# SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

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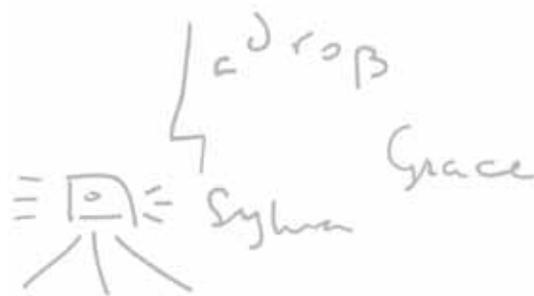
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SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Jordan Strom and Sylvia Grace Borda

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JORDAN STROM CURATOR, SURREY ART GALLERY

T he spaces categorized as 'suburbs' have long been home to sites of special consideration for artists. French impressionist painters of the 19th century, for example, looked to these spaces, and depicted them in order to capture key dynamics of the modern condition. Consecutive generations of artists in cities around the world have followed suit. Certainly, Vancouver has had at least a half century tradition of artists who have looked to the suburbs to make their art. N.E. Thing Co.'s *Portfolio of Piles* (1968), Jeff Wall's *Landscape Manual* (1969), and *Architecture of the Fraser Valley* (1972)[1] are a few of the photographic projects that looked to spaces at the apparent periphery.

As with this earlier generation of Vancouver artists, Borda's work is not so much attempting to produce an investigation of place—though certain places are made more resonant by these artworks and vice versa. Her pictures are often representations of types of space within a context referred to by urban critic Thomas Sieverts as the 'urbanized countryside,' the collapsed space of the city and periphery, or simply, "where we live now."[2] Modernity happens in these locales where the city and the country meet. These are sites, as Borda's work shows, that are no longer peripheral, or defeatured.

For Borda, the reference points do not reside so much in the figure of Robert Smithson's non-site, or the character of the Baudelairian flâneur, as it had for other Vancouver artists in the past. Instead, her art practice has focused on the systems and structures of the landscape. Shades of Jean-François Millet and Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin rub up against Eugène Atget and Edward Ruscha. Yet, her work is also frequently about the communities themselves: school students in Surrey, Canada, and East Kilbride, Scotland, in her project (*Sub)Urban Exchange* (2007), or the farmers of the Fraser Valley

< Images from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

in *This one's for the Farmer* (2013). In every instance her work is vigilant about transitional spaces and transitional places caught between modes of the urban, suburban, and rural.

Simultaneous to Borda's upending of the normative relationships between centre and periphery, she has been critiquing the nature of the image through her innovative approaches to photography and video. The artist has been reworking new technologies of vision through older outmoded forms of picture-making technology. Her artmaking often draws from older modes of photographic and proto-photographic practices such as the camera obscura and cyanotype printing. This can be seen in works such as *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three* (2013) and the video *Aura* (2013), part of a related series of 3-D stereo video works. Both series borrow from techniques used in Victorian stereoscopy, but updated with new digital technologies and new forms of display to create altered forms of dimensionality. While it borrows from other technologies and other media histories (not the least of which is painting), Borda's work is always anchored primarily in photography and photographic history. She has described her work as a form of expanded cinema—not an expanded cinema as a neuroaesthetic extension of human body and cognition, as theorized by Gene Youngblood,[3] but rather a form of moving still image rooted in a form of database cinema and systematic photography.

Growing out of her *Field Studies* residency, in summer 2013, Borda's multifaceted project *This one's for the Farmer* deployed photography, video and dimensional-based tableaux to depict a distinct set of hybrid agricultural and suburban spaces in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. *This one's for the Farmer* represented a continuation of a number of projects that the artist had created over the course of a decade and a half, that made the municipality of Surrey, British Columbia and its neighbouring region central to its concerns.

Whether it was *Aerial Fields* (2013)—created by flying drones rigged with video camera technology, to capture a series of sweeping panoramas and diptych video vignettes focusing on agricultural activities—or the tableaux in real-time of the *Farm Tableaux* series—where the artist created a suite of photographic vignettes within Google Street View, Borda's imagery is always pushing at the edges of the familiar. I would refer to projects discussed in this publication as chiasmatic. That is, on the one hand, they respond to the dispersed chiasmatic quality of Surrey itself—the City's dispersed, sprawling mix of farmland, adjacent housing projects, and industrial land base, and the once celebrated 'town centre model,' has been largely dictated by the massive X-shaped body of agricultural land at the municipality's centre. Borda's work has deeply probed the character of the resulting city. On the other hand, Borda's practice is also captured in the figure of the optic chiasma, the X-shaped structure produced by crossing over of the optic nerve fibers inside the human brain. Whether it's *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004) or *This one's for the Farmer* (2013), Borda's work resides in that cross-wise space between the brain and the eyes, constantly provoking the viewer to look again, not just at the artist's compelling lens-based imagery, but also the world immediately surrounding them.

Image of Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Notes

1.   While not exclusively a photographic project, *Architecture of the Fraser Valley* (1972) was an artist publication created by a group of artists documenting the vernacular architecture of New Westminster, Surrey, Delta, Maple Ridge, Mission, and Chilliwack. The creators included Robert Kleyn, Maureen Ryan, Duane Lunden, Ian Wallace, Bob Sandilands, and Frank Johnson.

2.   Thomas Sieverts, *Where We Live Now: An Annotated Reader.* Portland: Versus Chorus Press, 2008.

3.   While Borda appears to be less interested in the synaesthetic possibilities of intermedia culture theorized by Gene Youngblood in *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970) there is a strong ecological drive in her art practice that Youngblood sees as central to the new cinema at the end of the 20th century.

SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES

Sylvia Grace Borda: Two Geographies

REBECCA TRAVIS Writer and Critic

1. A Tale of Two Cities

How do we go about getting to know a city? Moreover, how can the essence of a city be visually documented so as not only to literally image its features, but also portray something of a true sense of place? The first question will be something that many of us encounter at some point in our lives, as we learn in our formative years how to map and navigate our geographic surroundings. In an age of rapidly rising real estate prices and global economy, it is highly likely that we will relocate to other neighbourhoods, other cities, perhaps even other countries in our lifetimes, encountering again the need to navigate anew. The second question, of how to understand and capture not only the physical features of a city, but a greater, less tangible sense of place, has challenged artists and documentarians throughout history, from Canaletto in 18th century Venice, to Charles Marville in 19th century Paris and Ed Ruscha in 1960s LA.

