

THE BALD EAGLE'S CLAW
XPACE CULTURAL CENTRE
JULY 5 - AUGUST 3RD, 2019

☆ ☆ ☆

YAN WEN CHANG
BRANDON FUJIMAGARI
ANDREW HARDING
JOSI SMIT

WITH PERFORMANCES FROM

MADELYNE BECKLES
DORICA MANUEL
MARISSA SEAN CRUZ

ADDITIONAL TEXT WORK BY

PHILIPPE PAMELA DUNGAO
ANA MORNINGSTAR

CURATED BY
PHILIP LEONARD
OCAMPO



☆ FOREWARD

The date is February 1st, 2003. I'm 7 years old, sitting in the passenger seat of the family minivan next to my father, on our way to pick up the twins from soccer practice. He turns on the radio and we tune into live news coverage of U.S Space Shuttle Columbia's re-entry to Earth from its most recent mission to outer space. I recognize a shift in the host's tone of voice as he describes the shuttle entering Earth's atmosphere, splintering into multiple parts, and then catching fire: He's realizing that the spacecraft is crashing in real-time. I look up at my father, who looks noticeably distraught, but I can't properly process what's happening; I'm just too young. I can only take note of the look on his face as he continues to listen in bewilderment of what he's hearing, staring off into the road ahead as he continues to drive.

Out of nine children, my father was the first to leave the Philippines in search of a better life in North America, motivated by what he knew as the "American Dream". And indeed, through my parents' dedication and diligent work were not in vain, their successes were also met with so much adversity: Oppressive barriers put in place by racist and xenophobic institutions, systems and ideologies challenged my parents as they fought to thrive in this country. Yet *still* he mourned for Space Shuttle Columbia, separate from just mourning the lives of its fallen crew members. To him, the spacecraft was a symbol of the U.S.A's boundless ambition, and its destruction was a harsh reality-check. It was the "American Dream" itself, falling out of the sky, challenging the exceptionalism that my father, up until then, understood as unquestionable.

The Bald Eagle's Claw is an attempt to interpret that moment in the car: to understand the "American Dream" as it spans countries and continents, as well as its hypocritical function as both tool and obstacle. It's dedicated to the many communities disenfranchised by "The American Dream". It's a love letter to my mother and father.

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On format: The Bald Eagle's Claw is an exhibition at Xspace Cultural Centre (July 5th - August 3rd, 2019), which runs in three capacities: A standard, 4-person exhibition, a performance evening on July 11th, 2019, of which the remnants of its three performances become the 5th exhibition work, and this publication that you are holding in your hands right now.

As a didactic approach is better equipped to speak to the rich nuances of each artist's work, I resolve to have the exhibition essay included here remain descriptive; this publication was born out of an interest in working around this necessary limitation. The original text work featured in this book from Ana Morningstar, Philippe Pamela Dungao, Yan Wen Chang, Josi Smit and Madelyne Beckles do what my writing cannot; their interpretive, poetic, and elusive texts run parallel to the themes explored in the show but are free to be non-linear and experimental in their structure.

I thank you for coming. I thank you for reading.

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And lastly, though this project provides a platform for the interpretations of the people of whom the ideals of the "American Dream" were not meant (namely people who are not straight, white, cisgender men) I acknowledge that it cannot encompass the vast scope of unique experiences that are relevant and immediate to the thesis of this exhibition. I commit to this project as a first step in a larger conversation that will continue in time. Though future iterations will likely not share the same name, continued explorations will allow the conversation that this show has started to press onward.

The Bald Eagle's Claw will return.

Philip Leonard Ocampo
Curator & Editor
2019

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☆ LAND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ☆

Though my family has called Tkaronto our home since my parents immigrated to Canada from the Philippines in 1989, it has been the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island for over 15,000 years. As a settler living on stolen land, I acknowledge that this land on which Xpace Cultural Centre operates, where I work as a facilitator and artist, and where I was born and raised, does not belong to us.

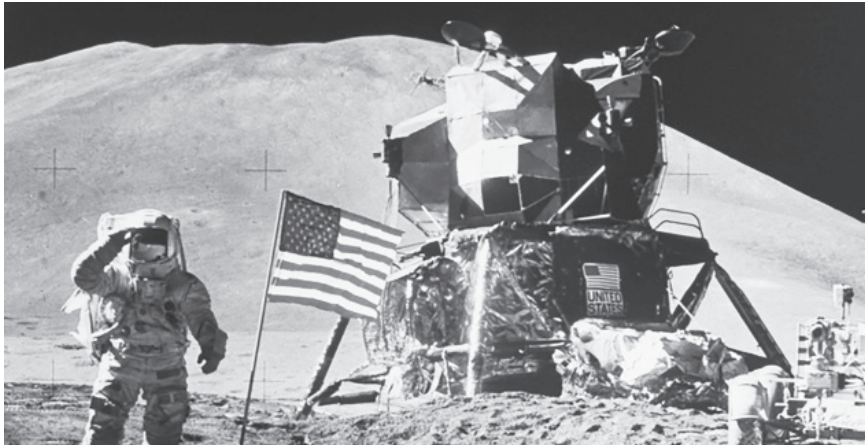
The territories of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations, and the Métis Nation hold space for the daily activities of every settler that resides in the meeting place of Tkaronto. The Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant was created by the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to establish an agreement to care for the precious resources around the Great Lakes; The dish representing the land itself and the spoon representing responsibility in sharing its resources.

