

WOVEN WORK FROM NEAR HERE



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grunt gallery
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Front cover	Melvin Williams <i>Medium basket</i> Inner cedar bark 8" x 5 1/2" x 5 3/4" 2018
	Melvin Williams <i>Small basket</i> Inner cedar bark 6" x 4" x 4" 2018
Back cover	Debra Sparrow <i>Graduation blanket for Jordan Wilson</i> Hand-spun sheep wool 42" x 22" x 20" 2016
Inside cover	Installation view WOVEN WORK FROM NEAR HERE
Page 20	Jovencio de la Paz <i>As in the summer, so too the winter (detail)</i> Handwoven natural and synthetic fibres 14' x 2 3/4' 2017



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WHAT IS HERE?

Imagine this “here” is not a location on a map but a basket-like form, a particular topos, which may be stretched and bent, but never torn or glued. Flexible, it is made up of intersecting strands: space is also time.

Imagine this “time” is time immemorial, but also a particular history that comprises colonization, resource extraction, plundering, etcetera. So this topological “time” is formed out of two different kinds of time. On the one strand, there are the metaphysical particle-waves (photons) that occupy past and present simultaneously; they are time immemorial—an instance of the past within the present, of ancestral traces. On the other, there is what the Marxists would call historical materialism, the constant change enacted by human beings on a planet, a land, a people for their near-sighted (usually monetary) ends.

These two “times” meet and overlap one another at right angles, creating a basket-like form. It is a plaited surface that contains an inside and is a barrier of sorts: a method of carrying some things and keeping other things out. At once open to the outside and a precise locale, this temporal mesh is “here.”

We understand being “near here” as a spatial and temporal condition that defines the wider region currently known as the Pacific Northwest—a mesh of overlapping Indigenous and Settler cultures, legal-political systems, and territories. To live, work, and weave near here—on the traditional, ancestral, unceded Musqueam, Tseil-Waututh, and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) land—is to contend daily with the legacy of colonial settlement and expropriation, but also the transient people who have decided to call this place, near here, their home.

Inspired by traditional practices—from Indigenous methods for weaving blankets and baskets to woven structures and patterns that have come from elsewhere—this show is an opportunity to highlight recent experiments by artists who have attempted to join (at least) two understandings of time, or what it means to be here.

Marked by the dislocation of Indigenous weaving traditions between the early decades of the 20th century and the 1970s—decades after the Potlatch ban in Canada was lifted in 1951—the region has seen the re-emergence of this conceptual, functional, aesthetic and spiritual form. Hence, Debra Sparrow proclaims: “I’m not going to stop weaving until I’ve wrapped the city of Vancouver in our work... because when you arrive here and come into the city you should know that it is Salish territory and Musqueam.” At once capacious and precise, new developments in woven work signal the potential of this practice to realign protocols and values.

A textile is a textile and so much more.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Debra Sparrow (θəliχˈəlˈwət)

In 1983, I joined a class of women in Musqueam which focused on the revival of Salish textiles and has since been combining textile and Salish designs in a contemporary way through geometric, handspun blankets and hangings.¹ I'm not going to stop weaving until I've wrapped the city of Vancouver in our work...because when you arrive here and come into the city you should know that it is Salish territory and Musqueam.²

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill

On weaving: I was interested when making this work in the connection between making objects and making spells—weaving, binding, tying, casting.

I made *Four Effigies for the End of Property* while thinking about two different but related concepts: private property and sculpture. I wanted to know how lot #274, the lot on which Polygon Gallery sits, became private property under the law of Canada, how it was expropriated from the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh First Nation, how it came to be understood as the rightful property of settlers, and how that idea became naturalized in the minds of so many Canadians. Each work in the series considers an idea or mechanism through which the land was turned into private property: preemption, improvement, highest and best use, and belonging.

Regarding sculpture, I have been thinking: what do sculptures do? I came across the word effigy in an anthropological text about the history of Cree sculpture. The word was used much like fetish often is, to describe a practice of object making that hopes to influence material reality. Maybe all sculptures are effigies or fetishes. The works in *Four Effigies for the End of Property* are images of four ideas that intend to have a kind of power over those ideas, a kind of undoing power, an ending power.³

Hank Bull

Two empty cardboard boxes sit together with their representation, a photograph. Apart from the reference to quilts, or other woven patterns, how do they act like textiles?

