

## About the artists

**Scott Benesiinaabandan** is an Anishinaabe (Obishkkokaang) intermedia artist that primarily works in photography, video, audio and printmaking. His research interests are the intersections of artificial intelligence and Anishinaabemowin. Currently, he is investigating audio works, light sculptures, and virtual reality. Benesiinaabandan has exhibited across Canada and internationally, notably Harbourfront's Flatter the Land/Bigger the Ruckus, Subconscious City at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, GHOSTDANCE at Ryerson Image Centre, unSacred at Gallery 1C03, mii omaa ayaad/Oshiki Inendemowin in Sydney, Blood Memories in Melbourne, and was commissioned by CONTACT Photography Festival in Toronto. He has also held residencies at Parramatta Artist Studios in Australia, Context Gallery in Derry, Northern Ireland, University Lethbridge/Royal Institute of Technology iAIR residency, and Initiative for Indigenous Futures and AbTec in Montreal. Benesiinaabandan received his MFA in photography from Concordia University.

**Cat Bluemke & Jonathan Carroll** make art about work and play. Taking form as video games, performance, and expanded reality, their projects consider how technology regulates both labour and leisure. They have worked together since 2013, often as the collectives Spek Work Studio and Tough Guy Mountain. Exhibiting across Canada and internationally, they have shown recently with Rhizome and the New Museum's virtual reality platform, MUTEK Montreal, and the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale with the American Pavilion. Their practice has been featured in Hyperallergic, Canadian Art, 032c, the National Post, and Blackflash and Our Times magazines. They have received funding from Rhizome, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Toronto Arts Council, Arts Nova Scotia, and SK Arts.

**Adrienne Matheuszik** is a mixed Jamaican & settler-Canadian interdisciplinary artist in Toronto. Adrienne has had unsupervised access to the internet since she was nine years old and spent most of her time online making art. Adrienne uses computers to make art — video, physical computing, creative coding & 3D design — which usually results in interactive installations, augmented reality, short film and video. Her work explores ideas of representation & identity online and IRL. She is interested in speculative futures and using sci-fi to examine the possibility of the post-colonial.

**Jenn E Norton** is an artist using time-based media to create immersive, experiential installations that reframe familiar objects, landscapes, and activities as fantastical, dreamlike occurrences. Using stereoscopic,

interactive video, animation, augmented reality, sound, and kinetic sculpture, Norton's installation work explores the blurring boundaries of virtual and physical realms. Often using video as a starting point within her process, Norton's imaginative video compositions of disjunctive imagery are bound together in post-production, using a combination of pre-cinema and contemporary display technologies. Recent national and international exhibitions include Lorna Mills' 'Ways of Something' in DREAMLANDS: IMMERSIVE CINEMA AND ART, 1905–2016 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, in/future, at Ontario Place, and Slipstream, a touring solo exhibition of new work premiering at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery. She is currently a PhD candidate in Visual Arts at York University.

## About the author

**Karie Liao** is a contemporary art curator and writer with an interest in public art, digital media and printed matter. She was the Co-founder/Curatorial Projects Coordinator for the Toronto Art Book Fair and has also held past positions including Curator at Cape Breton University Art Gallery, Resident Curator at Artscape Youngplace, Artistic Director of Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area, and Curator-in-Residence at the Textile Museum of Canada. She has written for Vie Des Arts, BlackFlash, and C Magazine. She is a graduate of the York University M.A. Art History and curatorial practice program.

## Exhibition locations

InterAccess  
950 Dupont St. Unit 1, Toronto, ON M6H 1Z2  
Front steps & indoors

Dupont/Dovercourt Billboard  
950 Dupont St, Toronto, ON M6H 1Z2  
Viewable from the parking pad outside InterAccess

Bartlett Parkette  
160 Geary Ave, Toronto, ON M6H 2B9  
Mounted on skating rink fence

Blood Brothers Brewery  
165 Geary Ave, Toronto, ON M6H 2B8  
On the west side of the building, just north of the train tracks

# Inter / Access

950 Dupont St., Unit 1  
Toronto, Ontario M6H 1Z2  
+1 416 532 0597

interaccess.org

Gallery Hours  
Tuesday - Saturday  
11AM - 6PM  
Admission is always free

Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, festival, and registered charity dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.