As a programming coordinator at Xpace Cultural Centre, the treaty informs my desire to advocate and support emerging artists who exist in the margins; to share knowledge, hospitality and opportunity across a vibrant arts culture that has developed here. As the curator of an exhibition that looks at the U.S.A's dominating presence in collective conscious, I am grateful to begin this necessary conversation and make space for multiple voices to find solidarity in sharing such personal, yet interconnected experiences.

EXHIBITION ESSAY



Philip Leonard
Ocampo



On July 20th, 1969, Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong and pilot Buzz Aldrin became the first two humans to ever walk upon the surface of the Moon.¹ Claimed in the name of the United States of America, human-kind's first contact with the celestial was televised to an estimated 650 million people², demonstrating America's superiority over other nations as the winner of a decade long "Space Race".³ Such a triumph helped to catalyze a national ethos, which became known as the "American Dream". Despite its promise that hard work results in the upward mobility of all citizens, we continually witness the harmful ways in which the "American Dream" marginalizes people within its borders and around the globe. Its prominence in collective conscious is rooted in colonial power, both in the past and in the present. The nation's romantic fascination with space exploration can be seen as an escapist tactic which neglects the realities of its own destructive influence.

The Bald Eagle's Claw calls attention to ideas of false-superiority in the United States of America by way of artworks that present as indulgent, disillusioned representations of American patriotism. By repurposing iconography associated with "Americana" culture, the artists involved in this exhibition use painting, sculpture,

1 Loff, Sarah. "Apollo 11 Mission Overview." NASA. April 17, 2015. Accessed June 17, 2019. https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/apollo/missions/apollo11.html.

2 Ibid.

3 A competition between the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States (US) from 1955 to 1969 in which the two countries competed for innovation in the realm of space exploration.

text and performance to question the U.S.A as a dominating force while demonstrating a concern for how its ideals have flooded beyond its borders and into global consciousness. Similar to the "American Dream", the works feign this same sense of romantic optimism, gazing forward into the hopeful future, seemingly distracted from the bleak reality of the present.

The futuristic, space-inspired aesthetic of the 1960s was an era of American visual culture that hypothesized a vision of what progress in the U.S.A would look like.⁴ Josi Smit employs materials reminiscent of aspirational possessions relating to the "American Dream" in *It was almost like you were there...*⁵ Her tulle blinds reference prom dresses; vinyl invoking the image of Cadillac upholstery is used to sew a rug. Through her fabricated objects and fusing two replica *Barcelona* chairs and a 1970s Italian chrome etagere⁶, the space can only suggest multiple interpretations of what it could be. It draws upon the interior design of a living room but it is non-functional and hyper condensed. It could be a public landmark if it looked less like a domestic, private space. Each component is separated from their original function, creating an aggregate, alien form. They cannot fulfill the promise of their respective references and original functionality, and instead, exist together as many things but nothing at the same time. Akin to the unrealized utopian future of the U.S.A, both reside within an in-between state.

Sadie Hawkins, L-280, *Prom Night (1980)*, The Final Girl, Pontiac Fiero, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The collection of paintings and objects included in this exhibition by Brandon Fujimagari are each imbued with nightmarish terror, inspired by visuals from slasher films combined with the passionate spirit of the American West and the commodified circuit in which these spectacular images become produced. There is a nearly mass-produced craftsmanship in the way that Brandon utilizes

4 McCall, Bruce. "What is retro-futurism". Filmed May 2008. TED video, 10:20.

5 The full title of Josi's artwork is *It was almost like you were there. I could hear you, I could see you, smell you. I could hear your voice. Sometimes your voice would wake me up. It would wake me up in the middle of the night, just like you were in the room with me*, a quote from *Paris, Texas* (1984) directed by Wim Wenders.

6 A piece of furniture with a number of open shelves for displaying ornaments.

contemporary garment processes in fabricating works that suggest a lingering tension in the idealistic American air; a clandestine horror that lurks within a luxurious patriotic atmosphere. Brandon partners with collaborator D.J Stewart to recreate the killer's butcher table (*Canyon Table*), and hangs the victim's cheerleading pom pom on a nearby meat hook (*American Beauty in Silver Foil and Distressed Pig Skin Leather*, 2019). He reimagines Joan Parker's Dodge Fever ad campaign and rests it on the table, further pulling you into danger through her persuasive gaze.