Textiles have a front and a back, like an inside and outside. Many woven works, especially tapestries and carpets, have a reverse side that is normally hidden from view, a negative foil playing backstage to the colourful performance of the front surface. Behind the scenes you can see loose threads, various clues allowing you to decipher the construction of the image. The boxes are similar but different. They too have an inside, like the inside of a body. And part of them, the other side, remains hidden, withholding itself from the gaze. The boxes never reveal themselves to me all at once. While painting them, I have to guess what's happening on the other side. The viewer plays the same game. The physical box cooperates to a certain extent. You can hold it and turn it, or walk around, but the photographs are implacable. They just sit there. Like the moon, they never disclose their secret meaning.

Textiles have two aspects. One is visual; its business is to present an image, to tell a story. Their other aspect is physical, textural, tactile, supple. The boxes take visual form, stand apart and perform like painting or sculpture. At the same time, they are capable of movement, they can change shape, fold, flatten themselves and slide under a door. They are plastic bodies. These two aspects—graphic and plastic—are interdependent, constantly collapsing into each other.

Jovencio de la Paz

As in summer, so too in winter. This work comprises an accumulation of overshot textiles layered precariously on the gallery wall. Colonial American Overshot is a technique of weaving associated with American domestic idealism and Americana in general. Modular in nature, these discrete panels were sampled from an archive of overshot textiles, woven by the artist over a period spanning from 2008 – 2017. Seeing a wide resurgence in popular interior design in the West, this tradition of weaving also evokes an era in which the colonization of

the Indigenous west was pervasive. The works consider the uncertain or even duplicitous status of cloth, often occupying a contested and fluid space between utility, artefact, image, structure, crafted thing, and transmitter of conflicted histories.

Weave-draft Aberrations (Compound Twill). A “weave-draft” is a visual instruction used to describe how to prepare a floor loom to weave a specific pattern, but also how to operate the loom to generate that pattern. In this way, designers and weavers can record patterns to be archived or shared at a later date. In the series of videos *Weave-draft Aberrations*, typical weave-drafts for Jacquard woven textiles have been overlaid on top of each other. The outcome is a moiré, a distortion pattern of interference, completely alien and unlike the source weave-drafts. As the drafts move across each other and across the screen, what is revealed is a new, secret pattern, an undulating series of schizoid but rhythmic chain of events. The process of repurposing the weave-draft skews the instructions away from the production of a physical cloth, directing it towards the weaving of a digital, disembodied textile.

Kerri Reid

In the early nineties, I took a two-year Studio Art program, and then a one-year Textile Arts program, at Capilano College in North Vancouver. In Studio Art I learned drawing and painting techniques, how to carve wood and stone, and how to use the lost wax technique for casting bronze. While in Textile Arts, I learned how to make and use natural dyes, how to weave cloth on a loom, how to do surface design techniques on fabric, and how to weave baskets. Basket weaving was by far my favourite, so I took classes with Joan Carrigan on Salt Spring Island. When I went from studio to textile art, and then specifically to basket weaving, I recall many people telling me in no uncertain terms that I was heading backwards. This value judgement stuck with me for years and led to a heightened awareness of how often “basket weaving” is (or hopefully was) used as a synonym for something that is easy, mindless, and to be disparaged. The values, or lack thereof, I saw associated with baskets also led to me to pay greater attention to how

every object in our lives is made and produced. I learned early on that all baskets are made by hand. No matter where they are purchased, what kind they are—dollar store Easter baskets, to Ikea, to high-end designer woven forms or whatever—all are made by hand. Perhaps this is most literally seen in my series of bronze baskets.

Matt Browning

The work began as a relatively dumb “challenge”: was it possible to make a piece of cloth that was woven, knit, and felted. This self-prompt was informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s “The Smooth and the Striated” chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They differentiate between ways of making cloth and the political implications of these disparate forms. According to them, weaving and knitting are both constructed according to the logic of the grid: weaving involves the *x/y* intersection of warp and weft, and knitting is worked through line by line, pixel by pixel. Constructed according to a grid, such cloth exemplifies sedentary, statist societies and their associated forms of control. Felt, on the other hand, in the sense that it is made through the random, chaotic agitation of fibres, is the cloth of the “nomad,” embodying all the emancipatory qualities they associate with “lines of flight.”

The simplest way to produce a cloth that is knit, woven, and felted is to knit a faux-woven structure and then felt it. So that’s what I did: I used 3 strands of yarn and knit an elongated diamond-shaped piece of cloth that had a Bavarian twisted lattice running over the entirety of its surface. When felted, this diamond disproportionately shrank, and when rotated 45 degrees the cloth assumes the gridded square form. The implications of this process are interesting to me: essentially, the felting ceases to be chaotic. The ever-expanding technique of felt lauded by D&G becomes a tightening of a pre-existing, dictatorial grid structure (the knitted cloth). The “chaos” is modulated by the grid, so to speak. This reading presents a potentially cynical side of the work.

