as a site of obligation. He accompanies this gesture with a series of talks, inviting speakers to discuss the interplay between governance structures and Indigenous cultural production, attending anew to the perspectives that *What Then Remainz* can offer today.

The following is an excerpt from "Within walls...", an essay written by Georgina Jackson, Mercer Union's then Director of Exhibitions & Programs, to accompany Linklater's exhibition, *From Our Hands* (2016).

In this exhibition, [Duane] Linklater considers the internal language of walls, what is said and unsaid, spaces for the Indigenous body, and how such spaces of inclusion can be extended. There is a large-scale structural intervention in the galleries, introducing a sentence questioning Indigenous sovereignty of land and law, and legacy. Over the past weeks the drywall, plywood and steel studs along the length of the east wall have been removed. The structure of the gallery has been physically altered and extended. The east wall has been replaced with new steel studs, in a skeletal form, powder coated in a fire engine red at specific intervals to form the words, "WHAT THEN REMAINS." [...]

The role of the remnant comes to the fore. The question of "what then remains," is excerpted from a statement by Justice Sotomayor in the closing remarks of the United States Supreme Court case *Dollar General v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians* (No. 13-1496), in which a thirteen-year-old tribal member on a training program, alleged sexual abuse by a non-Indian employee of the company's store on the tribal land. At the core of the case was the legal principle that tribal courts have civil jurisdiction over non-Indian conduct arising from consensual relations on Indian reservations, weaving through overriding sovereignties across territories and bodies, and, critically, Indigenous sovereignty. As Sotomayor expanded,

What then remains of the sovereignty of the Indians? ...you just want to cherry pick what 'sovereignty' means...Because if they're sovereign, the United States can have treaties with people that basically say in your land, you do what you want; I'm not going to enforce your judgement if I don't think it's consistent with due process here. But we don't dictate to other sovereigns what kind of systems they should have. You're right we have the power to do that, but it's still something that we don't have to exercise.¹

¹ The Supreme Court of the United States, *Dollar General Corporation et al., Petitioners, v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, et al.*, Washington, D.C., Monday December 7, 2015. https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/13-1496_p8k0.pdf, accessed 17 August 2016.