It's the Golden Hour along a California Highway. The road, the trees, the neighboring cars: All bathed in glorious sunlight. In *New Horrors*, Brandon interprets this sublime sky, as seen through the dashboard of a car that soars towards it, as apocalyptic. He uses bleach and dye in paintings that depict the sunset as an atomic mushroom cloud and an uncontrollable wildfire. But wryly so, Brandon welcomes the impending doom, and considers it a fine way to die.⁷

In *Safe Travels*, Andrew Harding cruises towards this same sunset, but trades serene indifference for nostalgic optimism. Harding ties together disparate yet familiar imagery of travel that, together, are more able to cope with the bleakness of reality mediated through American influence. His works include a packaged image, lock and key set on top of an acrylic engraving of similar imagery (save for a spine fragment) that rests on top of a wooden platform. The inclusion of cedar in this work is both culturally and personally significant to Harding's Métis background. With its medicinal qualities, he seeks to imbue the other objects of his work with its healing properties; steeping a Car Freshener in it as well as dispersing it throughout the assemblage.

On the pillar behind it hangs kitsch memorabilia (including an Indigenous headdress shirt, a popular object in Americana culture that has been somewhat reclaimed by Indigenous people but also plays into stereotypes of Indigeneity at the same time) vacuum sealed with a folded image the highway sunset. Finally, a piece of

acrylic laser-cut into the shape of a car hood suspends another image of a sunset as a gold chain dangles from it. Andrew Harding incorporates found objects, images and fabricated items in makeshift sculptures that acknowledge assemblage as an act of making that is futile yet hopeful. *Safe Travels* packs your bags affectionately for the uncertainty that lies in the journey ahead.

The sun sets. Stars emerge as darkness engulfs the night sky, shining distances beyond comprehension. Its symbolism tethered to our sense of wonder and awe, fame and success; the extraordinary amongst the ordinary. Due to their prominence within Americana iconography, the star has grown synonymous with American patriotism and nationalism, boosting the narrative of the nation's purported ability to succeed, accomplish, thrive, and achieve.

Yan Wen Chang's works appropriate optimistic phrases and powerful statements, yet obscures them within the compositions of her meticulously crafted paintings. In contrast to the dynamic energy and bold imagery of her paintings - flora indigenous to her home country of Malaysia, Travis Scott lyrics, and majestic animals (among more) - Chang illustrates a nostalgic loss of picturesque memory through channeling her father's struggles throughout his lifetime of moving between Asia and North America. Chang's works demonstrate the complicated relationship between bleak reality and escapist fantasy, channeling diasporic hardship as it ripples through generations.

Malaysian Moon Moth 1 and Malaysian Moon Moth 2 are two works painted on bleached denim - a fabric considered to be working class - assuming the form of a four-point sparkle and a five-point star. *do you remember?* a large, vibrantly coloured painting, depicts a blazing horse accompanied by Hibiscus flowers. Chang's visual and material choices present a confident aesthetic in order to combat adversity, encouraging viewers to reflect on an aspect of the "American Dream" that served as solace for the many marginalized people enamoured with it - that one could dream beyond actual circumstances, no matter how difficult they may be.

9 ⁷ Brandon Fujimagari in conversation with the author, January 9th, 2019.

A large rectangular piece of black velvet hangs in the back of the space. *resident of uncey-le-franc* is reminiscent of a monolith, a geological feature popularized by its feature in Stanley Kubrick's, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Subject to countless interpretations, the monolith exists as an enigma that encompasses space and time.⁸ Its subjective nature ignores our scientific efforts to understand outer space and instead embraces itself as a mystic anomaly. Resembling a starscape, over 200 enamel pins of objects relating to Americana iconography (fast food brands, liquor bottles, and cigarette packs) that Josi Smit has acquired are hand pinned to the textile. Previously belonging to a single, anonymous person, the scattered ephemera embodies a lived experience, focusing on a personal subjectivity instead of the consumerist influence its pictorial symbols usually represent. Their capitalist power is rendered inconsequential as they float throughout a universe.

Housing the remnants of performances from Madelyne Beckles, Dorica Manuel and Marissa Sean Cruz, their traces remain as a sculptural installation once their performances on July 13th, 2019 end. While questioning the realities that surround maintaining appearances of lifestyles that are prominent in American popular culture, each performer accesses performance's subversive potentials in order to illustrate misunderstandings of labour and idealized living; a form of stardom in itself.

