



Depository Park



Depository Park proposes an engagement with archive, shared memory, and individual experience. The artists have created work that asks us to think critically about how tightly we hold things that are dear to us when they are equally public domain. This group show animates a corner corridor of the Beaverbrook Gallery. The exhibition is a cross-institutional collaboration between a group of ten artists led by D’Arcy Wilson through Connexion Artist-Run Centre and The Beaverbrook Art Gallery. D’Arcy Wilson, Jennifer Wiebe, Janice Wright Cheney, KC Wilcox, Reuben Stewart, Carla Weideman, Naomi Millier, Andréa Peters, Christina Lovegrove Thomson, and Oscar Tecu created a diverse set of responses to Fredericton’s Odell Park in efforts to honour, reflect, preserve, or question its symbolic and material legacy.

Participating artists' multi-disciplinary works include photography, sculptures, textiles, new media, and an installation. The artworks are hung along the walls of this corridor gallery, with Andrea Peters's participatory installation anchoring the work in the apex of the corner. The ten artists participating in the exhibition all have personal experiences embedded in their individual psychic topo-graphies of Odell. Some took up the call for works about Odell to create new memories and a closer encounter with what the park had to offer. For others, visiting Odell has been their daily foray into nature, and they have inscribed kilometre after kilometre of hikes throughout its pathways and desire lines. Collectively, these ten artists populate Odell's forest with memories from their childhoods, teenage days, and into their adult lives. For these artists and many Frederictonians past and present, Odell is a piece of what constitutes "home" (some at times most literally).

Depository Park clearly links the function of institutional civic archives to the archival qualities inherent to nature preserves. Where the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick "...collects, preserves, and makes available for research, documents and records bearing upon the history of New Brunswick"¹, these artists chose to similarly approach Odell as an archive in its own right. The artists encountered Odell through a framework of artistic fieldwork by collecting and responding to their own experiences in the park and its provincially held archive. Parks themselves offer up a strange living archive of political priorities and sanctioned experiences with an at times fraught and often colonial concept of "nature". *Depository Park* invites its audience to reconsider what counts as worthy of archiving, and to consider the duality inherent to gestures of preservation: when we choose to preserve, are we keeping things safe or are we removing them from natural flows and rhythms?

1. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, <https://archives.gnb.ca/archives/?culture=en-CA>



D'Arcy Wilson
Surface Tension, 2018
 Photograph, branch, embroidery



Jennifer Lee Wiebe
KLATTÄ/EAB (Emerald Ash Borer), 2018
decal map, coloured water, glass bottle,
cork, gouache on paper

D'Arcy Wilson's *Surface Tension* contribution acts as a synecdoche of the themes held throughout the exhibition. Wilson collected a twig from the grounds of Odell, and carefully embroidered it after carving into it, doing her best to emulate the twig's own bark with her careful stitches. The twig is simply displayed on a plinth with macro photography documenting her stitches arrayed on the wall behind it. This gesture of embellishing the dead twig is at once a sweet intervention and embellishment while also embodying a darker critique around the gesture of "fixing" nature with our technology. The twig itself would have happily decomposed; its breaking being a part of the natural cycles of living things; but Wilson's intervention forestalls this flow and in some ways removes the twig from its once enormous state (a facet of the forest), and reduces it to specimen status.

Her care bewitches: her act of removing the twig from the park, sewing it, and documenting her efforts undoes and stymies the twig's own potential to rot and become a new form of life. *Surface Tension* calls into question what can count as "natural"; and Jennifer Wiebe's Ikea inspired *KLATTÄ/EAB* (Emerald Ash Borer), pushes this question further. The EAB has been detected in New Brunswick, and *may* infect thousands of Ash trees in Odell Park; the city has plans to proactively remove this Ash population. Wiebe's work (a map of the world and a bottle of emerald liquid with an IKEA style label) considers the Emerald Ash Borer as part of the process of globalized trade; another flow that may enter Odell and eventually leave. Her work provokes its audience to ask: is this invasive species so alien? Is the beetle more or less "natural" than removing 10,000+ trees?

KC Wilcox's new media installation of a dot matrix printer producing the image of tree bark brings out the duality of fixing something in time through documentation as a means of forestalling its loss. Printing an image of a fallen tree (perhaps several centuries old) collects it into the archive (indeed, items from *Depository Park* will be shared with the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick) while the tree itself is an archive of the forest. Trees stand as quiet witnesses in their own temporalities: if you cut down a tree in northeast France, you may find shrapnel embedded in its rings.²

