

## Decelerated Dialogues

16<sup>th</sup> Annual Art History & Visual Culture Symposium

Art History Graduate Student Association of York University

Y+ contemporary

Feb 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Preface

The Art History Graduate Student Association of York University is pleased to present Decelerated Dialogues, the 16th Annual Art History and Visual Culture Symposium. The symposium theme responds to the 2016 York University Summer Institute, Slowness, not Sedation, which explored slowness as an active mode of engagement within visual and art-historical practices. Decelerated Dialogues will continue to explore what slowness can look like in our contemporary climate.

This year's symposium reacts to the concept of slowness through the lens of deceleration, which indicates a change in pace rather than a quality of movement. In contemporary contexts, deceleration can be interpreted to encompass topics such as sustainability, mindful artistic approaches, forms that art that encourage resistance, abstracted conceptions of reality, and escapism. By questioning encounters that cause deceleration, and the opportunities for critical conversation that emerge because of it, Decelerated Dialogues explores the motivations and stakes of slowing down.

The symposium will not only consist of artist talks and academic paper presentations; it will also feature the art installations of Andrea Aleman-Pastor, Tyler Muzzin, Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh, and Golboo Amani.

## Symposium Program

<b>9:30AM</b>	Registration & Coffee/Tea
<b>10:00AM</b>	Opening remarks
<b>10:15AM</b>	Elyse Portal (Sudbury-based independent scholar, University of Toronto MVS graduate)  <i>Materia medica</i> , paper presentation  What are the psychological, spiritual and environmental implications of perceiving the natural world as isolated and mute? Predominant political and social structures classify human and non-human forms into hierarchies. Categorized into resources that are administered, allocated, and exploited, the Other – a category that represents what is placed in opposition to the individual human – is therefore subservient.  Our separation from the Other, and the associated consequences, motivate an interest in enacting potential solutions within Portal's artistic praxis. This way of art making is invested in redefining progress as a kind of relational specificity that recognizes diverse worldviews, spiritualities, emotions, and ecologies.
<b>10:50AM</b>	Paul Roorda (Waterloo-based Artist)  <i>Long Wait for the Last Dance: Climate Change and Slow Kinetic Art</i> , artist talk  Using vintage clocks, music boxes, barometers, and weather recording devices, the kinetic sculptures Paul Roorda creates are at once playful and disturbing. Distorting nostalgia by transforming and combining found objects, he creates slow moving sculptures where water drips or mechanical devices gradually unwind to create a sense of anticipation and

apprehension. By adding the element of time and movement to his sculptures, Roorda explores a sense of urgency and apprehension about climate change. At the same time, he acknowledges the complacency warranted by a global disaster that is experienced so gradually it is difficult to perceive. Disbelief challenges science and the magnitude of the resulting anxiety is equaled only by the paralysis with which we face it. Yet the oppressive drip of water and ticking of machines serves as a constant reminder that there is a relentless progression of time towards that certain future.

**11:25AM** Golboo Amani (Toronto-based artist, University of Toronto MVS graduate)

*Unsettling Settlers: Intervention Game Night*, artist talk

*Unsettling Settlers: Intervention* aims to interrupt the game space of the popular *Settlers of Catan* in order to employ strategies that strengthen our ability to imagine and practice critical alternatives and counter hegemonic action. Included in the game are new game pieces, cards and rules to be played out on the original Catan board game. Amani's reconstruction of the game allows for players to work through strategies of environmental and social sustainability by collecting renewable resources, building treaties and reclaiming land on a virtual landscape.

**12:00PM** Emma German (MA Art History Candidate, York University)

*Longing for Prada: Speculative Tensions Between Toronto and Marfa*, paper presentation

In 2016, curators Ben Mills and Jess Carroll rearticulated Elmgreen & Dragset's 2005 Prada boutique installation as a video in the lobby of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre – a building located in the heart of Toronto's

financial district and near a high-traffic retail destination. Mills and Carroll's iteration of Elmgreen & Dragset's *Prada Marfa* recasts the lobby of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre into a performative space, where interaction between artwork, spectator and public space further informs the temporal shifts of a simulated retail environment. An exhibition that requires attentiveness and contemplation, *Prada Marfa* is further complicated by the viewers' discernible distraction. With a focus on the environmental displacement of the original *Prada Marfa*, German's paper examines Mill's and Carroll's time-lapse video as a critical curatorial framing tool for exploring the glamour of obsolescence.