The performance evening begins with Madelyne Beckles. *One Light* is a monologue that is made up of half Kanye West lyrics, half Kim Kardashian quotes. Beckles recites it all in a digitally distorted, high pitched tone, akin to the sounds of a child speaking. She performs as North West, the couple's six year old daughter: *I've made mistakes in my life for sure / When I gain a pound it's in the headlines / Aspire to inspire before you expire / Can we get much higher? / So high / Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh / Life is a marathon / I'ma shift the paradigm / I'ma turn up everytime.*⁹ In this performative reading, Beckles explores stardom, success, cultural capitalist production in the United States

of America as built upon the expense of black women through a character that is also commodifiable because of her blackness. She weaves her way through the audience, wearing a pair of pink high heels that are way too big for her feet. As North West, she represents a hyperbolic amalgamation of her parents superstardom, but also embodies the repercussions of cultural exploitation at a young age: Her shrill reading becomes an uncanny, romanticized look at becoming in its most unsettling form.

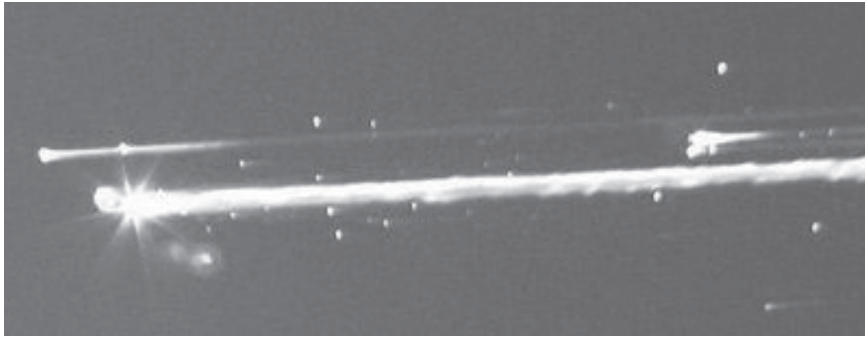
As the first note of Christina Aguilera's *Dirty* begins, Marissa Sean Cruz *awakens*. Dressed in both a hot pink and neon yellow latex dress, two matching sets of dish washing gloves, and several sponges glued to the bottom of her homemade slippers, she is prepared to clean up and work out at the same time. *SO Flesh, SO Clean* is a three part performance in which Cruz repeatedly cycles through a rigorous workout circuit. Misusing fitness equipment more and more nonsensically each time the song loops, she chugs yellow Gatorade as she cleans and exercises. Mirroring the healthy, active lifestyles of America's brightest stars, Cruz exaggerates the labour behind maintaining the proactive appearances marketed to us by American popular culture in humourous desperation.

The evening concludes with Dorica Manuel's *A Recipe for Flies*. The performance conflates two idioms, "Land of milk and honey", and "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar" two sayings that share honey in its metaphor through associating it with opportunism in the United States of America, and then describing it as a necessity for success. Vinegar's significance in Filipino culture¹⁰ is met with shame in the context of the latter idiom, and the former champions the United States as its favorable opposite. Surrounded by various containers of milk, honey and vinegar, Manuel patiently transfers the liquids between containers, obscuring the divide that unfairly elevates the U.S.A above other nations.

⁸ Kubrick, Stanley, and Arthur C. Clarke. 1968. *2001: A Space Odyssey*. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp.

⁹ Beckles, Madelyne, "One Light", 2019.

¹⁰ I'm Gonna Git You Suka (Filipino Vinegar). May 17, 2009. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://burntlumpiablog.com/2009/05/suka-filipino-vinegar.html>.



WE SHOULD BE DANCING...



On February 1st, 2003, Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon re-entry into earth's atmosphere, killing all seven crew members onboard.¹¹ Distinct in its sociocultural prominence, the iconic footage documenting the crash is horrifying in its aesthetic appeal. The fragments of metal as it broke apart caught fire, making each piece twinkle; cameras interpreted the flashing light as technicolour, resembling a multi-coloured shooting star as it fell from the sky. Thirty-four years after the Moon landing, this tragic moment in American history was speculated to be a result of oversights and overconfidence of prior successes in the field of American space exploration.¹² The disaster demonstrated a fault in the country's own self assigned idea of excellence.

The painting, sculpture, text and performance work of *The Bald Eagle's Claw* are brought together through a collective search for belonging amidst being disillusioned by the "American Dream". Just as the nation itself looked to the stars in their quest for global dominance, the artists of this exhibition deliberately set their hopeful gazes outward, but are conscious of the complicated realities that inform such desire. If walking upon the surface of the Moon was our collective understanding of America at its finest, then let outer space take these ideas of excellence and send them crashing down, alongside the dying spacecraft. ☆

¹¹Howell, Elizabeth. "Columbia: First Shuttle in Space." Space.com. November 30, 2017. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://www.space.com/18008-space-shuttle-columbia.html>

¹²Berger, Brian. "Columbia Report Faults NASA Culture, Government Oversight." Space.com. January 29, 2013. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://www.space.com/19476-space-shuttle-columbia-disaster-oversight.html>.

