

University of Regina

Kâkikê / Forever by Duane Linklater
ART Review

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ART 100

Living in Regina for the last six years as an International student from India made me believe that I look at the city the same as any other citizen but my opinion changed when I looked at the quote in the front Mackenzie Art gallery. “as long as the sun shines the river flows the grass grows” had a completely different meaning for my friend who was born and raised up in Canada. While this artwork meant a sense of hope in life for me, it made my friend think about the foreverness of the treaties.

Canadian artist Omaskêko Ininiwak (Cree) artist Duane Linklater installed his text-based artwork called *Kâkikê / Forever* on the façade of the T.C. Douglas building in Regina. Due to the nature of the install outside the building, it is visible to the public even before they enter the art gallery. Duane is known for exploring the physical and theoretical structures of the art in relation to the history of the place to indigenous people. He represents the meaning in his artworks through photography, sculptures, film, text work and installation. For instance, in his installation, *From our hands* (2016), Duane removed the drywall from a wall in the gallery, exposing the metal stud framework. *Kâkikê / Forever* was commissioned by Mackenzie Art gallery in Regina after considering 12 different Canadian indigenous artists. It is a part of Mackenzie’s *Transformative landscape* projects which was presented on the 150th anniversary of confederation. Duane’s proposal was selected by the art gallery because it was the perfect fit for the location and history of Regina with indigenous people.

Duane installed a famous quote used during the making of treaties: “as long as the sun shines the river flows and grass grows” *Kâkikê / Forever*. This artwork is made from aluminium and acrylics using LED lights to add the glowing effect at night. It’s big enough in size to take over the front façade of the building which adds into making it highly noticeable. None of the characters in this text are capitalized and they all have been given the white color which glows green LED around it to give it a 3d effect. It covers the whole front visible roof starting from the left and finishes around the middle of the roof which is exactly above the main entrance. This art piece was installed in spring 2018. Duane selected a title which contributes to the story told by the text itself. According to Duane “What is suggested in this phrase is the passage of time, or the duration of how long these treaty agreements and relationships will last”. The word *Forever* refers to the foreverness of the treaties.

This specific quote was chosen by Duane because it poetically reflects the past, present and the future of the relationship between indigenous people and Canada. This quote means that as long as there is life and elements continue to grow, the treaty will live as well. This plays

1. Catriona Jeffries, “Duane Linklater”, March 30th 2020, <https://catrionajeffries.com/artists/duane-linklater>
2. Duane Linklater, “DUANE LINKLATER: KÂKIKÊ / FOREVER,” MacKenzie Art Gallery, March 30th 2020, <https://mackenzie.art/experience/exhibition/duane-linklater/>

an essential role in expressing the relationship of Indigenous history and legal treaties. According to Duane, “These words act as an entrance into the conceptual frameworks Indigenous people were, and are, using when articulating a new and potentially mutually beneficial relationship with settlers”. Here Duane is referring to poetic usage of this quote while creating a treaty.

The text used was very carefully selected by Duane as it fits perfectly with the location of the site. Location of this MacKenzie art gallery played a vital role in the selection process of the text that was installed by Duane. The MacKenzie Art Gallery is situated within Treaty 4 territory. Treaty 4 was signed in 1874 and this territory is home of the Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis peoples, and a home to the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people. Also, this artwork is very specific to the site by being located on the roof of the building. It refers to the sunshine, meadow below which is full of grass and the creek behind it which is the closest thing to a river in Regina.

Mackenzie art gallery provided a platform and Duane was able to successfully install an artwork which represents history and future of Indigenous people. This artwork was able to share the story of many Indigenous people in Canada. After observing and researching the story about this artwork, I was able to look and interpret it the same way as my Canadian friend. Now the quotes did not just mean rising of the sun and growing of grass for me anymore, it held a much deeper meaning about the past of the Indigenous people which means Duane was able to fulfill his motive behind creating *Kâkikê / Forever*.

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MacKenzie Art Gallery,”Duane Linklater: Kâkikê / Forever”, May 25 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mW7BhD9CT8>

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