

ADA EXHIBITION TEXT  
**LARGE TYPE**

**Duane Linklater**  
**mymothersside**

# **there's really only so much I can do and say**

2017

Four digital prints, mounted on Dibond

Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University,  
MSU purchase, funded by the Emma Grace Holmes Endowment,  
2019.12.1–4

This work presents copies of four framed prints of Mesoamerican artworks, likely made for the tourist trade, which Linklater purchased in a secondhand shop in Canada. Without removing them from the frames, he scanned the prints and then framed the resulting reproductions. Their poor quality emphasizes the multiple levels of mediation through which Western audiences consume “authentic” works made by Indigenous artists. The prints’ presence in a secondhand shop signals the casual misappropriation of significant tribal objects as collectible curiosities rather than sacred belongings. Divorced from their specific makers and contexts, the objects function as decorative

prints that signify an exoticizing and acquisitive colonial worldview.

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## **dislodgevanishskinground**

2019

Twelve painted tepee poles, steel cable, charcoal, rope, digital print on linen (black tea, blueberry extract, sumac, charcoal)

Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

For the past five years, Linklater has experimented with the tepee, the traditional dwelling of his Cree ancestors. Taking care to signal the tepee's movement from the cultural to the aesthetic sphere, he deconstructs and reassembles the architectural structure. Here Linklater separated the fabric cover from the poles, which he mounted sideways on the wall.

Protruding into the gallery, the upended tepee creates a dislocating effect, referring to centuries of Indigenous displacement throughout North America. As in *there's really only so much I can do and say* (also on view), Linklater is interested in the symbolic multivalence of cultural forms: despite the tepee's sacred nature in Cree communities, it has been misappropriated and turned into a generic symbol of "Indianness" in Euro-American constructions of Native identity.

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## **whiteeagle**

2020

Handmade sweater, cochineal dye, silk screen, nails; edition 2/3

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

Linklater handmade this sweater and tinted it pink with cochineal dye; it includes

two silk-screened images in blue, on the front and the back. Both contain distorted film stills from *The Daughter of Dawn*, a 1920s silent film shot in Oklahoma with an all-Indigenous cast of more than three hundred Kiowa and Comanche. Despite its contrived storyline, which centers on a love triangle involving the Kiowa chief's daughter, Linklater has described the film as an extraordinary document of Native life: the costume and set design feature the Indigenous actors' own tepees, horses, canoes, and clothing.

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**wintercount\_215\_kisepîsim,  
mistranslate\_wolftreeriver\_ininîmowinîhk**  
2022

Canvas, linen, cochineal, orange pekoe tea,  
charcoal, sumac, cotton thread, blueberry  
dye, felt-tip marker, tarpaulin

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

This large-scale installation, on view for the first time since it premiered at the 2022 Whitney Biennial, represents Linklater's continued experimentation with the tepee form. Forgoing the traditional stretcher and frame of Western paintings, the six tepee-canvas rounds hang unstretched in the center of the gallery. Their positioning can be rearranged with each presentation, reflecting the form's flexibility and adaptability to different environments and seasons. The work's title references the process of aging that accompanies the passage of time. Linklater said "In my Omaskeko Cree culture, when we ask each other, 'How old are you?' if we were to translate that we would literally be saying, 'How many winters are you?' If we are looking at a lifetime of a person, that person is half winter."

## **The place I seek to go**

2014

Coyote fur, garment rack, hanger, flat-screen TV, Apple Mac mini, digital video, cables

Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Grants program, 2016

In this sculptural assemblage, Linklater paired a coyote pelt and a garment rack with a video of his hand. Pelts were used as a form of currency in Cree culture, but starting in the seventeenth century animals were commercially hunted to feed the growing European market for furs. In the video, the artist's hand moves through a series of gestures reminiscent of dancer Yvonne Rainer's *Hand Movie* (1966), which she made from bed while recovering from an injury. Linklater's video likewise centers on bodily memories related to a hand wound. By including this intimate portrait alongside the inert pelt, Linklater suggests a sense of kinship that aligns with the Cree belief that furs retain a residue of the animal's spirit.

