

Aja'sit combines, for the first time, individual practices of Amy Malbeuf and Jordan Bennett, intensifying their dialogue of colour, form, material, and ancestral knowledge in the contemporary.

The duo-exhibition, *Aja'sit*, features contemporary artists Amy Malbeuf (Rich Lake, Alberta) and Jordan Bennett (Stephenville Crossing, Newfoundland) in the Main Gallery, with mural and wheat paste work in the Discovery Gallery by local youth: Char McIver, Latisha Seward, Tao Sluuguu Yaklaanaz, Michaela Planomaniac, who were mentored by the artists during a three-day workshop.

Two people move through air, across land, over water: by foot, by car, boat, plane: through digital, material, animal, time, space, light: two human bodies achieving momentum, transcending displacement, stasis, inertia: each foot touches the earth, a succession of steps, of contact and departure: alone, together: what imaginaries reside in such movement? *Aja'sit* is monument in movement

Aja'sit translates from Mi'kmaq into s/he is moving.

28 July - 1 September 2016

Amy Malbeuf
Jordan Bennett

Aja'sit

Making moments.

A diversion from Bennett's past work. Paintings on carved wood perform the meeting of colour and line, a chance encounter, transmitted through time, ancestral story, image, contained and fraught with energy. These represent the first commodified works. We discuss Mi'kmaq quillwork trade, how colonialism inferred itself in practice, wherein pigment and form are shifted but highly desired. This is a contentious issue to discuss ethically. Bennett exposes such contradictions and ways of knowing as he denounces classifications of his series as "paintings" rather than works rooted in sincere experimentation with form and colour, ultimately depicting the experiential.

Presented within *Aja'sit*, the series challenges the viewer to be taken over by the elemental non-linear, non-textual, to delight in colour and form and material. "...[E]ach of [Bennett's] brightly coloured abstractions reflect on points of contact that were once significant and that may have continued to be so. In Bennett's paintings and carvings, he deconstructs and reimagines a kind of Indigenous Newfoundland futurism, where the Mi'kmaq eight-point-star and the double-rainbow coexist with the Beothuk forms for which we have few names. Each work is a place, an attempt, a potential." - Heather Igloliorte, Inuk art historian and independent curator quoted from the 2016 essay, "Visiting/Echoes and Reverberations from the Land"

Intensely saturated hues play and challenge each other in shape and proximity. Boldly taking hold of the viewer, Bennett's paintings emit movement formally, within the viewer, and within the gallery space. One must give way to the experiential nature of the space.

Bennett's newest works are derived from the artist's experience in nature. Hikes are mapped utilizing traditional Mi'kmaq and Beothuk symbols creating a visual memory. Bright pinks, oranges and greens are at once contemporary and traditional. The works are then a mapping of such an experience, a moment in time explored in composition.

CAMPBELL RIVER

ART GALLERY

Acknowledgements

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To be in motion requires constant negotiation of pasts and futures.

Aja'sit requires your physical presence, movement.

Aja'sit requires your memories, and the willing destruction of them.

Aja'sit requires your time, in an attempt to challenge preconceived notions of understanding.

Aja'sit requires your eyes, vibrating and restless.

The artwork.

Tension replicates itself. Malbeuf works her materials across time and space, of death; the antipode of the archived, Other'd, and otherwise inert. Movement collapses distinctions of past and future, between the here or there, proposes new forms of place, punctuating the persistent grasp of the present... makeshift, marking, meaning of the moment.

Useful / Spiritual
Spiritual / Useful
Amy Malbeuf's sculptures fluctuate between two- and three-dimensional. These works, in their most elemental, are fringed tarps stretched within and issuing from an embroidery hoop. Returning to their pre-woven material state, the works represent a meeting of Métis and colonialist clothing style, practical adornment, as a means to extend the body along the clothing seam accentuating movement, shedding, status.

A physical diversion is created by safety vests sewn to furs, strung between pillars with twisted yellow rope, obstructing the viewer's path. The process-based works by Malbeuf, rooted in her sewing, beadwork, and tufting background, infer movement through the radical repurposing of materials. Here, in the gallery space, the installation constrains the human visitors, wrapping and confining the exhibition hall pillars. In doing so, Malbeuf intentionally shifts what one might ignore into a means of enclosure, intensifying the front and back of the works.

In this incarnation, the neon X's of the safety vests extend beyond the stretched animal hides into the optic yellow rope, and further even into the erratic triangular shapes used in Jordan Bennett's paintings. The animal furs in this context are intensely textual. Notions of nature's sterilization and commodification are even more heightened in *Aja'sit*.