For the past 15 years, the work of Vancouver-based artist Sylvia Grace Borda has focused on using the medium of photography, in many forms and varying offshoots of its ever-changing technologies, to try and fully capture two hitherto artistically overlooked cities. Whilst myriad projects have led her to exhibit worldwide, she has turned her lens to these two sites repeatedly, finding surprising parallels despite the fact that geographically they are over 4,000 miles apart. Through projects that have unfolded over a number of years, Borda has developed an oeuvre that positions her somewhere between the objective, distanced city documentarian, creating tools by which to navigate these cities at key points in their contemporary development, and the more subjective artist community observer and member. The two cities that have so captivated Borda are: Surrey, British Columbia, Canada and East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire, Scotland.

< Diptych series showing Surrey, BC, on the left, and on the right, East Kilbride, Scotland, *(Sub)Urban Exchange* (2007)

Borda's relationship with Surrey began when she was a child. Born to European immigrants in Vancouver, Borda would regularly visit the then-suburb of Surrey in her early years, as passenger on her parent's exploratory drives into Vancouver's surrounding areas. As would become important in the later development of her artistic practice, the purpose of these trips often centred on culture—either visiting the Surrey Art Gallery, or the area's flourishing farmer's markets (an established rural concept not yet developed in downtown Vancouver). Borda went on to study at both Emily Carr University of Art + Design and the University of British Columbia, where she experienced the tutelage of Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace, and Ken Lum, all of whom would have a significant impact on her conceptual approach to digital media. Borda later became a sessional lecturer herself, during which time the TechLab at Surrey Art Gallery was launched. This ground-breaking facility—established in 1999 and to-date still the only facility fully dedicated to contemporary digital arts media within a Canadian arts institution—cemented Borda's connection with Surrey, when she developed the pioneering project *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* for the Gallery in 2004. This epic project marked the first of many collaborations with the Surrey Art Gallery. Since this time, Borda's expansive practice has continually riffed on the idea not only of creating artworks *about* a city, but of the city *itself* being considered an immense, unfolding artwork.

While it may not be as culturally romanticized as Venice, Paris, or LA, from the outset Borda saw Surrey as a fascinating example of rapid contemporary urban development, contrastingly positioned within rural working farmland, and therefore a potential site for tension between two seemingly opposed modes of living. Set just below the Fraser River, to the south of Vancouver and part of the wider Metro Vancouver area, Surrey gained official city status in 1993 and at the time of writing, is one of Canada's fastest growing cities. If it continues its current growth trajectory, it is set to out-populate Vancouver by 2020–2030, a fact echoed in its civic motto: *The Future Lives Here.*[2] All this is to say that Surrey's development from working rural suburb to a defined city in its own right makes it a stellar example of a very 21st century kind of urban expansion, just as worthy of artistic attention as more iconic architectural and town planning developments in history.

In order to photograph Surrey at this time of flux, Borda required a systematic backbone against which to build a project. Having previously examined the transit systems of Tokyo and London, she elected to use Surrey's numerous bus routes as a formalist, conceptual means to approach a city-wide documentation project, and—as its self-explanatory title suggests—set about diligently photographing every single bus stop within the city limits. Between 2003 and 2004, Borda covered around 370 square kilometres, predominantly on foot, in dogged pursuit of digitally photographing every stop and route.

Borda's conceptual methodology most readily calls to mind Ed Ruscha's photobooks chronicling the everyday of 1960s LA: *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip,* and *Los Angeles Apartments*. However, she also references Charles Marville and Eugène Atget, the great documenters of 19th and early

Charles Marville (1813–1879), (L–R) *Cour Saint-Guillaume, Rue du Chat-qui-Pêche, Rue Traversine* (from the Rue d'Arras)

Eugène Atget (1857–1927), *Fountain of the L'École Polytechnique* and *Rue du Regard*

20th century Paris. During this time, the French capital underwent 'Haussmanisation'—a complete transformation, commissioned by Napoleon III and realized through Georges-Eugène Haussman's renovation project, which transformed (through vast destruction) much of medieval Paris to the wide boulevards and iconic spiral footprint that we know today. In particular, Borda cites Atget as an influence, not only for his determination to immortalize 'old Paris' with his camera lens (then still a burgeoning piece of technology), but also for his self-description of 'author-producer' rather than 'artist' or 'commercial photographer,' noting that "to this extent I see my working strategy in the same mode, and may extend that my earlier undergraduate studies in anthropology may have assisted in this definition."[3]

Eugène Atget, *Porte d'Ivry (Junkyard)*

Positioned as an outside 'author-producer,' and using bus routes as a means to document a broad range of sites in Surrey, Borda has experienced the city in a way most residents have not. With her long perambulations through which to observe and document, it is tempting to see her as somewhat of a contemporary 'flâneur'—a term coined by French poet Charles Baudelaire and more readily associated (again) with the idle strollers and observers of the modernization of 19th century Paris—albeit one in line with a female reclaiming of this traditionally-male depicted city walker, a formalized sense of directional purpose, and the backdrop of early 21st century Surrey.

The images that Borda captured promote a very innate sense of suburban ordinariness. What could be more mundane, more utilitarian than the humble bus stop? However, viewing multiple images in sequence, it is clear that Borda employed much consideration for compositional form, and understands well the accumulation of visual power in repetition. In some cases the stops appear front and centre within the picture plane; in others they are pushed to the backdrop, as farmland dominates the foreground, exemplifying the two worlds

Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

Images (above and below) from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

that Surrey straddles. A few show the impressive Cascade Mountains in the distance—a glimpse of iconic, stereotypically photogenic Canada behind a much less remarkable urban sprawl. Present within almost all of the photographs is a flash of turquoise blue, the municipally chosen colour palette that designates the city bus system. This colour, as much as the verticality of the bus stop signage and soft curve of the bus shelter design, becomes a point of formal unity, tying the images with all the idiosyncrasies of their individual settings.

Like Atget's Parisian photographs, Borda was evidently keen to capture unique contextual information and human presence, even when figures are not physically visible in the

photographs (and often they are not). Everywhere there is sign of human activity, in voter canvassing signage, vehicles, local businesses, religious buildings, trash bins, and advertising. Many of the collected images evidence Surrey's increasingly multi-cultural demographic. As innocuous and unglamorous as it may seem, the bus stop provides the perfect motif around which to survey each site's wider surroundings. They are, after all, conceived as pause points and waiting spaces.

The exhibition presentation format for the hundreds of images that Borda collected was three-fold. As with Ed Ruscha's photobooks and Bernd and Hilla Becher's grid-format 'typologies' of industrial architecture, Borda conceptualized the means through which her immense collection of visual data should be presented, stored and shared. At this point, *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* took on the added dimension of addressing the complex world of image archiving and information architecture. The resulting three formats for the exhibition comprised a series of photographic prints and a looped digital slideshow, alongside Borda's pièce de résistance: a fully interactive digital website, featuring a map of Surrey that could be clicked through to corresponding slideshows of images, allowing viewers to widely navigate the city from one web page. This is now, of course, a familiar platform by which to experience a city, thanks to the development of Google Maps and Street View. Borda's net-art project, however, predated the launch of this function by almost two years, anticipating a mapping technology that is now used worldwide, and rendering the *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* website (https://artengine.ca/~busstop/) as exactly the kind of frontier digital artwork that TechLab was established to premiere.