Geofenced  
Curated by Karie Liao

Geofenced: Curator Tour with Karie Liao  
Wednesday, September 15, 2021  
5PM-6PM

In this exhibition, the geofence becomes a metaphorical framework through which to consider how AR technologies alter the environment, either by making spaces more accessible or by creating new barriers. At InterAccess, sculptural works trigger interactive and immersive AR experiences. Beyond the gallery's walls, AR artworks adorn billboards, fences, and railway crossings. Enlivening Toronto's Davenport neighbourhood with site-specific, virtually activated interventions, the artworks in Geofenced connect viewers to the forgotten histories, contemporary politics, and faraway futures of place.

# GEOFENCED

*An essay by Karie Liao*

Scott Benesiinaabandan  
Cat Bluemke & Jonathan Carroll  
Adrienne Matheuszik  
Jenn E Norton

September 15 - October 9, 2021



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



In October 2017, Snap Inc., the parent company of social media platform Snapchat, launched an augmented reality (AR) collaboration with contemporary pop artist Jeff Koons. Members of the public were invited to search for AR versions of the artist’s iconic sculptures at popular landmarks around the world using an in-app camera feature. Koons’ larger-than-life balloon dog was virtually plopped in the middle of New York City’s Central Park. Within 24 hours of its release, designer and provocateur Sebastian Errazuriz created a graffitied copy of the work in the same geotagged location in a “symbolic stance against imminent AR corporate invasion.”<sup>1</sup> The defacement of Koons’ balloon dog signals growing wariness of the commodification of virtual public spaces. The AR landscape, regarded as a new frontier for innovation and progress, has become a battleground for artists, technologists, and citizens to defend their agendas and uphold their values against those that are solely driven by market forces.

*Geofenced* explores the critical and creative potentials of AR. In this exhibition, five artists, Scott Benesiinaabandan, Cat Bluemke and Jonathan Carroll, Jenn E Norton, and Adrienne Matheuszik use AR technology in relation to geography. One way that AR content is presented is through a geofence, a virtual geographic boundary composed of GPS coordinates. This invisible fence enables software to trigger a response when a device enters or leaves a real-world area. In this exhibition, the geofence becomes a metaphorical framework through which to consider how AR alters the environment, either by making spaces more accessible or creating new barriers.

InterAccess is located on Dupont Street, adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Railway. The proximity of Dupont to the train has made it an important industrial manufacturing corridor.<sup>2</sup> The departure of most manufacturers at the close of the twentieth century was a gentrifying catalyst for the neighbourhood. This urban history informs Cat Bluemke and Jonathan Carroll’s *Reality Crossing* (2021), an interactive AR simulation of railway real estate activity. Upon activating the yellow railroad crossing sign in the gallery, the audience can become one of two characters: a Worker (who must earn wages by laying down train tracks) or a Speculator (who purchases property where the train may hypothetically pass, in hopes of maximizing returns on investment). Beyond the gallery walls, along the railway on Bartlett Avenue just south of Geary Avenue, an AR conductor appears, who guides viewers through the conclusion of the simulation’s narrative. He reveals a train pulling boxcar condos, a dystopian scenario signaling the ultimate commodification of housing. Through this work, Bluemke and Carroll connect the railroad, real estate, and AR to remind us how these infrastructures often enable abuses of power by governing bodies and corporations in the name of techno-capitalist advancement.

Jenn E Norton’s work also gathers inspiration from local history, particularly 950 Dupont’s past life as the Hamilton Gear and Machine Company. *In careful fitted Ground* (2021) is a two-part site-specific work comprised of an indoor mural and an outdoor floor decal. When activated with a smart device, the constellation on the gallery wall transforms into an interactive AR animation

of gears. Each gear is embossed with poetry and can be rotated by viewers, thereby changing the order of the stanzas. The featured poem is Emily Dickinson’s *No Notice gave She, but a Change* (1863), which begins with the description of a woman quietly exhaling her last breath, “No Notice gave She, but a Change/No Message, but a Sigh.”<sup>3</sup> The poem concludes with “her warm return,” which can be interpreted as referring to the woman’s soul—a resurrection or perhaps her existence in memory.