## **what grief conjures**

2020

Painted tepee poles, nylon rope, wooden pallet, refrigerator, tie-down straps, hand truck, plastic statue, handmade hoodie with cochineal dye, silk-screen ink

The Baltimore Museum of Art: Art Fund established with exchange funds from gifts of Dr. and Mrs. Edgar F. Berman, Equitable Bank, N.A., Geoffrey Gates, Sandra O. Moose, National Endowment for the Arts, Lawrence Rubin, Philip M. Stern, and Alan J. Zakon, BMA 2022.142

For this sculpture, Linklater assembled a range of objects that reference his adolescent interest in punk music and fashion, memories of home, and the fetishization of Greco-Roman sculpture within the Western art historical canon. These objects sit inside a tepee structure that the artist constructed with friends affiliated with the Dokis First Nation outside of North Bay, Ontario, by harvesting and debranching sapling poles. The incongruous grouping of objects suggests a collapse of “high” and “low” culture in oppo-



sition to ideologically loaded hierarchies that apply similar distinctions to tribal and modern art. Placed on a moveable base within a provisional form of Indigenous architecture, the sculpture functions as an anti-monument at a time when public monuments are being widely interrogated for the inequitable worldviews they uphold.

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## **foiled (Version 1)**

2021

8mm film transferred to digital video; color, silent; 7:30 min.

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

*foiled* captures a 2012 charity boxing match between Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and fellow politician Patrick Brazeau. Trudeau later commented that he selected the Indigenous senator as his oppo-

ment because “[he] would be a good foil,” throwing into question the sincerity of his government’s efforts at reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

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## **What Then Remainz**

2016/23

Disassembled wall(s), enamel painted steel, steel screws

Courtesy of the artist

The words spelled out on the metal framing of this deconstructed wall refer to a 2016 US Supreme Court ruling on the jurisdiction of tribal nations. In *Dollar General Corporation v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*, Justice Sonia Sotomayor asked the question “What then remains of the sovereignty of the Indians?” Linklater was drawn to the tension between this poetic

phrase and the highly consequential nature of Supreme Court decisions, which have real effects on people's lives.

*What Then Remainz* gestures to a similar contradiction at play in institutions associated with settler systems. Linklater literally dismantles the architecture of the museum and symbolically reveals its inner workings as a space that has historically upheld patriarchal and white supremacist ideologies, which he believes is especially significant “when the galleries are located on contested lands.” At the end of the exhibition, drywall will be reapplied over the metalwork but the words will remain indefinitely within the museum.

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**for mymother, return**

2021

Custom frame, digital print, ink

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

## **canoe by night**

2020

Handmade canvas jacket with cochineal dye, silk-screen ink, nails; a.p. 1/1

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

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## **Modest Livelihood**

2012

With Brian Jungen

Canada, Dane-zaa, born 1970

Super 16mm film transferred to digital video; color, silent; 50 min.

Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

Linklater and his friend and fellow artist Brian Jungen filmed *Modest Livelihood* while hunting moose with Jungen's uncle, Dane-zaa elder Jack Askoty, on Treaty 8 territory in northern British Columbia. Hunting is central to each artist's Indigenous identity

and represents an ancestral way of living. However, this activity has been complicated by the Supreme Court of Canada's 1999 case *R v. Marshall*, which determined that Indigenous people have the right to fish, hunt, and gather food to sustain a "moderate livelihood"—a vague qualifier that has since been questioned repeatedly in court. While the title evokes the struggle for Indigenous self-determination and the settler state's continued strategy of dispossession, the film depicts hunting as a deeply relational, intergenerational ritual that connects contemporary Indigenous life to its precontact origins.

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## **Sunrise at Cape Spear**

2011

Digital video; color, silent; 12 min.

Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

*Sunrise at Cape Spear* documents the sunrise from Newfoundland's Cape Spear, the place of earliest dawn in North America, as well as where Indigenous North Americans are thought to have first encountered Europeans. Through the simple act of recording the sunrise, Linklater marked his bodily presence there: a quiet form of resistance to the ongoing erasure of Indigenous histories, practices, and peoples.