Images from *EK Modernism* (2005–2010), Westwood Neighbourhood (*above*) and Calderwood Neighbourhood (*below*)

Following her pioneering work in Surrey, Borda was awarded a public art commission in East Kilbride, Scotland, where she would turn the same frames of reference, net-art capabilities and dedicated zeal to the city's modernist architectural features in the project *EK Modernism*.

Like Surrey, East Kilbride is a site of vast urban expansion. It was designated Scotland's first 'New Town' in 1947, as part of a governmental act to restructure city living in postwar Britain. The 'New Town' movement aimed to redistribute overcrowded populations from large industrial centres to nearby, purpose-built 'new towns' designed with ample green space, improved housing, and modern living amenities. Having previously been a small village of around 2,500 people just outside of Glasgow, the new town of East Kilbride, with the EK Development Corporation at the helm, was rapidly transformed into a bustling urban centre founded on utopian ideas for modern living: "In the first 10 years of 'New Town' East Kilbride, the Corporation directed the building of 11 factories, 5000 houses, 50 shops, five schools, and seven churches. By 1969, the 17,000th family moved into the town and the development of residential and industrial areas continues to the present day."[5] It is now home to around 75,000 residents.

Visionary ideals required visionary architects, and this is reflected in the fact that many of the new town East Kilbride's municipal features were designed by renowned modernist

College Milton Industrial Park, St Brides Church, Calderwood Neighbourhood, New Town Centre, and Dollan Aqua Centre, *EK Modernism* (2005–2010)

Images from *EK Modernism* (2005–2010), Kirktonholme Primary School (*above*) and Duncanrig Secondary School (*below*)

Scottish architects from the era, including Sir Basil Spence and Gillespie, Kidd & Coia. However, at the time of Borda's commission in 2005, new towns in general had become more associated with drabness than desirability. Brutalism was yet to enjoy a resurgence in aesthetic appreciation, neglected buildings were suffering substantial wear and tear, and city planning had changed dramatically. Borda arrived in East Kilbride just as it was entering a new phase of redevelopment, with several mid-century structures slated for demolition and their generous parcels of surrounding land reassigned to meet demands for contemporary real estate.

As with Surrey, Borda determined to document 'old' new town East Kilbride before its regeneration, and for her public commission declared the city itself as an artwork to be presented back to the community. Beginning with the city's seventeen purpose-built primary and secondary schools, all of which were due either for demolition or major refurbishment, Borda began fastidiously documenting, not only walking and photographing, but researching the city archives for contextual newspaper articles and original planning materials.

In the course of her field work Borda amassed eight thousand images of East Kilbride, which were presented both as the distributed book EK Modernism—a format conceived to "give the town mobility"—and as the enduring net-art website eknewtown.com. As with *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC*, this web-based artwork allowed viewers worldwide to externally navigate East Kilbride via a vast database of images accessible through a custom-designed map interface. It, too, predated the launch of Google Street View.

Throughout the *EK Modernism* photographs, Borda focused on capturing subtle details of the new town's original features that exemplified its dedication to creating a harmonious and well-conceived layout for living. This included the North/South axis given to many sites to capitalize on natural light, bespoke finishing materials unusual for municipal buildings, and the varying ways in which co-existing buildings were designed to complement each other when taken in the same vista. Such material and proportional considerations are rarely seen in quick-build city expansions today.

In keeping with Borda's preference to be viewed as an 'author-producer,' the images collected for both of her major early works for Surrey and East Kilbride predominantly display a cool sense of objectivity. One of Borda's influential touchstones is the artist duo Hilla and Bernd Becher, who photographed industrial architecture across the American Midwest and mainland Europe with a similarly objective gaze. Reflecting on their collaborative oeuvre shortly before her death in 2015 Hilla commented that "our attitude was romantic; our images are not."[7] The same sentiment could well be applied to Borda, whose photography can easily be envisaged as documentary evidence, or a communication device, as much as an aesthetic response to place.

By contrast, in her own writing about the projects, Borda passionately frames *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* and *EK Modernism* as visual tools to assist in assigning 'cultural worth.' Drawing a parallel between how the two cities are designated, she observes that new towns and suburbs are frequently viewed as second rate to

Surrey Art Gallery invitation card, *(Sub)Urban Exchange* (2007)

Postcards from Surrey, BC, and East Kilbride, Scotland, *(Sub)Urban Exchange* (July 2007) exhibition at the East Kilbride Arts Centre

their close-by 'parent' cities, portrayed as bland and lacking in points of interest.[8] In presenting the cities of Surrey and East Kilbride back to local and international audiences as artworks to be celebrated within the culturally loaded space of the contemporary gallery, Borda prompts them to be seen through a different context. That this may assist in elevating the perception of her subjects and perhaps even aid in re-instilling a sense of civic pride in those who reside there is a bold ideal that mirrors the utopian vision of the new town East Kilbride's modernist architects.

An extension of this bid to generate local pride and forge a direct partnership between Surrey and East Kilbride manifested in a third, collaborative work: *(Sub)Urban Exchange: EastKilbride.uk <> Surrey.ca*. Here, Borda engaged with young people from schools located in each place to build a photographic postcard exchange project, which generated conversation between residents of the two sites. She encouraged students to rethink how they viewed and promoted their home cities, with the postcard vehicle by its very nature

bound up in a loaded history of tourism, culture, communication, and sense of site 'worthiness.'

The postcards were shared in corresponding exhibitions at Surrey Art Gallery and East Kilbride Arts Centre, and online through a dedicated blog. Borda's commendable desire that her work be used to raise social awareness and shape political policy was concretely realized when the *(Sub)Urban Exchange* exhibition was referenced at a public art and learning legacies roundtable held at Scottish parliament in 2007.

Indeed, Borda's works chronicling the built environment of Surrey and East Kilbride have garnered an impressive legacy as part of academic discourses at the juncture of art, architecture and town planning.

Through *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC, EK Modernism,* and *(Sub)Urban Exchange*, Borda recorded and encouraged response to Surrey and East Kilbride at a specific time of flux in their relatively young histories. The significance of each of these projects has only become further activated by the cycle of demolition and rebuilding as each city expands. Many of the sites that Borda photographed have changed significantly in the years since. Her photography collections are visual time capsules for each city, forming a part of a greater landscape 'memory,' which is prolonged by their enduring presence and accessibility online.