**12:30PM** LUNCH BREAK

Screening of artist Tyler Muzzin's *Sven (Shores of Expectation)*

**1:35PM** Keynote Address: Francisco-Fernando Granados

*like brushing your teeth even though you know you're going to die / expanding the field is a slow task.*

**2:40PM** Justine Hartlieb-Power (MFA Criticism & Curatorial Practice Candidate, OCAD University)

*Am I Speaking in Clichés? And Other Curatorial Concerns*, paper presentation

Multi-sensorial artworks that embrace banality and the every day exist outside of the confines of accelerationist culture; they resist curatorial impetuses to both historicize and categorize while rejecting Neoliberal desires to go faster, be louder and act flashier. In the process, spatial 'ordinariness' is harnessed to create interstitial moments, wherein the

quotidian becomes an unlikely site of quiet resistance. In the context of such concerns, this paper will argue for deceleration within art institutions, taking as its point of entry Canadian artist Janet Cardiff's installation *To Touch* (1993).

**3:15PM** Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh (Toronto-based artist, OCAD University BFA / Post-Graduate)

*Knowledge Through Translation: Equations, Drawings and Sound*, artist talk

While travelling throughout the Middle East, Rohbakhsh acquired a number of banned books, which included scientific texts on quantum physics, where music was often used as a metaphor to describe astrophysics (particularly, string theory). Having difficulty understanding many astronomical passages, Rohbakhsh began to use drawing as a tool, creating diagrammatic works to understand the mathematical underpinnings between music theory and quantum theory. This act of mark-making to generate knowledge, not only became a form of escapism, but a means to transcend theocratic politics.

This became a serious research undertaking; it resulted in an installation of drawn works, and Rohbakhsh began to see drawing as a way of mapping time. In recognizing that both astronomy and music are controlled by time, Rohbakhsh further translated her drawings of astrophysical theories into musical soundscapes. With reference to her installations in the conference venue, Rohbakhsh will discuss her own practice in relationship to other artists who have used meditative concentration and mapping time as a means of active engagement and invention, such as John Cage, Agnes Martin and Hermann de Vries.

**3:50PM** Katie Lawson (MVS Candidate, University of Toronto)

*The Body of the Artist: Theories of Subjectivity and Corporeal Feminism in the Life Writing of Anne Truitt*, paper presentation

This study reimagines artist Anne Truitt's visual and textual production as interdependent and overlapping forms of life writing which recognize the self as emergent, embodied and experiential. For Lawson, Truitt's corpus proposes a practice-based model of subjectivity which draws on theories of phenomenology and corporeal feminism, with an emphasis on slowness and the meditative potential of her material engagement. The sculptures take the place of proximate others which simultaneously support and disrupt Truitt's sense of self, integral to the artist's understanding of her own corporeal identity. As Lawson contends, this relationship is complicated by the sculptures' inherent vulnerability — cycles of damage and restoration and processes of care are central to this reading of Truitt's work.

**4:25PM** Closing Remarks

## Biographies

**Andrea Aleman-Pastor** is a Guelph-based artist working primarily in drawing, video, and audio installations. Her work is often autobiographical with aspects of humour and confession. She covers themes of embedded memory in physical space as well as the translation of experiences through text work. Her art provokes an unsuspecting relationship between herself and the viewer through the disclosure of personal life.

**Golboo Amani's** works in photography to performance, space intervention, digital media, and social practice. Her work considers pedagogical tools and methodologies as ready-made sites of social engagement. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues including the Article, Rats9 Gallery, Hemispheric Institute Encuentro (Montreal), Blackwood Gallery (Mississauga) Union Gallery (Kingston), XPACE Artist-Run Centre, FADO Emerging Artist Series, Rhubarb Festival (Toronto), TRANSMUTED International Festival of Performance Art (Mexico City), 221A Artist-Run Centre, and the LIVE Biennial of Performance Art (Vancouver).

