



Duane Linklater  
*Torpor*, 2016  
Mixed media

Duane Linklater with Ethel Linklater & Tobias Linklater  
"From Our Hands"  
80WSE Gallery  
8.12.2016 – 18.2.2017

In the 2015 US Supreme Court case *Dollar General v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*, which eventually upheld the authority of tribal courts to hear suits against non-tribal businesses, Justice Sonia Sotomayor asked: "What, then, remains of the sovereignty of the Indians?"

Caustically distilled, the first three words of this question constituted the core provocation of this exhibition by Omaskéko Cree artist Duane Linklater, from Moose Cree First Nation in northern Ontario, with his grandmother

Ethel Linklater (1932–2004) and son Tobias Linklater (\*2004), which was conceived with and first staged at Mercer Union in Toronto.

Removing certain gallery walls, Linklater replaced them with new steel studs and painted them sprinkler-system-red to spell WHAT THEN REMAINZ. While it evoked the institutional critique of Michael Asher, Linklater's intervention runs sharply against the dominant narratives of predominantly white, conceptually-driven art history, which is typically shy to address questions of the magnitude of the legacy of settler-colonialism. The slickness with which Linklater gutted this history and its language is enthralling. His removal of the white-painted walls operated as a conspicuous, iconoclastic effacement of whiteness as a signifier.

The exhibition was hardly about absence, however, and



Duane Linklater  
Installation view



Duane Linklater  
*Speculative apparatus 1 for the work of nohkompan* (detail), 2016

collected many stories and voices in sculptures and videos within this (literal) framework. The eight-foot high sculptures *Untitled Problem 1–15* (2016) echo the dimensions of Linklater's body with outstretched arms. Formulated in the gypsum, plywood and steel of gallery construction, and clothed in discarded elk and bison hides, offcuts from native crafts stores, plastic, and a faux fur scarf, these works index the Indigenous labor that underpins the colonial project of development and expansion, in the context of which no built environment can be coded as neutral.

The exhibition's title referred to a homonymous exhibition of Indigenous craft that toured Ontario between 1982–1985. This featured works by Linklater's grandmother, including beaded slippers and a child's mittens, made from materials such as moosehide and rabbit fur. They were presented here

on concrete and steel plinths (*Speculative apparatus for the work of nohkompan, 1–9* [2016] – *nohkompan* is a Cree word that translates to "my grandmother who is passed on") that return them to the realm of fine art rather than craft. Situated among these artworks is a video by Linklater's son, Tobias Linklater a short stop-motion animation of a sequence from the video game *Legend of Zelda*. This work, *Origin of the Hero*, was placed atop a *Speculative apparatus for the work of nikosis* (both 2016), manifesting an intergenerationality both medial and familial.

At the end of the exhibition the gallery walls were rebuilt; Linklater's provocation encased for future generations. Herein was the exhibition's resonating insight – that the question of what remains depends on who voices it.

Harry Burke



Duane Linklater  
Installation view