With this in mind, it is also pertinent to recognize that the period in which this trifecta of projects was created (2003–2007) marks a time just at the eve of social media and the smartphone—leaps in technology that have contributed a significant shift in the way we document our surroundings, and interact with photography. That Borda pioneered internationally accessible net-art photo databases to present her vast archives of imagery is key to their ongoing legacy. However, the websites themselves are also time pieces of sorts. While impressively ground-breaking in appearance and function at the times of their launching, as standalone 'net artworks' rather than commercial websites they have not been updated in a way that users have become accustomed to, and as such embody a style of

web design and imaging limitations specific to the era in which they were created. This is not to diminish their importance, rather it adds to it, building a further level of exploration into the cycles of regeneration and rapid change that Borda has so strived to capture in her works of the last fifteen years.

2. Turning a Lens to the Fields: Agri-Practice, Art History, and Surrey, BC

Having extensively documented Surrey's evolving metropolitan landscape and established a significant interest in the city and its environs, Borda was keen to turn her attention to the area's rural farmland. This rich and plentiful subject matter gave rise to a suite of artworks shown at Surrey Art Gallery in 2013–2014 across a five-part exhibition, with the overarching title *This one's for the Farmer*—the semantics of which exudes a sense of playful resistance. Once again, Borda set out to throw light upon a subject rarely explored in contemporary art, and only considered at a distance by the public. As a title, *This one's for the Farmer* directly encapsulates her ideas on authorship and intended usefulness of her artworks to the communities they take as subject. While the resulting exhibitions were presented for an art-viewing general public, the works were conceived and created very much in service to the agricultural community, first and foremost.

Borda's shift of focus to farming continues her trajectory of studying subjects downplayed or seen as unworthy of artistic attention. Broadly speaking, in comparison to how long farming has been an essential part of human existence, its

appearance in the canon of art history is slight. Within Western art-historical genre hierarchies[9] established long prior to the invention of the camera, scenes of rural life and landscapes were often dismissed as lowly subjects. When they did appear as a central focus, pastoral images were frequently heavily romanticized, portraying quaint depictions of rural idealism fit for easy consumption and suited to propagate the image of a contented working class. It would take the dramatic upheaval of the industrial revolution for farming to become a more coveted subject within painting, as traditional rural practices were suddenly at odds with their fast encroaching city neighbours. In European art, painters such as Jean-Francois Millet strived to give his agricultural worker subjects the same treatment of light and reverence as religious paintings of the Renaissance era, and later, the Impressionists became drawn to scenes in which rural life intersected with industrialisation. However, at the time, these depictions were still unusual, and were often met with derision from the traditional art academies and viewing elite.

Across the Atlantic, it would take another societal upheaval—The Great Depression— for the farming community to be taken as a serious subject in visual art. The most iconic photographic imagery of farming in the west can be attributed to the Social Realist photographers of the 1920s and '30s—amongst them, Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein, and Russell Lee— who were hired by the FSA (Farming Security Administration) to capture rural living and working conditions during the depression era. These commissioned images were politically driven, with an agenda not only to document

the social hardship and poverty of rural life at this time but to make a case for a restructuring of agricultural industry to fulfill its economic potential. Eighty years later, the practice and aesthetics of the farming industry have changed significantly, but once again it seems to have slipped below the radar of contemporary art practice. And so, through *This one's for the Farmer*, Borda sought to readdress the subject of contemporary agricultural practice within contemporary art, using 21st century technology to do so.

Unlike the public accessibility afforded by the bus stop routes that anchored her initial documentation of the city, commercial farms are private property, and therefore Borda began by making connections with farmers in the Surrey area, building a rapport and dialogue about both their practice and hers in order to gain insight and access to the processes and environments of their work. In addition to bridging relationships with farmers in the region, another somewhat unlikely technological collaboration emerged that would shape the way Borda approached imaging the farms and lead to the development of the central work to her farming suite, *Farm Tableaux*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Borda's map-based online interfaces in her earlier, city-focused works pre-date the widespread technology of Google Maps and Street View, which in essence have become the primary tool of digital, global visualization. In 2013, circling back to the technology that her own work foreshadowed, Borda forged a collaboration with Google Trusted Street View photographer John M. Lynch to image the previously private domain of commercial farming and create the site's first

explorative artworks imaging farming practices in the locales of Surrey and the Fraser Valley.

The advancements of Google's imaging technology allowed Borda and Lynch to capture their subjects in high resolution and at multiple angles and perspectives, creating a fully navigable set of images that feature farming practice both outside in the wider agricultural landscape and within farm buildings. Unlike static images, the ability to move through visual 'surroundings' affords the viewer a much more immersive and intimate experience, creating a virtual environment through which to explore viewpoints not usually accessible to the public. This collapsing of private and public space makes clicking through *Farm Tableaux* something of an uncanny experience, permitting the viewer to embody the role of trespasser and voyeur into a usually private enterprise.

In a somewhat ironic twist of technological method, Borda and Lynch's subjects were required to be motionless for periods of up to forty minutes in order to be captured from all angles in the Google imaging process, echoing the demands of early plate photography in the Victorian era, and adding an element of choreography to the essentially documentary-driven imagery developed for the project. In titling the work *Farm Tableaux*, Borda directly references this notion of static recreation, and contextualizes the work within art historical terminology. To acknowledge a reference much closer to home, with her conceptual nods to art history, scope of scale and employment of staging, it is also important to contextualize *Farm Tableaux* within recent Canadian art photography and the influence

of Jeff Wall, under whom Borda studied as an undergraduate.

Wall—part of the iconic Vancouver School movement of the late 1970s—creates a sense of the cinematic with his large-format, staged mise-en-scène photographs that demand photography be viewed with the same gravitas as painting or sculpture by directly referencing scenes from art-historical masterpieces in his compositions. Presenting his photographs as huge back-lit transparencies, Wall imbues them with a sense of sculpture through their physical interruption of space and references the larger-than-life experience of the cinema screen. He pulls the viewer into scenes that are at once ordinary, but also loaded with details of contemporary social tension and art historical references.