As an artist working within a social practice, Amani often relies on familiar social engagements as a point of entry into their artwork. Critical of systemic social patterns, the artist views social situations as ready-made sites for aesthetic intervention. Acknowledging that many of us are marked by long, personal histories and prescribed relationships with pedagogy, Amani's work often addresses the conditions of knowledge production that render epistemic violence as invisible, insignificant and benign. Much of their work focuses on interventions or alternatives to formal sites of pedagogy to include forms, contexts and content normally excluded from institutionalized knowledge production. By expanding sites of pedagogy to include the streets, backyards, homes, public transit etc., Amani intends to highlight the potentiality of non-hierarchical pedagogical experiences that speak to collective agency and egalitarian epistemology.

**Emma German** is an emerging curator based in Toronto and a Master's candidate in the Art History and Curatorial Studies program at York University. German's scholarly research in contemporary art and curatorial practice considers the roles and responsibilities of the institution regarding the public and collectivity. Her current research, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), examines the exhibition politics of

Hans Ulrich Obrist's ongoing curatorial vision *do it*, and its recent iteration in Montréal at the Galerie de l'UQAM. German has written numerous exhibition catalogues, and was recently published in the Journal of Curatorial Studies. She was the co-editor of the artists book *Letters of Negro Progress* for Theaster Gates recent exhibition *How to Build a House Museum*, at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Other projects include Pierre Huyghe's *Untilled*, Francis Alj's *A Story of Negotiation*, and the 2016 AGO AIMIA Photography Prize.

**Justine Hartlieb-Power** is an independent curator and art critic originally from Edmonton, Alberta. She currently resides in Toronto, Ontario, where she is in the process of completing her MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice at OCAD University. Past curatorial projects include *[INTERFACE]*, co-curated with Mohammad Ossobleh (Fringe Gallery, Edmonton, June 2014); *No Job More Dangerous*, co-curated with David Candler of dc3 Art Projects (Epcor Tower, Edmonton, June – August 2015); *Intellectual Play* (dc3 Art Projects, Edmonton, August 2015); and *Sounding the Alarm: The Poetics of Connection* (AGO First Thursday, March 2016).

**Katie Lawson** is currently in the Master of Visual Studies Curatorial program at the University of Toronto, where she previously completed her MA in Contemporary Art. A writer, researcher and art educator, Lawson is the Art Editor for the Hart House Review and an advisory board member for Critical Distance Centre for Curators.

**Tyler Muzzin** began exhibiting work while completing a BA in Studio Art at the University of Guelph. After graduating in 2013, he completed a two-month residency program at the Hochschule fur Kunste Bremen, Germany under the mentorship of Ingo Vetter. Since then, Tyler has exhibited work within Ontario, and participated in the curated Pavilion Projects at Art-Athina, Athens, Greece in 2015. The exhibition *Beyond the Bush Garden*, in collaboration with Samuel de Lange, was his first museum exhibition, hosted by the Woodstock Art Gallery in 2016. Working as an art installation technician and sign maker, Tyler continues a studio practice between Huntsville, Innerkip, and Toronto, ON.

**Elyse Portal's** art practice is dedicated to fostering connections with local ecologies. She is interested in relational specificity or how diverse worldviews cultivate meaning through specific approaches to places, materials, and

people. Considering the overlap of worldview and sustainability, she is motivated by gestures that encourage balance. For her, balance occurs by reclaiming relational ecological knowledge through field studies, and sharing these studies through art as a form of exchange and storytelling. Oftentimes, she incorporates the aesthetics of dreaming, healing and herbalism within installations, including openings for sensual spatial introspection, featuring sustainably harvested plant matter, and engaging the public in participatory workshops related to the exhibition.

As a multidisciplinary practitioner, Elyse has exhibited work for over a decade, including: *handmade fire* (Garden Skool, G. Amani, Toronto, ON 2016); *daylighting* (Reconstructing Resilience Symposium, OCADU, 2016); *(re)member of water* (Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario, Sudbury, 2015); *jars-microhabitat* (No Vacancy, Supernova, Burlington, 2015); *Journey into Fantasy* (McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, 2015); *Materia medica* (University of Toronto Art Centre, Toronto, 2014); *claybank* (Whippersnapper, Toronto, 2014); *Greenish* (Open Space Arts Society, Victoria, 2011). Support for her art practice has been generated by: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2013-14); University of Toronto Fellowship (2013), Royal Bank Scholarship for Innovation (2009), and the NWT Arts Council Emerging Artist Grant (2007). She has garnered the Dr Lorene Kennedy Environmental Studies Bursary (2011) and Eco-system Bursary (2011). Along with teaching studio art, she has been a teaching assistant for the University of Toronto's School of the Environment.