But this brings me back to craft more generally, and more optimistic theories of what the grid can do. One of the things that drew me to fibre arts in the first place was how “un-novel” they were, how

techniques for producing cloth involve such longstanding, collective projects of development that they are inherently anti-authorial. Thinking abstractly about technique and structure, weaving and knitting (and felting) seem to support more collective modes of production, and (potentially) eschew the individual self-differentiation so valuable to neoliberal (art) markets.

Melvin Williams

Most of my weaving is to recreate what my community of Lil’wat, in Mount Currie, BC, would have used, or at least a representation of it. I was introduced to weaving by my mother when she returned from a trip and brought back a belt that had been woven on a loom. She said, “Our people made similar belts called a Máqʷin that were used to carry baskets or anything that needs a strap.” My older sister Gabrielle saw some of the elders making Máqʷin and showed me how it was done. I was hooked. I made so many I can’t even remember the number. But it became very hard to find people on the reserve that needed one. So I started to ask around for something that no one was doing. One day my father mentioned that we used inner cedar bark for clothing and baskets, hats, and many other things like rope and mats. At the time I was working in Whistler and found some information on other people who also used inner cedar bark. With this information, one sunny day in 1981 at the end of May, I went out on my bike with some tobacco in hand as an offering to my first cedar tree. I was surprised at how easily the bark peeled away from the tree, and how the inner bark would peel away from the outer bark. Whenever I was in Vancouver I would go to bookstores, museums and art galleries to examine baskets and hats or whatever was on display. It would be three years before I got around to making my first basket. I sat in my bedroom working, no one around to show me how it was done. That was a sad day for me, my first basket was a flop. It was nothing like the ones I saw in the museums and books. After showing off my work to the family, I put it away out of sight. But the next day, after rethinking my steps I made another basket and it was great. Yea ho!

Merritt Johnson

Fetish (object/object/object) is a hand-woven basket in the shape of a female body without a head, arms, hands, legs or feet; with upper and lower openings, lined with teeth and fur respectively. The two openings refuse the task of a permanent container. The object asserts the most fetishized parts of female bodies as a passageway, a source of life and power. Simultaneously, the extreme reduction of the form acknowledges the same bodies capable of birth and nourishment are fetishized as objects; simplified, feared, erased, and abused through misguided desire for control and ownership. The title uses the English word object three times, to invoke its three meanings: material form, something or someone at whom something is directed, and disagreement.

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¹ Debra Sparrow, “Artist Statement,” <http://authenticindigenous.com/artists/debra-sparrow>.

² Debra Sparrow, cited in Alison Ariss (2017), “Wrapped in Wool and Copper: Encountering Musqueam Art at Vancouver’s Granville at 70th Development Project”(MA Thesis, University of British Columbia), 1

³ This text previously appeared in *The Capilano Review* 3.35 (2018).



Kerri Reid
Bronze Basket 1
Bronze
11" X 11" X 8"
1999



Kerri Reid
Bronze Basket 2
Bronze
18" X 18" X 12"
1999



Hank Bull with Robert Keziere and Robert Marks
Singular Plural
light jet print
40" x 50"
2018



Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill
Improve, from *Four Effigies For the End of Property: Preempt, Improve, The Highest and Best Use, Be Long*.
Installation view, The Polygon Gallery, 2017.
Mixed media (de-acquisitioned artefacts from the North Vancouver Museum and Archives)
36" x 29" x 16"
2017



Merritt Johnson
Fetish (object/object/object)
Handwoven palm fibre, buffalo fur, buffalo teeth
10" x 7" x 7"
2018