Since his 2011 visit to Newfoundland, Linklater has attempted to update the Cape Spear Wikipedia entry, which states that "there is no known archaeological evidence to indicate that Cape Spear was viewed by local Indigenous communities as a place of symbolic geographic importance." His contribution has consistently been removed and deemed "article vandalism" by site administrators.

## **can the circle be unbroken 1–5**

2019

Digital print on linen with iron-red, indigo, black walnut, and red cup-and-saucer dyes; sumac; cypress-yellow ochre; blueberry extract; black tea; charcoal

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions Committee  
Fund purchase, commissioned by the San Francisco Museum of  
Modern Art, 2020.23–27

The title of this set of five tepee-canvas paintings is borrowed from a song released by the Carter Family in 1935 about the death of a beloved mother. Linklater created the installation following the passing of his mother, Pauline Linklater, but the work also speaks to loss on the broader scale of collective history. The printed floral designs are sampled from Dutch paintings that inspired the fabrics the English traded with Cree peoples beginning in the seventeenth century, largely supplanting the Cree's customary geometric designs. Linklater

dyed and smudged the printed linen with plant matter and earth minerals native to the region around his home in northeastern Ontario. Draped, folded, and scattered throughout the gallery, and shown without their internal structures, the tepee covers evoke a loss of center.

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## **landlesscolumnbundle**

2019

Painted tepee poles, charcoal, rabbit fur coat, mink fur coat, rope

Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver



TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT

**UMFA1981.016.004 [Chief's Mask, Nootka, Kwakiutl]**

**UMFA1982.001.008 [Model of a Totem Pole, Haida]**

**UMFAED.1998.3.21 [Kachina Koyemsci or Mudhead Clown, Hopi]**

**UMFA2003.10.20 [Pot with Bird Design, Santa Clara Pueblo]**

**UMFA1981.016.002 [Kwakiutl Raven Mask]**

**UMFA1981.016.003**

**UMFA2003.10.19 [Pot, Rio Grande Pueblo]**

**UMFA1981.016.001 [Kwakiutl Chief's Mask]**

2015

3D sculpture of ABS plastic

Utah Museum of Fine Arts Permanent Collection, purchased with funds from The Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment Fund, UMFA2016.8.1A-H

The sculptures on view here are copies of objects in the collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City. Without seeing them in person, Linklater selected eight unattributed Indigenous objects created

between 1875 and 1978—four Northwest Coast masks and headdresses (Kwakiutl, Cowichan, and Tsimshian), a Haida model totem pole, two Pueblo pots, and a Hopi kachina doll—and created a low-fidelity copy of each. Working at the University of Utah's then-fledgling 3D printing lab, he purposefully scanned and printed the sculptural objects using inferior technology. The resulting objects' visible blemishes, alongside the loss of color and surface detail, mirror the ways in which encyclopedic museum collections tend to empty non-Western objects of their specific histories and reduce them to ethnographic specimens.

# **boys don't cry**

2017

Digital prints on hand-dyed linen

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase, with funds from the Dr. Michael Braudo Canadian Contemporary Art Fund and the Art Toronto 2019 Opening Night Preview, 2019, 2019/2305

Linklater appropriated various images, insignia, and texts of personal significance to create this banner. Three of the central panels refer to The Cure's 1980 album, from which he borrowed the work's title, including the iconic image of front man Robert Smith. The other panels picture Jesse Ed Davis, the Kiowa guitarist from the band Taj Mahal; the logo of the American Indian Movement (AIM); a photograph of graffiti from Alcatraz Island, where AIM activists famously protested in 1969–71; and George Caleb Bingham's 1845 painting *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*. While the references reflect Linklater's varied interests, they also reveal how pop culture

informs social constructions of masculinity. In lieu of the “handmade” quality that has long overdetermined interpretations of Indigenous art, Linklater inserts his hand into the artwork, literally “showing the artist’s hand.”