In *Farm Tableaux*, Borda pushes the desire for ambitious, filmic scope in the photographic medium further, by using the technology afforded through her collaboration with Lynch to create mise-en-scènes that break from the limitations forced by the physical camera frame and create virtual access to a three-dimensional, pictorial landscape. In terms of quantitative scale as opposed purely to physical dimensions, Borda also expands the scope of access to this artwork through her co-opting of online image-sharing technologies, which allows viewers to dictate their own exploration of the farm environments through any web-connected device. Similarly to Wall, Borda's continual pushing of the limits of photography and the formats in which it is presented means that her work does not often fit neatly into prescribed genres of the artistic medium. In his extensive writings on Wall,

the critic Michael Fried coins the term "near documentary"[10] to describe the essence of images staged to capture "what the events . . . are like, or were like, when they passed without being photographed,"[11] which also feels apt to ascribe to Borda's almost-reality farm imagery for the *Farm Tableaux* series. In 2015, Borda expanded on the series' geographic scope, and further nodded to Wall's influence, with an extension of the project to photograph farming practices in Finland, under the title *Mise en Scène: Farm Tableaux Finland*. In recognition of their progressive approach to photography and net art, Borda and Lynch were awarded a Lumen Prize for the project in 2016.

In addition to reaching for the cinematic in her static tableaux imagery, Borda also produced a video, simply titled *Farm Work*, made up of dual-channel, looped vignettes that show various farming practices unfolding in real time. As opposed to the wide-open nature of the imagery captured for the tableaux, Borda's film by contrast predominantly utilizes tight, fixed-frame shots of agricultural processes as they happen, placing the viewer right into the action of the scenes she chooses to feature. The aim of this particular work (though it

is certainly present throughout the entirety of Borda's farming suite) is the portrayal of diversity and sustainability in many of Surrey's farming practices, from the individual farmers themselves and the approach that they take to cultivate their produce, to the variety of products grown in the region: from blueberries to turkeys, to rhododendrons to dairy. This all adds to the overall portrait of Surrey that Borda has been building since 2003, each piece of information and different perspective adding to a greater whole that aids in chronicling its evolution.

As with her architectural imagery of Surrey, the individual images and film frames in Borda's farming suite exemplify a well-tuned eye for composition and a clear, aesthetically fluent use of light and form. Despite being part of a larger, technologically impressive whole work, many of Borda's singular images from *Farm Tableaux* retain a standalone interest by finding fascinating detail in the ordinary, while Borda herself observes that a still from *Farm Work* of farmers Pat and Sue Harrison (see page 126) sorting blueberries by hand is "an exquisite image . . . it sort of reminds me of a Rembrandt, it's very warm, there's lovely light attached to it."[12] In particular, *Farm Work*'s durational

quality provides an intimate insight into the time and extent of human interaction that still goes into certain farming practices, even in a highly technological, globally economic age. Whether it is watching people sort berries by hand, hand-rear chickens or pick corn, it goes some way to unlocking imagery about the products that sustain us before they reach the supermarket shelves, at a time when the disconnection between consumers, products and farming processes is very real.

From imaging processes that view farming from the ground up, Borda turned to drone technology for her series *Aerial Fields* to capture a birds-eye view of Surrey's farmland. In 2013 drones were still relatively rare outside of professional photography, and to see the footage from *Aerial Fields* now, creates an awareness of how often we have become accustomed to seeing landscape footage from a top-down perspective thanks to the prolific use of drone imaging in nature documentaries and YouTube videos alike. Borda's aerial footage—despite the drone's evolution to a piece of equipment just as likely associated with amateur photography as the military—still retains a pervading connection to a more insidious mode of surveillance imaging and invasions of privacy. With that in mind, *Aerial Fields* can be seen to add to the giddy feeling of voyeurism that *Farm Tableaux* hinted at with its 'behind the scenes' imagery.

There is, also, an undeniable beauty in Borda's drone videos, in which the camera rises to just above crop level and slowly sweeps across the landscape. In her artist talk titled after *Aerial Fields*, Borda mentions the division of Surrey's land use as being roughly equal thirds

Borda being recorded by her own video drone during the production of *Aerial Fields* (2013)

residential, industrial, and agricultural, and to see the farm footage from an aerial perspective conveys the vast swathes of land still used (as of 2013) as working farmland, despite Surrey's ever-growing demand for residential infrastructure. In addition, once again it appears Borda has displayed her ability for technological prediction, as, increasingly, agricultural drones are being made and marketed to farmers as a high-tech means to monitor their crops. The great irony of farming practice is that it can be seen as entrenched in the past, without acknowledgement that it is also a big proponent of technological innovation.

The final two works to complete Borda's *This one's for the Farmer* suite use the comparatively vintage, analogue process of stereoscope imaging to present a three-dimensional examination of agricultural produce to the viewer. *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three* makes reference to the optical mechanics behind stereo imagery, in which two identical images, placed adjacently and viewed through a stereoscope viewer, merge to present a seemingly three-dimensional picture. The photographic subject of *Two if not Three* is

< Video still from *Farm Work* (2013)

something of a before-and-after study of crops when they are initially planted versus when they are ready for harvest. To make the 48 stereo cards, Borda shot on analogue slide film, demonstrating her ability to traverse the history of the photographic medium in practice as much as through her conceptual approach to subject.

A furthering of Borda's explorations of photographic technology past and present is evident in the work *Aura* in which a real time recording of a hay barn is shot as a 3-D stereo video, presented on an iPad and activated by looking through a stereoscope viewer. The delicate footage—strands of hay blowing from static bales as they float and catch the light—is the antithesis of much mainstream 3-D cinema, offering subtle, abstracted action through an intimate and deliberately retro viewing process. Akin to its ephemeral sounding name, the video captures more of an abstracted sensibility than any kind of descriptive narrative. It is a fittingly restrained work to finalize a discussion of Borda's *This one's for the Farmer* series, perfect as an outro or closing shot; it follows the complex technological and conceptual studies of land and labour, economic worth, and farming's changing aesthetics and place within the wider Surrey community explored across the rest of the suite.

3. Cycles of Reinvention: Conclusion

Through the process of authoring such in-depth studies that reflect an academic, anthropological eye as much as an artistic one, Borda forges a symbiotic connection with her subjects and the technology she uses to record them. As revealed through her artworks created over the past 15 years, these partnerships can be surprising, challenging, and mutually beneficial. In seeking out material that is classically overlooked but at the precipice of change, Borda carves a place for herself as part of its greater ecology and growth. She, in turn, is present to record and share documentation of those subjects and aid in rooting their cultural legacy, before they are lost in the maelstrom of rapid, contemporary evolution.