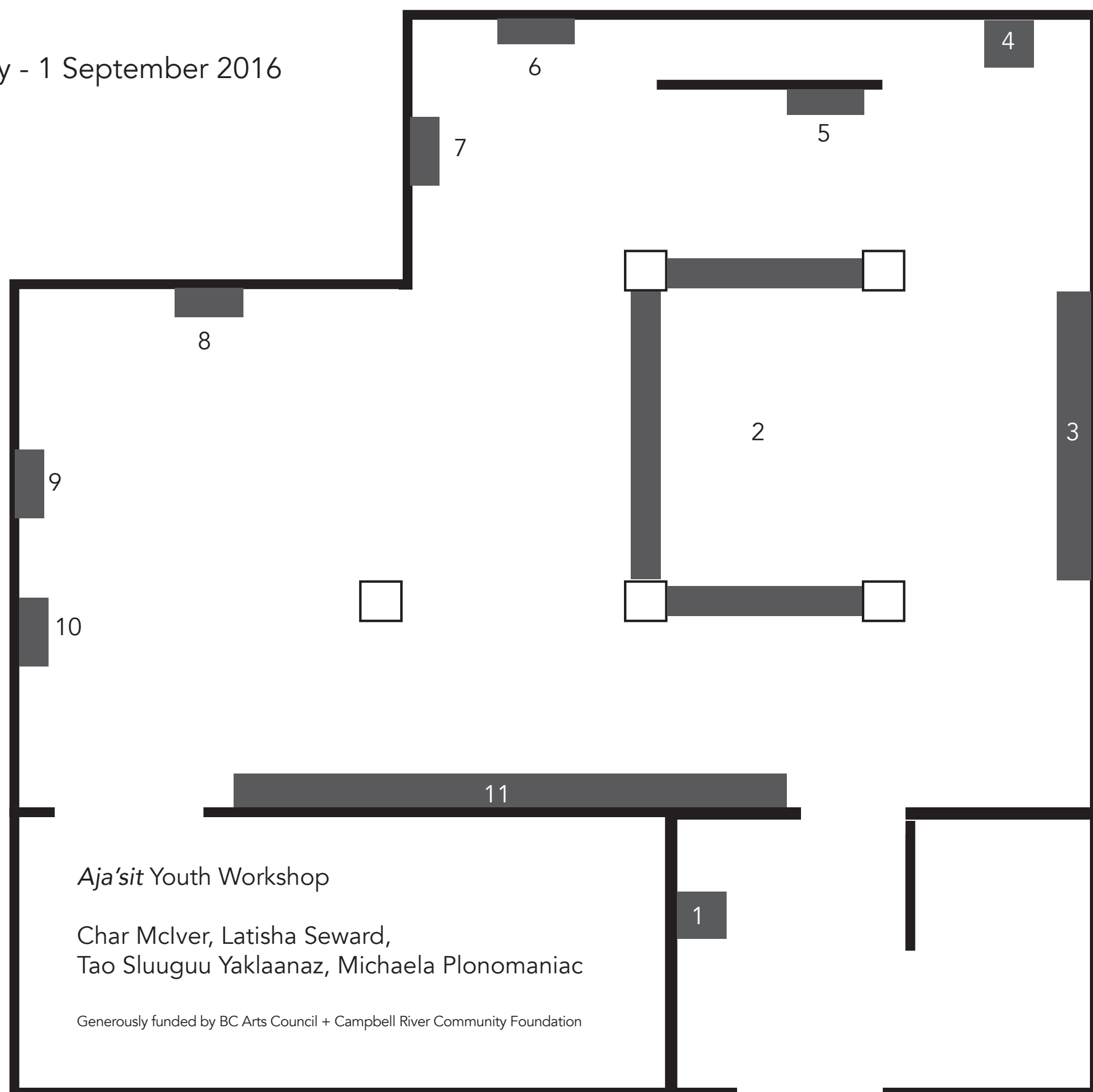
"I am the knowledge of all my ancestors combined and in order for me to mamah'tawisiyih'tapicikéyan ô-tê-nîkânîhk or 'tap into the powers to conceptualize the future' I had to first trust my mamah'tawisowin or 'exercise my own inwardness'. It was then that I realized that to express the resiliency of my Grandmother Ancestors in this artwork, I must do it through the physical embodiment of contemporary Métis women." (8)
- Amy Malbeuf, "apihkêw (s/he braids, s/he weaves, s/he knits)", May 2016

Aja'sit

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Amy Malbeuf

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| 1. <i>The Outer Seam 1</i> | Tarp, embroidery hoop, 2016 |
| 2. <i>Coyote, Muskrat, Fox, Rabbit, Beaver, Skunk</i> | Furs with safety vests and rope, 2014 |
| 3. <i>Jimmie Durham 1974</i> | Glass beads on tarp, rope, found wood, 2014 |
| 4. <i>The Outer Seam 2</i> | Tarp, embroidery hoop, 2016 |
| 5. <i>Trade on Hudson Bay had been initiated by literally taking the "coat" beaver off Cree bodies.*</i> | Beaver tail, Beaver fur, LED light, wood, 2015 |

* from Sherry Farell Racette's "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Metis and Halfbreed Identity", 2004

Jordan Bennett

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| 6. <i>Gep't'g-Frozen Over</i> | Acrylic paint on carved wooden panel, 2016 |
| 7. <i>Sylix Sikwan</i> | Acrylic paint on carved wooden panel, 2016 |
| 8. <i>Nisqunamu'k Kmtn (Purple Mountain)</i> | Acrylic paint on carved wooden panel, 2016 |
| 9. <i>Cedar Stargate- Stein</i> | Acrylic paint on carved wooden panel, 2016 |
| 10. <i>Cedar Stargate- Unknown 1</i> | Acrylic paint on carved wooden panel, 2016 |
| 11. <i>Agaqtuk (Far Out to Sea)</i> | Acrylic mural paint on wall, 2016 |