Janice Wright Cheney and Reuben Stewart created works for the exhibition to reflect the diversity of Odell's organisms. Wright Cheney's devotion to Odell and the natural world is expressed in her *Portrait of a Lady Fern* embroidery with its evocation of ecclesiastical Unicorn Tapestries both in form and content.³ The lush forest background of the work is rendered on fabric from an

image of Odell taken by the artist before the portrait of a "Lady Fern" was embroidered on its surface. Wright Cheney gathered and subjectively catalogued elements of Odell gathered on her frequent walks through the park in a typesetter's drawer, hung beside her Lady Fern embroidery. Her collection doesn't accommodate academic taxonomies, but rather, the artist finds homes in the drawer in response to the specimens themselves. Reuben Stewart similarly collected materials from the land, but instead staged an arrangement at the foot of one of the park's trees. His arrangement was created from flowers and vegetation gathered from the shore of the Wolastoq (Saint John River) which used to be included in the boundaries of the park. Stewart's resulting photograph depicts an exuberant homage to Odell's present and past, reminding us that the boundaries of Odell (and all parks or preserves) are vulnerable to political priorities.

2. Jesse Boles. *Loss Library*. Photography Exhibition. (Toronto. UTAC, 2015).
<http://www.jesseboles.com/index.php?/projects/the-loss-library/>

3. *The Unicorn in Captivity (from the Unicorn Tapestries) Textiles-Tapestries*. New York: MET Cloisters.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/70007568?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=hunt+of+the+unicorn&pos=2>



KC Wilcox
*Memory Support (Tree in
Preservation)*, 2018
Personal Computer, Dot
Matrix Printer, Fanfold Paper



Janice Wright Cheney
Portrait of a Lady Fern, 2018
 Embroidery and digital print on
 linen, found frame



Janice Wright Cheney
A Study of Flora, Fauna and Fungi, 2018
 Specimens from Odell Park, found letter-
 press drawer

Reuben Stewart
Patronage, 2018
Inkjet print





Naomi Millier
Dear Odell, 2018
Mixed media sculpture

The duality of responses to Odell expressed in *Surface Tension* again is pulled forward by artist Naomi Millier as well as in a second artwork by D’Arcy Wilson. Millier created a beautiful dome sculpture of Odell’s flora rendered in vibrant colours on paper. This dome shelters a small figure on the forest floor, seemingly wrapped up as if either healing or wounded. We’re invited to wonder – does the artist feel safe or overwhelmed in the forest? Is the forest a place for healing? The *Memorialist: Diorama Panels*, by Wilson, similarly renders elements of flora on paper; aspects of old growth Acadian forest in particular. These isolated renderings harken to field drawings of an eighteenth century naturalist. Such drawings were complicit in the fraught

colonial history of specimen gathering; seeing renderings of exotic creatures and plants drove the trade of these organisms (at times driving species to extinction, other times introducing invasive species to delicate ecological niches).⁴ The drawings created by naturalists afield would be passed between fellow collectors, and helped to fuel a world-wide market of trading live, and preserved animals and specimens. Wilson inserts herself into this uncomfortable history, but has also produced a work which underscores the diversity of plants and creatures needed to sustain a healthy forest. Her gnarled and scruffy trees look nothing like more uniform mass plantings of trees carried out by the industrial forestry industry.

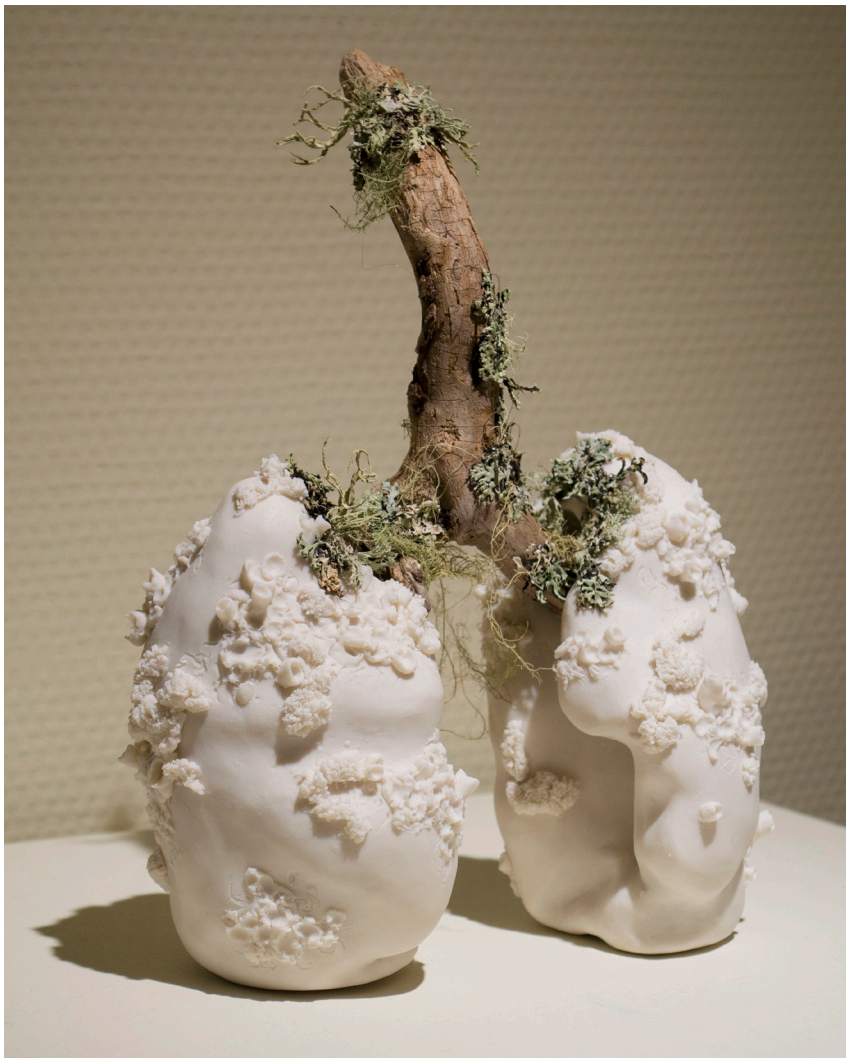
4. J Melody Rowell. *Exotic, Extinct, and On Display: Robert Clark’s Take on Taxidermy*. National Geographic Online. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2014/09/23/exotic-extinct-and-on-display-robert-clarks-take-on-taxidermy/>