Josi Smit

We Should Be Dancing...

The first time I saw *Saturday Night Fever*, it didn't feel like I was watching a film. It felt like a moving photo album. My mom and I were channel surfing and tuned in during the dinner scene where Tony Manero's unemployed father smacks his head—and his perfect helmet of hair—for taking an extra pork chop. I was around eight or nine at the time, and my mom's disco queen twenties were my favourite mythology. Then, with the click of a remote, her stories were dancing in the TV static, electrified behind thick JVC glass, glowing with flashing floor tiles and soft-focus rainbow spotlights.

I didn't see the opening scene where Tony struts his iconic paint-can-swinging strut into his dead-end job until years later.

My mom and aunts lived together back then. She always points out the triangular high-rise complexes clustered by highway 417 when we drive past.

They ate digestive cookies and baby food and made box-mix angel food cake.

They spent most of their pay-cheques on clothes from the stores they worked in.

They photographed each other at the beginning of the night, silk scarves around their necks, cream trenches over their shoulders, red blush framing their closed eyes from cheek to temple, eyebrows plucked so they nearly faded from view.

They photographed each other at the end of the night, smoking cigarettes in flannel night gowns, legs crossed on the bed.

They walked home in six inch platforms when the bus didn't show up, until their feet got so torn and bloody they had to go barefoot.

They spotted through every brand of birth control until they found one that didn't make them faint.

But damn, if they didn't look glamorous.

And they danced all night.

I have all of the colour-coordinated Danskin bodysuits and wrap skirts that my mom saved. They were her favourite Saturday night outfits. We've both fussed over how the skirts twist at the waist like they're always a step behind and facing the wrong direction. The bodysuits press my chest and stomach into contours of smooth, lustrous spandex. They also dig into my thighs and ass, like a prodding reminder.

I've had a digestive cookie phase too—with apple sauce, though.

And I work retail, and keep trying not to blow everything on the daydreams that I inhale while steaming clothes all day.

And my birth control made me feel foggy for years. Four years without the kind of joy that inflates your chest until you feel you'll either burst or cry. Then my insurance malfunctioned and I couldn't get a refill.

It feels like I haven't gone dancing in forever.

The last time I did, I danced with a friend of a friend who seemed fun, until he kept grabbing for my hand to twirl me, like he thought he needed to, like he thought I wanted to. He couldn't keep up. I didn't want his eye contact. I wanted to break off, turn Tony Manero's "Oh, forget this," against the twirl and go solo. I'd rather close my eyes or look everywhere-and-nowhere in that way that happens when the four on the floor rhythm beats in bones and buzzes and thought is unnecessary, just muscles contracting and releasing and contracting and releasing and contracting and releasing with the bass vibrating the air and my skirt whirling around me like it whirled around my mom.

In those moments, I'm expanding and time is still. ☆

REMEMBER



BEFORE WE WERE AMERICAN



Before we were American
We came as the pause to a hyphen
Waiting in line for our papers to process

Before we were American
We came in shipments
Hecho en Mexico
We came to work
Learned English in the spaces
Between cleaning houses
And raising their children

Ana
Morningstar

Before we were American
We waited
For our husbands bi-monthly letters to arrive
Crumpled envelopes that showed us
The dream was a crude \$20 hidden
Between folded promises
That they'd be back soon

Before we were American
We were the signs on farm fronts
The pins pleading No Grapes
The face of a union revolution
The hands of children
Squeezing so tight
They turned hardship into diamonds

Before we were American
We were long distance phone calls
Made on cards from grocery store checkouts
We were bought time
We were five minutes left on a call
Trying to fit in enough sweet nothings to get us through
The next six months

Before we were American
We were everything

Before we were American
We were Mexican ☆

NOTES ON THE HEART,



Philippe
Pamela Dungao

(1.) You knew you'd start the trip by making your way to the Niagara border, an hour and a half south of the only city you knew how to live in. You knew you'd be ending West. By the ocean, hopefully. Somewhere in between, you knew you wanted to see the open sky, rolling hills, valleys and mountain sides. Vegas, maybe. You wanted to see the edge of every city and every town. You wanted to see stars, and the sprawl underneath, fading. You have been in love for months. Meaning, you can't quite imagine what it would be like to go anywhere in the world, to see it unravel before your eyes, to leave so much behind without the other person. This only felt like the right thing to do.

(2.) Before leaving, you pack as much as you can into two bags. You were never one to spare yourself with only the necessities. You pack more clothes than you will end up wearing, and yet still not enough underwear. You pack a toothbrush. A towel. Extra socks. A sweater. Some toothpaste. You squeeze every last drop of your shampoo and your conditioner into two travel-sized containers.

A rosary, *kung sakali lang*. Last, your passport. He says, isn't that a lot; so you tell him that you have to fit everything you could of yourself into two bags, just in case they make you prove who you are and where you are from at the border. Just in case, too, you miss home.