**Mehmaz Rohbakhsh** is an interdisciplinary artist based in Toronto, who focuses on visual art and sound. She received her BFA and completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in 2016 in Florence Italy at the OCADU Campus. She has exhibited her work in Canada and Italy. Her practice consists of studying the connections between music and astronomy, using drawing as a tool to understand the mathematical concepts that underlies them. These linear, intricate drawings are preceded by translating mathematical equations into sound.

**Paul Roorda** is a Waterloo artist who transforms found materials to create two-dimensional art, sculptures, and outdoor site-specific installations that examine the relationship between religion, medicine, science, and environmentalism. He has exhibited extensively with solo exhibitions in

Canada, the United States, and Germany and has been awarded grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. Paul Roorda was a finalist for the 2016 K.M. Hunter Artist Award in Ontario, Canada and for the 2011 Blake Prize for religious art in Australia. He has also been the subject of an episode of "The Artist's Life" which aired on Bravo TV in 2005. Roorda was Artist in Residence for the City of Kitchener, Ontario, in 2007 and at GlogauAIR in Berlin, in 2012 and 2015. Recent art examines the human experience of climate change and the passage of time in slow moving kinetic sculptures.

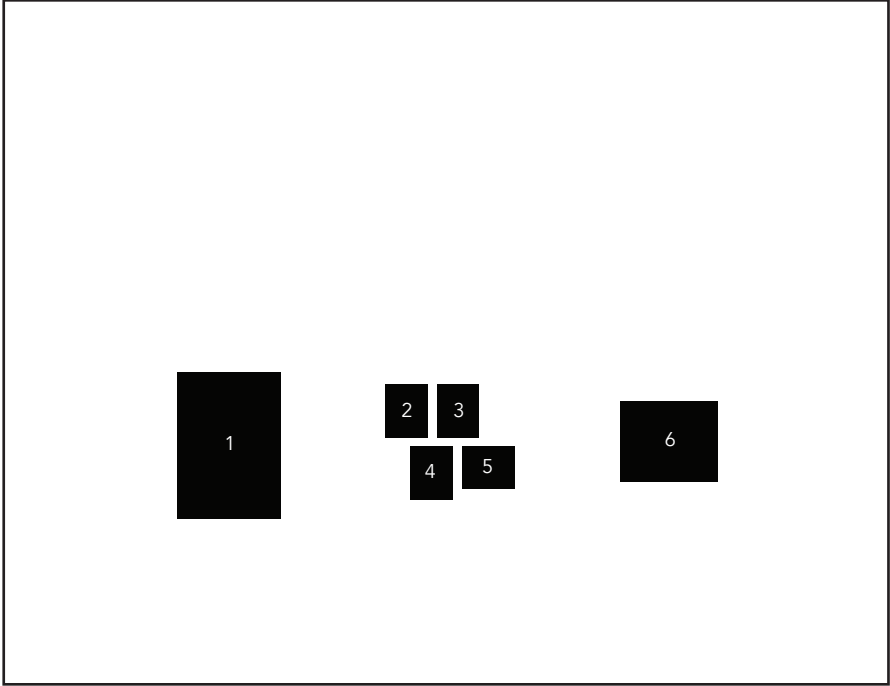
### Keynote Speaker

**Francisco-Fernando Granados** is a Toronto-based artist. His multidisciplinary critical practice spans performance, installation, cultural theory, digital media, public art, curatorial and community-based projects. He has presented work in galleries, museums, theatres, artist-run centres and non-traditional sites since 2005. These venues include the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Gallery of York University, Doris McCarthy Gallery, Blackwood Gallery, Gallery TPW, Trinity Square Video, Images Festival, NuitBlanche, Harbourfront Centre, Sur Gallery (Toronto), Vancouver Art Gallery, LIVE, VIVO Media Arts Centre (Vancouver), Darling Foundry, Fofa Gallery (Montreal), University of Western Ontario (London), Queens University (Kingston), Neutral Ground (Regina), Third Space (St. John) Hessel Museum of Art (NY), Defibrillator Gallery (Chicago), Voices Breaking Boundaries (Houston) Ex Teresa Arte Actual (Mexico City), Kulturhuset (Stockholm), and Theatre Academy at the University of the Arts (Helsinki). Upcoming projects include a new performance for Montreal Arts Interculturels (MAI) in March of 2017.