Matt Browning
Knit-felted wool (detail)
17.5" x 17.5"
2016

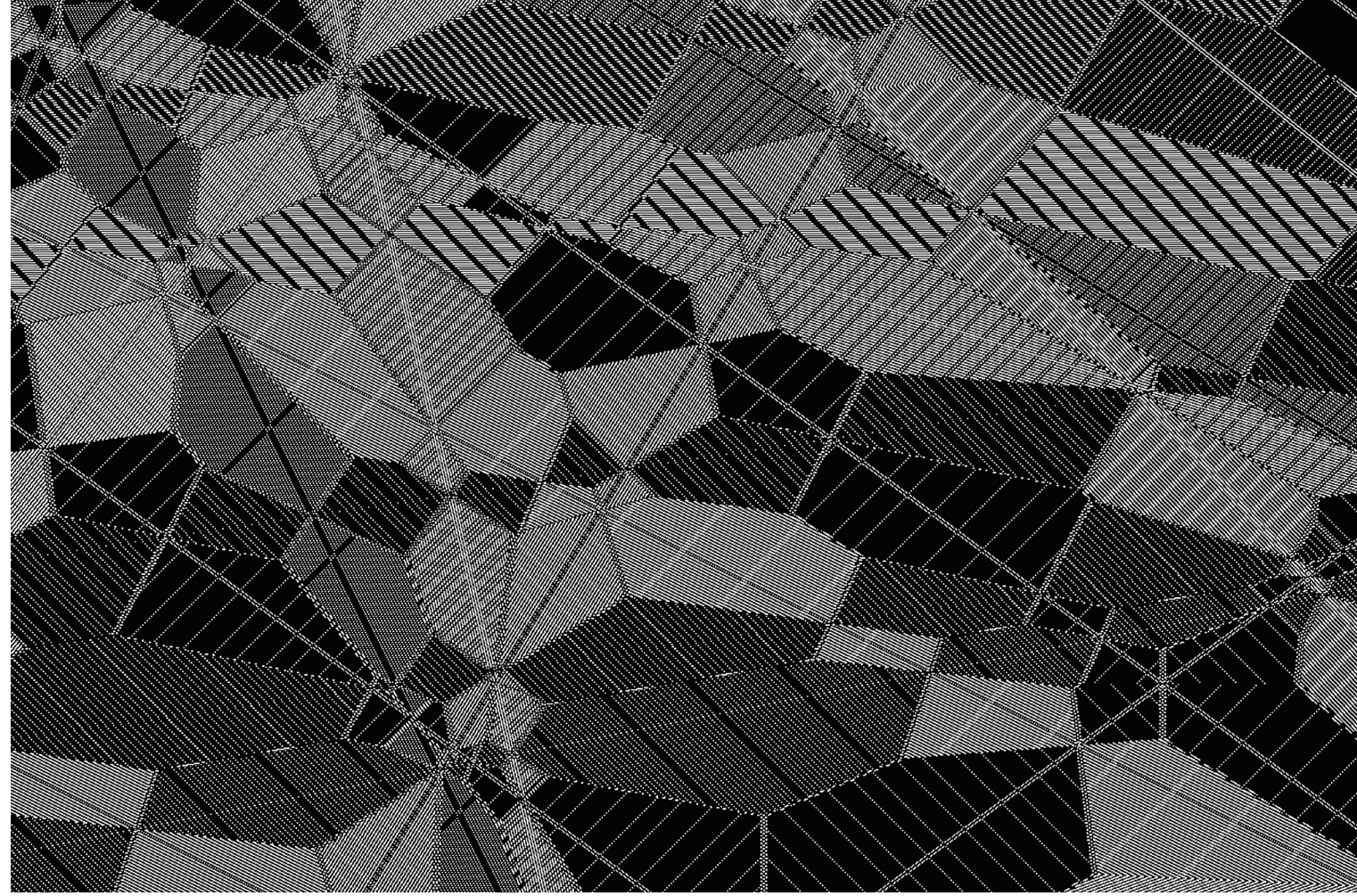


Melvin Williams
Fine woven hat
Inner cedar bark
5 ½" x 15" x 15 ½"
2018

Sun hat
Inner cedar bark
9" x 15" x 15 ½"
2018



Jovencio de la Paz
As in the summer, so too the winter
Handwoven natural and synthetic fibres
14' x 2 3/4'
2017



Jovencio de la Paz
Weave-draft Aberrations (Compound Twill)
Digital Animation
4 mins 12 secs (looped)
2018



ARTISTS' BIOS

Debra Sparrow (θəɪlɪxˈwəlˈwət) is a Musqueam weaver, artist and knowledge keeper. She is self-taught in Salish design, weaving and jewellery making. Her work is exhibited in permanent collections and public spaces throughout Vancouver, including the Museum of Anthropology, YVR Airport, and the Granville at 70th Project.

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill is a Métis artist working and living on unceded Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Skwxwú7mesh land. Gabrielle works mostly with sculpture, often using found materials to build forms that investigate the relationships between place, property, occupation, and settler and Indigenous economies.