(3.) You are not the first and the only one to make a pilgrimage across unknown places. You have known people who have left for elsewhere in search for something better. A better life, for example, like your parents who knew that leaving everything behind is worth more than everything that was waiting for you. But you — you go because you can. Others can't, but they must. Displacement is just another way of getting lost, after all. You go because there's a boy next to you, and with the windows down, with the Nebraska breeze and the heat, speeding down I-80W, you feel everlasting. Even briefly. Because he's white, and when you cross the border, the guard looks at you, first; and then, him (they exchange a smile, some words) and lets you through. When the car speeds up, and you cross the threshold, that

makes you feel everlasting. Even briefly.

(4.) In California, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, you are all at once the furthest and closest you've ever felt from home. Maybe, it's the heat, you say. Maybe, it's the Los Angeles traffic. Maybe, it's the brown bodies. Maybe, it's the ocean and the further you go inward, the more it becomes a wasteland.

(5.) America is: red red red red never-ending vast sprawling fading billboards neon lights abandoned blue skies [his hand on your knee] church signs the faded cries the shit decrepit [in the heart] white picket fences beauty and age and awe and *oh, how nice how quaint this is imagine living here oh, gosh* and oh how sublime and the wired fences guns and men with their hands held out begging and MONEY! FOOD! HEALTH INSURANCE! HELP WANTED! \$2 BURGERS AND FRIES DEAL! PRIVATE PROPERTY! KEEP OUT! GOD SAVES! barricaded windows dying endless [not the heart]

(6.) Years later, you will remember this time as if it were

a dream. You'll wonder where it had gone wrong. You were in love for months. He had said you were so beautiful and he has never seen someone so beautiful and you felt it and it was so hard to believe. And when he said I love you, you said I love you too, and you even felt it — even when it was so so so hard to believe because you were in love. You knew this. It was the only the right thing to do.

(7.) Once, you both found your way in the stretch somewhere between Kansas and Oklahoma. At a diner, a white woman ignores you and only asks the boy sitting across from you for the order. When she leaves, you say that it's because you're brown that she ignores you. He tells you that he had it all under control. It doesn't matter anymore, he got your order. That's what matters. He's so hungry, he says. You're both so hungry and you're both so tired. Outside, a man begs for money, he says he's so hungry, he's been so sick, and so quietly, you say sorry, you don't have any cash, you say excuse me, and he yells and says go fuck yourself go home go back to where you're from get out of this country you

ruined America the people like you whore whore whore piece of shit *die* ungrateful bitch.

(8.) Driving for miles and miles and for hours leaves the impression of emptiness. In the car, with you in the passenger seat and him beside you, it felt as if it you are the last two people alive, trying to reach the end of the world. It feels just like falling in love all over again. In the car, he tells you that you should ignore the man. He tells you he was just crazy. You don't get it, you say. You don't get it! Why didn't you do anything! Why! You just let him yell at me! You let her ignore me! You did that! He tells you you're being crazy now! You need to calm down! You say I can't! I just can't! You don't get it! You just don't! Of course you don't! And he says, what does that mean! You say you just don't! He says that's bullshit! You say it's because he's white! He's white and he'll never understand! He says you're being fucking emotional! Shut up! It's not always about you! You think everyone's out to get you!

(9.) Love is: [you think] never-ending vast sprawling

undoing unraveling forevermore undone his hand on your knees your thigh the softest parts of you against him the 6-am sunlight lining his hair his nose that mouth the steady rise and fall of his chest of him curling into you even after the worst and the toughest of nights [your mother says] forgiveness *survival* pain so so so much pain and giving and giving and giving and giving until you have nothing called sacrifice *escaping* if you can anak *bahala ka na* [you think] crumbling desire wanting chasing hunger passionate and wasted and feeling and needing beyond what your skins can expose in beauty and in age and in awe is all a lie all the right words and right feelings and the wrong time and wrong people

(10.) *Your mother wouldn't approve of how my mother raised me* you tell him in one of your last nights together. What does that mean? he asks. You say it has something to do with where you're both from and what people think of you. You say it's like you're the sun and it's like *I'm not even the moon*. He says I don't care come on we're just two people. We're not suns

or moons or stars or anything celestial. We're just people. You say, no no no. You are wrong to assume that the world you have created together was enough to protect you, or him, but mostly you. That night you felt like leaving.