Echoing the design of the indoor mural is Norton’s stylized crack on the steps to the gallery’s entrance. When activated, the rupture in the ground reveals an underground water source. The imagery of water alludes to the former pool that was once used to cool and harden the red-hot, freshly-made gears at the factory. In viewing the water or turning the gears, we are invited to momentarily experience the “warm return” of Toronto’s industrial past.

While Bluemke, Carroll, and Norton experiment with ways AR can build upon the histories of a place, Scott Benesiinaabandan dismantles the borders of AR. He investigates how digital beings are able to transgress conventional boundaries of virtual and physical, spiritual and corporeal, as well as human and non-human. *shke! waboose/look at the rabbit* (2021) is an AR rabbit animation that users are intended to follow on a journey of unknown outcomes. One of the artist’s inspirations for this work is Nanaboozho, a shape-shifting spirit featured in many Indigenous world creation stories, who is often described as a giver of gifts.<sup>4</sup> Benesiinaabandan regards his AR rabbit’s existence in this

manner: it leads humans to a better place and time, though where and when is left for viewers to discover. The conceptual development of this work was influenced by cultural theorist Dominic Pettman’s writing on the autonomy of digital beings and their existence beyond human and machine logic.<sup>5</sup> Benesiinaabandan’s AR rabbit is boundless, crossing and evading all confines including geofences.

As a technology that blurs the boundaries of virtual and physical as well as reality and fiction, AR lends itself to science fiction. Adrienne Matheuszik’s *Proxima-B* (2021) capitalizes on AR’s world-building capacity. This body of work consists of an outdoor billboard and an indoor pop-up travel agency. Located on Dupont Street, just west of InterAccess, the billboard depicts all the trappings of a luxury resort against an exotic intergalactic terrain. The picturesque destination is a remote, uninhabited place where time passes slowly. These qualities can also be observed in the postcards featured in the travel agency, which depict the same luxurious pool, a hotel room with a superior view of the extraterrestrial landscape, and a serene private patio. *Proxima-B* imitates and deconstructs the visual strategies of social media travel marketing. The tourist imagery seen in Matheuszik’s work has a legacy rooted in the colonial project of presenting travel destinations as vacant, devoid of local inhabitants, and thus ready for consumption.<sup>6</sup> Upon activating the AR image markers, these images of a fantasy getaway reveal a dilapidated resort that has been taken over by otherworldly decay. The artist deliberately denies the viewer visual, mental, and physical access to this

resort, planet, and future. Instead, beholders must stay where they are and remain accountable to the environmental, social, and political ailments of our present moment.

*Geofenced* demonstrates how AR technology can manipulate the viewer’s experience of a place by layering digital content over their physical surroundings. These digital layers can connect people to overlooked or forgotten narratives and help us view the landscape as more of a living palimpsest rather than a tabula rasa. My hope with this exhibition is that the boundaries resulting from AR technology, like geofences, resist land ownership and gatekeeping and remain permeable and temporary. Preserving the use-value of AR, and challenging its commodification, can help us reimagine the present and work towards a better shared reality for the future.

## Notes

1. Claire Voon, "Artist Vandalizes Virtual Koons Sculpture, Questioning Silicon Valley's Fake Public Space," *Hyperallergic*, October 05, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/404143/sebastian-errazuriz-jeff-koons-snapchat/>.
2. “This is what Dupont Street used to look like before it was cool,” *BlogTO*, October 6, 2018. [https://www.blogto.com/city/2011/11/a\\_visual\\_history\\_of\\_dupont\\_street](https://www.blogto.com/city/2011/11/a_visual_history_of_dupont_street).
3. Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Herbert Johnson (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1960), 392.
4. There are many spelling variants of this name, but I have chosen to use “Nanaboozho” based on my conversations and correspondence with the artist.
5. Dominic Pettman, “The Orc and The Penguin In Search of a Psukhepolitics of the Living,” *Look at the Bunny: Totem, Taboo, Technology* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2013), 77.
6. Sean P. Smith, “Instagram Abroad: Performance, Consumption and Colonial Narrative in Tourism,” *Postcolonial Studies* vol 21, no. 2 (March 2018): 172-191, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1461173>.