Hank Bull was born in Calgary and grew up in Ontario. After studying drawing, painting, and photography in Toronto, he moved to Vancouver in 1973 to join the Western Front, where he became involved in performance, radio, shadow play, video and telecommunications. In 1999 he co-founded Centre A, the Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art. An exhibition survey, “Hank Bull: Connexion,” toured to five cities across Canada in 2015-17. His work can be found in numerous public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, MoMA New York, and The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver. He is represented by Franc Gallery, Vancouver.

Jovencio de la Paz is an artist, writer, and educator. His work explores the intersection of textile processes such as weaving, dye, and stitchwork as they relate to broader concerns of language, histories of colonization, migrancy, ancient technology, and speculative futures. Assistant Professor and Curricular Head of Fibers at the University of Oregon, he has exhibited work in solo and group exhibitions both nationally and internationally, including at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, CO; The Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, OR; The Alice, Seattle, WA; SPACE Gallery, Portland, ME; The Sculpture Center, Cleveland, OH; The Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL; and Uri Gallery, Seoul, South Korea.

Kerri Reid is a visual artist of settler descent who lives and works in the small fishing village of Sointula, BC, in Kwakwaka'wakw Territory, where she and her husband Tyler Brett co-direct The Sointula Art Shed. She has worked with a wide variety of processes and materials, such as bronze, clay, stone, drawing, wood, wicker, and dust. The common thread through all of this work is an interest in what is valued, and why, an interest that goes back to when Reid first learned how to weave baskets, over 20 years ago.

Matt Browning's works concerns time, latency, and the selective and hierarchical valuation of human activity. He is currently pursuing a PhD in the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia, and has recently exhibited works at Veronica, Seattle; Fanta Spazio, Milan; and Kimberly-Klark, New York.

Melvin Williams was born in Vancouver, BC and raised on a small farm 30 miles north of Whistler in Mount Currie, BC. He began weaving baskets and hats using inner cedar bark over forty years ago. His work has been shown in Alberta and in North Vancouver, BC.

Merritt Johnson was born in West Baltimore and spent her childhood navigating between trees, tarps, concrete and culture. A multidisciplinary artist, Johnson exhibits, performs, speaks and writes independently and collaboratively. For nearly two decades her work has navigated spaces between bodies and the body politic, between land and culture rooted in and dependent on Anowarakowa Kawennote (Turtle Island). Johnson sews, casts, weaves, draws, beads, paints, carves, performs, films, and projects into and out of how we are. The mixed materials and processes Johnson employs embody her mixed heritage, exploring layering, allegiance and agency in the face of continued threats to land, water, culture, and bodies. Johnson's works are containers for story, feeling and thought; they cast light and shadow on how and who we are, on how and who we could be.

Curators' Bios

Emily Hermant is an interdisciplinary artist whose sculptures, drawings, and installations explore themes of communication, gendered labor, and the spatial experiences of the body. She received her BFA in Studio Arts from Concordia University in Montréal, QC, and her MFA as a Trustee Merit Scholar in Fiber & Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, and festivals in Canada, the United States, South America, and Europe, and has been featured in *LVL3 Media*, *ArtSlant*, *Espace Sculpture*, *The Washington Post*, and *TimeOut Chicago*. Hermant has been awarded grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des Arts et Lettres du Québec, and artist residencies at Haystack, ACRE, Ox-Bow School of Art, The Ragdale Foundation, Nordic Artists' Centre, and the Vermont Studio Center. Hermant lives and works in Vancouver, BC, where she is an Assistant Professor of Sculpture and Expanded Practices in the Audain Faculty of Art at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

T'ai Smith is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Originally from New York, she has lived on unceded and ancestral Musqueam territory since 2012. Author of *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), she has published over thirty articles and chapters on textiles, craft, and media in edited volumes, museum catalogs, and journals, including *Art Journal*, *Art Practical*, *Grey Room*, *InVisible Culture*, *Journal of Modern Craft*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Zeitschrift für Medien - und Kulturforschung*. A recipient of a SSHRC Insight Development Grant (2016-18), she is currently completing a book manuscript titled *Fashion After Capital*.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the patience of many as we have learned to heed the wisdom that is embedded in traditional weaving practices and this place we now, as uninvited guests, call home.

Thanks also goes to several specific individuals: the artists for sharing their work with us; the grunt gallery team for their incredible support in realizing the show, especially Vanessa Kwan, Meagan Kus, Leena Minifie, and Glenn Alteen; the install and prep of the gallery by Vivienne Bessette and Charlie Stableford; early support and guidance from Tarah Hogue; and finally, Graham Entwistle for the donation of his time and energy in designing and fabricating the table.