(11.) In the end, you barely had anything left. You had tossed aside the stained, crusted panties. All you had was the denim chafing between your legs and your crotch. The pain burns. At the terminal, you tell him don't wait for me, I won't come. So he leaves. You stay behind, under warmth of the unrelenting sun. And there, you begin again ☆

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

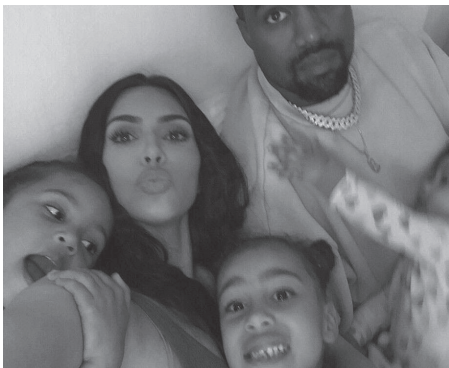
This text is a work of fiction. It references the following: *America Is in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan (1946), *America Is Not The Heart* by Elaine Castillo (2018), and *Your Best American Girl* by Mitski (2016). It is inspired by Sarah Nicole Prickett's essay, *How to Make Love in America* (2013). Each work informs notions of (American) desire, love, belonging (to whom and where), and intimacy that works in conversation with the text.

ONE LIGHT



Madelyne
Beckles

Get to know me and see who I am / White is actually one of my favourite colours, I love white / At the mall there was a seance / Just kids, no parents / Then the sky filled wih heroines. / (I saw the devil) In a Chrysler LeBaron / (But after that, took pills, kissed an heiress) / (And moved her back in Paris) / She need a daddy / Baby please, / We on an ultralight beam / We on an ultralight beam / This is a God dream / This is a God dream / This is everything / This is everything / I've made mistakes in my life for sure / When I gain a pound it's in the headlines / Aspire to inspire before you expire / Can we get much higher? / So high / Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh / Life is a marathon. / I'ma shift the paradigm / I'ma turn up everytime / We're still the kids we used to be, yeah / I put my hand on the stove, to still if I still bleed / Yeah, and nothing hurts anymore, I feel kind of free / I've been tryin' to make you love me / But everything



I try just takes you further from me / I do rely on having a full face on / People don't understand the pressure on me to look perfect / Botox to me is not surgery / Turn up the lights in here, baby / Extra bright, I want y'all to see this / Turn up the lights in here baby / You know what I need, want you to see everything / Want you to see all of the lights / I have a hit tv show / My mom and I have the same vision and we want the same things, we make goals lists every year / Some day, some day / Some day i'll, I wanna wear a starry crown / Some day, some day / Turn up the lights in here baby / You know what I need, want you to see everything / Want you to see all of the lights / High lights / We only makin' the high lights / Tell my mama, tell my mama that I only want my whole life to only be high lights / Some day we gon' set it off / Some day we gon' get it off. / You never know what the future holds or where your life will take you / Restraining order / Can't see my daughter / Her mother, brother, grandmother hate me in that order / Can't let her grow up in that ghetto university / And nothing hurts anymore I feel kinda free / I'll be more supportive / I made mistakes

you would call me a feminist / I feel like I'm at a really happy good space / I can't dwell / I get letters from little girls begging me to adopt them / If you want it you can get it for the rest of your life / If you want it you can get it for the rest of your life / Baby don't you bet it all / On a pack of Fentanyl / You might think they wrote you off / They gon' have to rope me off / Some day the drama'll be gone / And they'll pray it's not enough / If you can fix a problem with money it's not really a problem / It's time to recognize the armenian genocide / Sometimes I take all the shine / Talk like I drank all the wine / Years ahead but way behind / Fast life, drug life / Thug life, rock life / Every night (all of the lights) / Shit could get menacin', frightenin', find help / Sometimes I scare myself / That's my bipolar shit nigga / At the end of the day life is about being happy who you are / There are always going to be ridiculous rumors / Cop lights, flash lights, spot lights / Strobe lights, street lights / (All of the lights, all of the lights) / One light, one night / High lights / Livin' the life 'til I die / When there's so many haters and negative things I don't really care. Caught between space and time / This not what we had in mind / But maybe some day ☆

/ I bump my head / Court suck me dry / I spent that bread / I am cautious about what I say and do / I play into the perception of me, but it's really not me / I was in africa in a diamond mine / I don't talk about money / I don't really have goals as far as I want to be on a cover or something like that / I wish my trainer would tell me when I overate / I need every bad bitch up in Equinox / I wanna know right now if you're a freak or not / Oh lord, oh lord / I hate to talk about myself / I used to enjoy the spotlight, when I had a day off from filming. I didn't know what to do / I hated school / I think it would be so much fun to be in the white house / Fast cars, shooting stars / (All of the lights, all of the lights) / Until it's vegas everywhere we are / (All of the lights) / I'm on one, two, three, four, five / No half truths, just naked minds / OMGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGG. OMG. Ate a bite of salad & an olive was in it! I liked it but it scares me bc I hate olives! Hope my taste isn't changing, I don't wanna like olives / If I feel something it's how I feel. I never say I feel this way so you should feel that way. Not that there's anything wrong with it but I just am who I am but yeah I think

☆ CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES ☆

MADELYNE BECKLES ☆ Performance + Publication

Madelyne Beckles is an artist based in Toronto. Pop culture, theoretical texts and/or art history are employed as entry points to explore the/her body, race, and femininity, and create new contexts, and environments through video work, installation and performance. Recurring themes in her work include domesticity, consumption, intimacy, shame, labour, camp and the abject, which she attempts to deconstruct through feminist frameworks. She has presented her work in Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York.