As a retrospective publication prompts and demands, Borda has taken time to look back upon her works in Surrey and East Kilbride. Already, in the relatively short amount of time that has passed since they were completed, a number of the landscapes that feature have changed irrevocably. Of note, many of the modernist buildings photographed in East Kilbride have been demolished as scheduled, two of the farms she extensively collaborated with in Surrey— Clover Field and Finley's—have ceased operations with the land turned over to real estate, and some of the older generations represented in her farm studies have since passed away. Observing these changes is a blunt reminder of the speed at which change can occur, and the accumulative power of photographic imagery as indelible record, a process so eloquently surmised by Susan Sontag in her iconic publication *On Photography* when she mused that "All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability."[13]

> Images from *Seeing Technologies* (2015) (*top*) and *Interrogations of a Camera* (2011) (*bottom*)
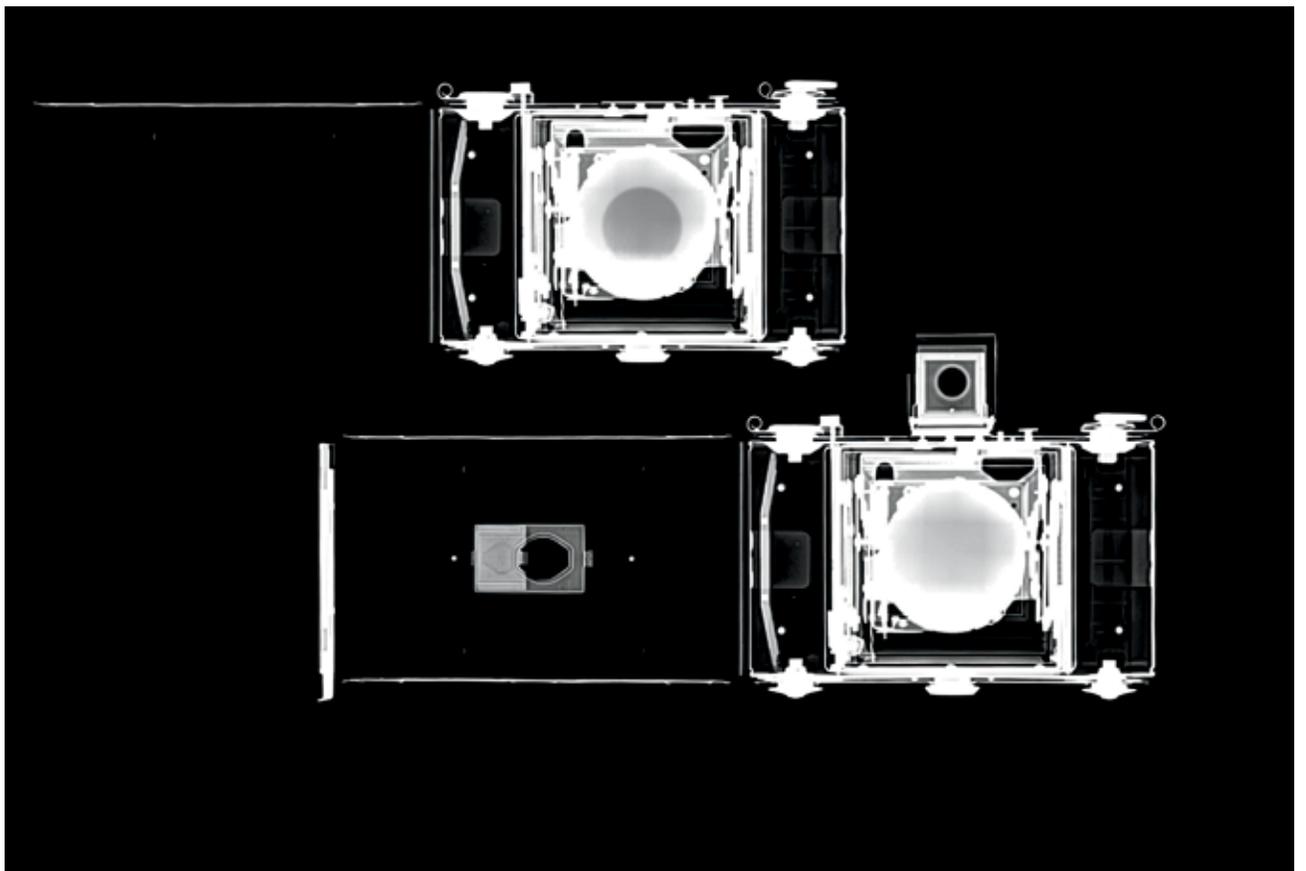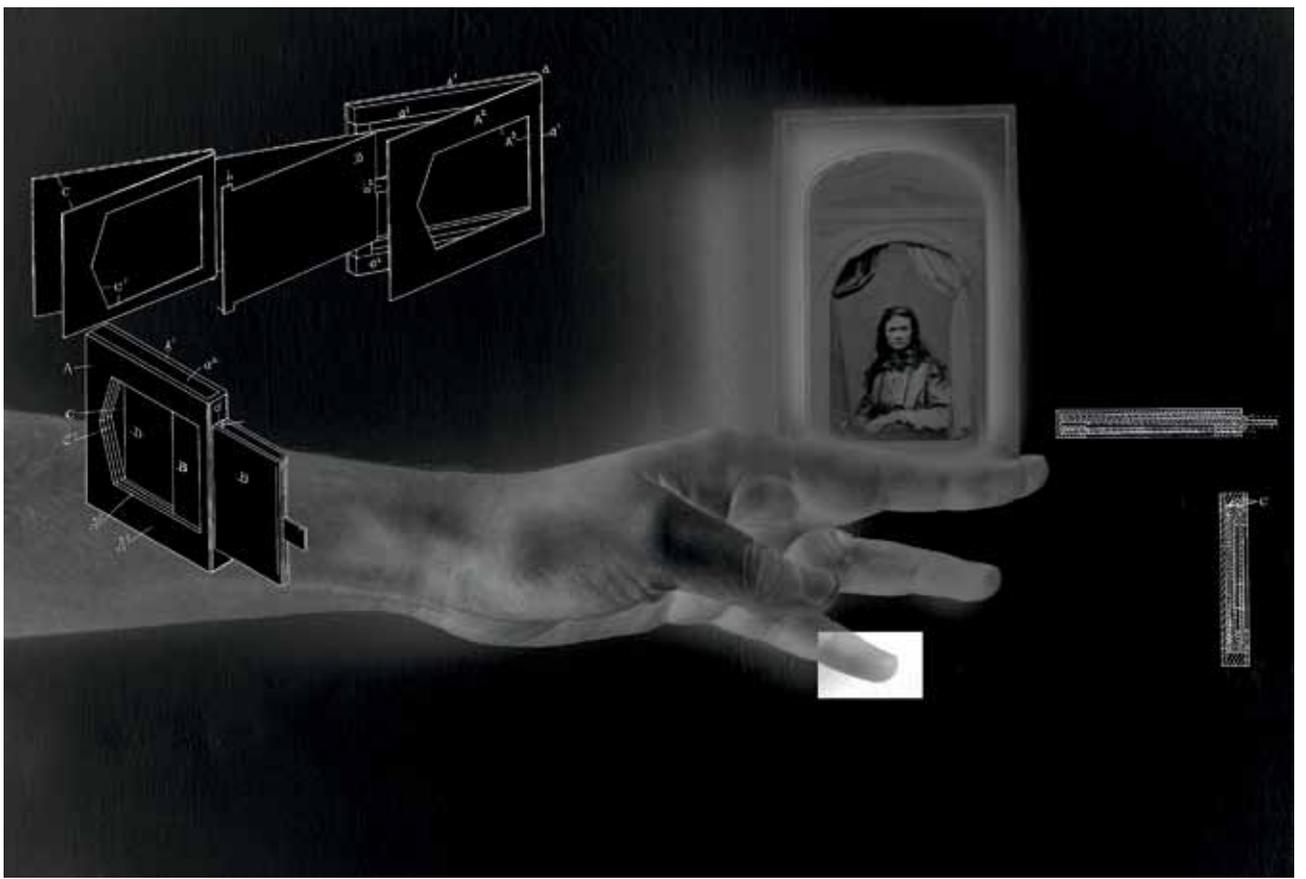
As Borda's ever-evolving subjects have taken on a cycle of reinvention in the past 15 years, so too has camera technology and its democratisation as a universally available tool—an evolution that she has strived to be at the cutting edge of, and succeeded in being acutely prescient about. Between 2010 and 2015, in tandem with her studies of East Kilbride, Surrey, and farming, Borda acknowledged the stand-alone camera device's own potential mortality by reflexively turning the lens of the camera back on itself. The resulting series, *Camera Histories*, navigates photography's changing aesthetics and function through formats related to its many iterations both digital and analogue, including stereoscope imagery, x-rays, and eBay listings for vintage equipment. In becoming so ubiquitous, the camera risked falling prey to its own ordinariness, existing as a piece of equipment less commonly acknowledged in a physical sense due to its increased integration within other digital devices. However—common to cycles of technological reinvention, film cameras, retro processes, and equipment offering the warmth of physical, analogue comfort amongst the tide of digital formats have re-emerged, redeeming their creative and cultural worth as their existence became threatened. Currently, with both avenues of the medium booming, and often productively overlapping, photography has perhaps never been stronger.