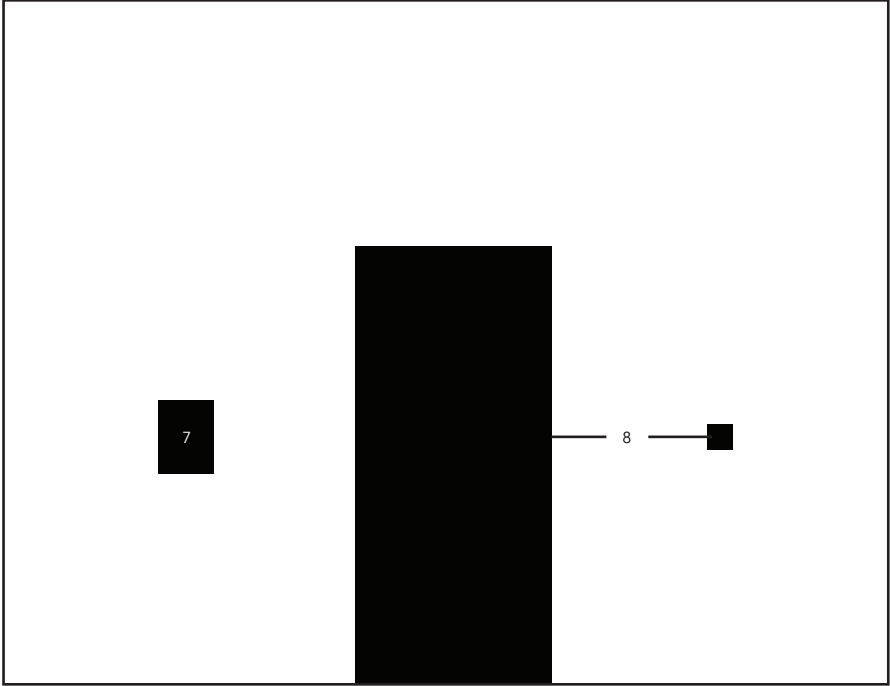
He has curated exhibitions, performance art programs, and screenings for 221A Artist Run Centre, LIVE (Vancouver), FADO Performance Art Centre, Xpace Cultural Centre, and Pleasure Dome (Toronto). As a member of the 7a\*11d International Performance Festival Collective, he has been involved in the organization of the largest performance art festival in Canada since 2012.

His writing has been published in exhibition catalogues, magazines, art journals, online platforms and books including FUSE, KAPSULA, Canadian Theatre Review, and PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art. Writing about his work has been published in TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies and C Magazine. Awards and honours include Emerging Artist Grants from

the Toronto and Ontario Arts Councils, a Projects to Visual Artists grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Governor General's Silver Medal for academic achievement upon graduating from Emily Carr University in 2010, and being named as one of Canada's 30 Under 30 by BLOUIN ARTINFO in 2014. He completed a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto in 2012, and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art, Critical and Curatorial Studies Program at OCAD University.



Wall 1



Wall 2



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Bird's eye view

## List of Works

1. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Sound map for Syzygy: An Absurdist Opera (E=mc<sup>2</sup>)*, 2016  
coloured pencil on paper  
33x23.25"
2. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Sound map for Op.72 No.1 (Chopin)*, 2015  
Ink on paper  
12x9.5"
3. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Sound Map for El is a Sound of Joy (Sun Ra)*, 2015  
Coloured pencil on paper  
12x9.5"
4. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Sound Map for Clair de Lune*, 2015  
Graphite on paper  
12x9.5"
5. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*4th Dimensional Octahedron (After Anderson)*, 2015  
Coloured pencil on paper  
9.5x12"
6. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Vedic Sound Map*, 2015  
Graphite on paper  
  
Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*The Speed of Light*, 2015  
Graphite on paper  
  
18x22"
7. Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh  
*Sound Map for Pathetique (Beethoven)*, 2015  
Graphite on paper  
15.5x12.5"
8. Andrea Aleman-Pastor  
*Stages*, 2017  
Pencil on paper, MP3 soundtrack  
8 x 3.75'
9. Golboo Amani  
*Unsettling Setters: Intervention*  
Board game, with components of varying sizes