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YAN WEN CHANG ☆ Exhibition + Publication

Yan Wen Chang (b. 1993) is a visual artist living and working in Toronto, Canada. Chang grew up in Singapore and Malaysia before moving to Toronto in 2011. In 2014, Chang was Governor General Award-winning Artist and Writer Robert Fones' studio assistant for his solo show at Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, Canada. Under his mentorship, Chang was tremendously influenced by his painting practice. She continued to assist him for his Retrospective Show Signs, Forms, Narratives at Museum London, Canada, in 2017. Chang received her BFA in Drawing and Painting at the Ontario College of Art and Design University, Toronto, Canada, in 2015. Chang was recently a recipient of the Emerging Artist Visual Art grant from the Toronto Arts Council for her first solo show the life of vanda miss joaquim at Pushmi Pullyu, Toronto, Canada, that opened in September 2018. Chang has shown work in numerous group exhibitions across Canada including Toronto, Montreal and Saskatoon.

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MARISSA SEAN CRUZ ☆ Performance

Marissa Sean Cruz is an interdisciplinary artist. Cruz's practice is based in Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal), with focus in video and performance. As a biracial Filipin* womxn, Cruz's work negotiates a layered socioracial identity. Through symbolism and linguistics, Cruz offers propositions to challenge social engagements – specifically relating to notions within Western and South-East Asian labour.

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PHILIPPE PAMELA DUNGAO ☆ Publication

Philippe Pamela Dungao lives and writes in Toronto. Her reviews and essays have appeared in places like Real Life Magazine, Shameless Magazine, The Puritan, and elsewhere. Her poetry can be found in The White Wall Review, Rookie Mag, around the Internet, and her iPhone Notes app.

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BRANDON FUJIMAGARI ☆ Exhibition

Brandon Fujimagari was born in San Francisco, California and lives and works in Toronto. He worked in corporate retail marketing prior to receiving his BFA from OCAD University in 2018. He is a recipient of the Mercedes Benz Drawing and Painting Scholarship and has exhibited at Art Toronto.

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ANDREW HARDING ☆ Exhibition

Andrew Harding is an artist of Métis ancestry whose practice is based in Toronto. Creating hybrid sculptures, he uses photography, fabricated objects, and found materials to form installations. Andrew's work explores narratives through reconsideration and re-appropriation.

andrewhardingart.com
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DORICA MANUEL ☆ Performance

Dorica Manuel is a Canadian artist and educator based in Toronto. Manuel's practice is informed by her Canadian upbringing and Filipino heritage, the merging of which creates a tension that she tries to reconcile with through performative video and photography. She often addresses notions of spirituality, culture, and identity. Manuel received an Honours BA from the University of Toronto Scarborough in 2015, with a major in Studio Art and a double minor in English Literature and Media Studies. Professionally, Manuel has worked for the Images Festival and Harbourfront Centre. Manuel is co-founder of the Scarborough-based collective Y+.

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ANA MORNINGSTAR ☆ Publication

Ana Morningstar is an Indigenous multi-faceted artist from Los Angeles, currently majoring in Indigenous Visual Cultures at Toronto's OCADU. As a mixed Mexican Indian/American Indian artist, Ana's work currently focuses on the exploration of Indigenous identities across borders and between cultural lenses. What does it mean to be Indigenous when you're from the city? When you're displaced physically and told you're out of context for the western world? When half of your identity has a right to land and the other half is *illegal*?

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PHILIP LEONARD OCAMPO ☆ Curator + Editor

Philip Leonard Ocampo is a queer Filipino artist and arts facilitator based in Toronto, Canada. Ocampo's multidisciplinary practice primarily involves sculpture, installation, and public programming. His work usually explores phenomenon, magic, and memory, using the extraordinary as a conduit for reconciling and better understanding personal and collective experiences. Ocampo is interested in the allure of the unknown, and through this curiosity, seeks to access aspects of existence that are invisible, intangible, or inhuman in nature.

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He holds a BFA in Digital Painting and Expanded Animation from OCAD University (2018) and is currently one of the Programming Coordinators at Xpace Cultural Centre.

JOSI SMIT ☆ Exhibition + Publication

Josi Smit is an artist and writer who works in sculpture, installation, photography, prose, and poetry. She often considers the intimacies that form in our relationships with objects and spaces, and how agency can emerge from tenderness and fantasy. She lives and sometimes dances the night away in Toronto.

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This project is dedicated to mom and dad,

Because I know you're trying.