With photography wholly integrated within mass culture and the scope of its technological capabilities constantly advancing, Borda is provided with ever more varied means through which to reframe her subjects. Even when it is not the pictorial subject of her work, Borda's focus is and has always been to push the limits of photography as a tool for communication and social innovation, a desire that can be seen throughout her photographic, city-wide portraits of Surrey, BC—urban and rural—and East Kilbride. Using photography as a visual and conceptual framework, she has repeatedly proven herself adept in recognizing the extraordinary in the ordinary, encouraging attention toward the overlooked. Her ability to identify worth in the everyday echoes that of American photographer Stephen Shore, famously a cataloguer of the traditionally non-descript: "To see something spectacular and recognize it as a photographic possibility is not making a very big leap. But to see something ordinary, something you'd see every day, and recognize it as a photographic possibility—that's what I'm interested in."[14] Borda's interests—be that the suburban sprawl of downtown Surrey, the brute modernism of East Kilbride, peripherally viewed agricultural practices, even the camera itself—demonstrate her as an author-producer dedicated to the exemplification of photographic possibility in the world around her, positioning herself at the leading edge of imaging technology to turn a forward-thinking lens to subjects that otherwise might pass by unnoticed, before it is too late.

Notes

1. Jill Bennett, "Vancouver's population projected to surpass Vancouver's," Global News, June 18, 2013, https://globalnews.ca/news/653206/surreys-population-projected-to-surpass-vancouvers/.

2. "About Surrey, BC," City of Surrey website, accessed August 29, 2019, https://www.surrey.ca/3547.aspx.

3. Sylvia Grace Borda, "About Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC," accessed August 29, 2019, http://artengine.ca/~busstop/project.html.

4. Lauren Elkin, "A tribute to female flâneurs: The women who reclaimed our city streets," *The Guardian*, July 29, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jul/29/female-flaneur-women-reclaim-streets.

5. "Archives and records: East Kilbride Development Corporation," South Lanarkshire Council website, accessed September 4, 2019, https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200165/local_and_family_history/588/archives_and_records/6.

6. Sylvia Grace Borda, "Re-casting Modernism Seminar—Why EK Modernism Matters?" filmed talk for Architecture & Design Scotland, accessed September 4, 2019, https://www.ads.org.uk/re-casting-modernism-seminar-why-ek-modernism-matters/.

7. Sean O'Hagan, "How Hilla Becher found beauty and dignity in industrial decline," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/oct/15/hilla-becher-photography-beauty-dignity-industrial-decline-appreciation.

8. Sylvia Grace Borda, "Focusing on the suburban—assigning cultural value," gallery hand-out for *(Sub)Urban Exchange: East Kilbride.uk < > Surrey.ca*, published by Surrey Art Gallery.

9. The French Royal Academy established a hierarchy of painting subject matter in the seventeenth century. History and portrait paintings were seen as most important, with genre paintings (scenes of everyday life), landscape and still life as less worthy. "Art Term: Genres," Tate website, accessed September 16, 2019, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/g/genres.

10. Michael Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2007, 505. zJSTOR, accessed September 16, 2019, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/513524.

11. Michael Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2007, 506. JSTOR, accessed September 16, 2019, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/513524.

12. Sylvia Grace Borda, "Aerial Fields," filmed talk for Surrey Art Gallery, accessed September 9, 2019, https://vimeo.com/176281773.

13. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, read by Jennifer Van Dyke (Audible, 2011), Audiobook.

14. Rosie Flanagan, "Stephen Shore Explores the Power of the Ordinary," Ignant, accessed September 18, 2019, https://www.ignant.com/2018/06/27/stephen-shore-explores-the-power-of-the-ordinary/.

