

DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University
agnes.queensu.ca

Collection Count + Care

Count + Care seeks relationships within and conversations across the collection.

What stories does the collection tell?

2022

SPEAKER

Kirsty Robertson, Professor and Director of Museum and Curatorial Studies and Director, Centre for Sustainable Curating at Western University

FEATURED WORKS

Kim Ondaatje, *Carlings on 401*, 1971, acrylic and mixed media on canvas. Gift of Mrs Kathleen Milne, 1972

Kim Ondaatje, *Lake Ontario Cement*, 1970, acrylic and mixed media on canvas. Purchase, Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund and Donald Murray Shepherd Bequest Fund, 2016

Eleanor Bond, *The Cloudy Spectre of Detroit Hangs Over Winnipeg*, 2008, gouache and pencil on gesso on rag paper. Gift of the artist, 2008

A Collection of Dreams

Kirsty Robertson/Centre for Sustainable Curating, 2022

KEYWORDS

Dreams, Air Pollution, Environment, Sustainability

TRANSCRIPT

Kirsty Robertson: Hi. My name is Kirsty Robertson. I'm the curator of the show and I'm the Director of Museum and Curatorial Studies at Western University where I also direct the Centre for Sustainable Curating. This is a show about air pollution, and it comes from an article that I read where anecdotal evidence suggests that in environments that have heavy particulate pollution, people tend not to dream. And in environments with very fresh air, people have very vivid and colourful dreams. I was thinking about what the objects in the Agnes's collection might dream about while they're put to sleep for the years of the renovation. I worked with several participants to collect air in the gallery and also at the Feminist Art Residency farm. So it's really important for objects, that they have clean air in the museum environment because it keeps them static. But what does that clean air mean when the objects are dreaming? Is it somewhere between the polluted air where there are no dreams or is it something more like the fresh air where the objects might have vivid dreams? For the purpose of the show, I was thinking of the clean air as something where dreams might be a little lacking and so the air from the farm could add something to the object's dreams as they're sleeping. This is a work by Kim Ondaatje called *Lake Ontario Cement*. She was living in a place where the dust from the cement factory, a sort of fine, grey dust was raining from the sky and falling on everything around her but she's able to create a look of the smoke and haze through her application of paint in the work. A year after painting the cement factory, Kim Ondaatje continued her factory series and she painted *Carlings on 401* which is the Carlings Brewery on the 401 Highway. Again, she uses a technique of layering paint with some detritus like toothpicks and

fishing line and masking tape. They give the painting three dimensionality. You have to look pretty closely before two jet planes kind of reveal themselves. And in that sense, she's getting the pollution that is being made on high from the jet fuel as well as the smoky haze that's coming out of the factory itself. This is a work by the artist Eleanor Bond called the *The Cloudy Spectre of Detroit Hangs over Winnipeg* from 2008. It's like a foreshadowing of what would happen if Winnipeg went ahead with a plan that they had to build the stadium. In the work, Winnipeg is at the bottom and then this spectral cloud of pollution just comes up in a dream of the future of an industrial and polluted city if passages of gentrification are not halted.