Andréa Peters, Christina Lovegrove Thomson, and Oscar Tecu created works underscoring their subjectivity and intimacy with Odell, but also to suggest an understanding of the park's ecology which includes humans. Lovegrove Thomson and Tecu collaborated to create a dreamy and exploratory video in the forests of the park. Glimpses of Lovegrove Thomson's body arrive only as shadow over the landscape, and Tecu's soundscape evokes the magic one might feel when slowing down to observe the forest most closely. Through their collaborative video, we learn that Odell's floor is scattered with evidence of its human inhabitants and passers-through. Andréa Peters's perspective on the environment of Odell could not be more intimate, and through her installation we gain a more immediate understanding of human presence in the park. The artist spent six years living in the park when she experienced a period of homelessness. Her work offers a logistics of homelessness with its maps, lists, personal items, and an accompanying essay. Peters's installation flows across the walls and floor into the exhibition, and acts

as an intervention into gallery propriety. Her installation is informative, and invites viewers to look outward at the infrastructure housing it. Whose spaces are public galleries, or parks? Who feels welcome and who feels ownership over these spaces? What is worthy of archiving and what gets left out? Where in the NB Archives does it document the human inhabitants of the park? How does our social infrastructure, including our archives, include or preclude some lives and not others? Official archives help us encounter shared histories, but the framework through which they operate casts a net that can only really capture what they are designed to hold. The documentation housed by archives in the form of legal records, newspapers, photographs, and objects are self-limiting in what they are able to represent and collect - photographs only capture precisely what is in-frame, newspapers report news-worthy items, while legal documents record legal events and transactions. Our institutional attempts to create objective records, much like the methodologies of gathering and depicting Odell by these artists, are subjective.



Andréa Peters
Lullaby of Park-Land, 2018
 Poncho, saxophone, pocket
 treasures, garbage can



Carla Wiedeman
Transplant, 2018
Ceramic

Carla Weideman's *Transplant* reminds us of our incredibly intimate dependence on healthy forests to break the oxygen we need out of its bond with carbon in her mixed media sculpture of porcelain, a branch, and lichen. A healthy presence of lichen indicates good air quality, which Weideman sought to honour in her sculpture. Weideman expressed a discomfort in desiring to create this beautiful and delicate sculpture while understanding how environmentally deleterious her chosen material could be; how to best describe the intimacy and parallelism of brachia and branch without employing the medium over which she has

mastery? The work is beautiful, and does juxtapose our own vulnerable bodies with the vulnerabilities of the forest. Again, as with the other *Depository Park* contributions, we aren't offered resolution through the work, but instead are invited to consider concurrent possibilities. The artists who participated in *Depository Park* offer us inroads into thinking not just about Odell Park in particular, but more broadly, give us space to dwell in discomfort with the dual suffocation and cherished preservation articulated in archives and public parks alike.

- Gillian Dykeman

Depository Park was collectively curated & organized by participating artists and Connexion Artist-Run Centre. It was on display at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick from October 8 to December 16, 2018.

Text: Gillian Dykeman

Design: Kelly Hill

Photography: Kelly Hill (except pg. 9, Reuben Stewart)

Inside Cover: Still from
Christina Thomson and Oscar Tecu
I came here to get lost, 2018
Video, 3min.19sec.

Connexion Artist-Run Centre is a not-for-profit, charitable artist-run centre mandated to present, develop and promote contemporary art, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Depository Park would not have been possible without the support of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery; New Brunswick Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture; and the Canada Council for the Arts.