Image from *Interrogations of a Camera* (2011)
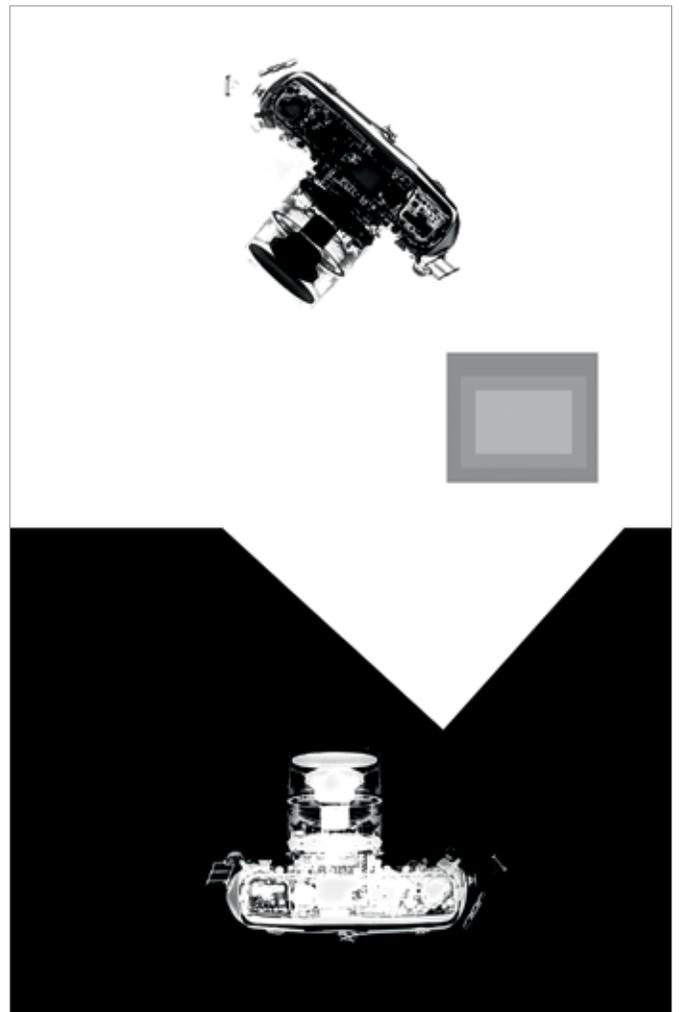
Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC

LIANE DAVISON Manager of Culture, City of Surrey

A community's profile can be defined by many characteristics including, its architectures, geographies, neighbourhoods, and its transportation systems. For artist Sylvia Grace Borda her project *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* attempts to create a composite portrait of the City of Surrey, through a new kind of mapping supported by a digital database of photographs of every bus stop in this sprawling municipality. Collectively, these images create a new kind of digital map or 'snapshot' highlighting different aspects of Surrey's diverse geography and neighbourhoods.

Presented first in an exhibition at the Surrey Art Gallery in 2004 and as an online presentation since then, *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* maps the city for both residents and viewers, and asks each to reconsider their own geography. The artist documented over 1,000 bus stops across 380 square kilometres. She has walked kilometre long blocks in rural Surrey, rode her bike in other areas, borrowed and rented cars, collected stories about buses and bus stops from residents, and visited many of the delis, corner stores, and restaurants on various routes while undertaking her documentation. She has come to know Surrey in a way few of its residents have ever seen it. The project was presented in two phases. In the gallery visitors experienced a 38-minute slide show of photographs projected at two second intervals. An online and interactive kiosk complemented the show and provided access to the interactive database of bus images, and visitors were also to view a series of printed photographs.

Borda's work is aligned with a practice of conceptual-documentary photography, concerned with the careful choice and framing of its subject and composition. In this project she is also engaged with a critique of digital media and photographic history, exploring what digital technology has to offer while also addressing information delivery.

< Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC Net Artwork and C-41 Photographs (2004)

Artist's Statement—A Reflection on Two Cities

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA
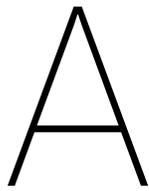
All artists accumulate ideas and visual references from both direct physical and indirect experiences. As part of this project I was fortunate enough in 2004 to see at the Portland Art Museum a set of small watercolour works by artist Paul Signac from the turn of the 19th century. I was fascinated by Signac's watercolours because from first glance they appeared nothing more than small pastoral watercolour scenes of various ports in France. However, upon closer inspection, I realized these picturesque watercolours offered something far greater. The images, collectively titled *100 Ports of France*, were created by Signac over a three year period, during which the artist visited each port and painted two watercolours of each. The series had close alignment to my own working methodology in documenting every bus stop in Surrey, BC. Signac's work was described in the museum panel as being out of keeping with French aesthetic tastes during his timeframe. In effect Signac had painted a transportation system which was overlooked and was framed in the mind of his contemporary viewers as being part of a modernist resurgence. The images not only depicted the ports but also encompassed the surroundings, illustrating cranes and heavy machinery, and other adjacent areas such as civic neighbourhoods. To today's viewer these images would not enter the mind as historical documents bearing witness to change, but as the museum panel, described the presence of cranes and other construction forms depicted in the images marked significant change and a tension between traditional ideologies of market trade and new methods.

Seeing Signac's work gave a new rationalization to my own endeavours. My working concept was not without historical precedent nor was it as absurd as some had suggested. I, like, Signac had selected a given transportation mode to document this time through the camera within a specific geography. My geography was over 370 square kilometres

< Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

and resulted in more than 1,400 images of bus stops. Similarly to Signac, my project was documenting transportation systems in relationship to a 'living grid.' Neighbourhoods and rural and manmade landscapes were caught by the camera and depicted in a given moment in time and place that became reflections of the activities and persons that passed through these zones. My ability to infer social interactions through remnants and discarded things near the bus stops may place this project closer to documentary work; however, to this end, I also think the series may parallel the photo work of Eugene Atget. Like Atget I do not fully envision myself as a commercial photographer; instead I like the term adopted by Atget, who preferred to be called an 'author-producer.' To this extent I see my working strategy in the same mode, and may extend that my earlier undergraduate studies in anthropology may have assisted in this definition.

I have also reflected on work by Atget and while it may seem too grand to even assume a comparison between him and my own endeavours, I am willing to assume this risk and explain my rationale. Atget documented old Paris before and just after its announcement of re-urbanization under Haussmann's design to the new wide boulevards that define contemporary Paris. In Atget's documentation of old Paris, before its deconstruction and removal, his images illustrate an absence of the human figures: human activities are inferred and represented by the artifices and placement of mobile goods and discarded products of people left behind in the streets. The desolate images foreshadow the plans for new rapid urbanization of these districts; however, Atget's images still capture a human presence. In the same way, I have seen my work as similar to Atget's in that numerous areas that I have documented through the transit grid illustrate tensions of an agricultural Surrey in the process of giving way to a new urbanized city. The birth of any city is nothing new; however, its transition from an earlier state to another happens only once. Numerous images depict the transit grid and bus stops present before the actual arrival of the community that will utilize that system; while, others illustrate bus stops in zones dominated by rural activities that would seem not to be best served by this system. A great portion of images, though, portray a balance rarely seen in civic images, the construction of dwellings amongst vistas and fields. Again I need to reiterate that when one usually enters a city it has already been predefined by construction, housing, neighbourhoods and history. This is what defines and opposes Surrey's own definition. It has been a city of parks, wherein there has been an accommodation of farming lands that often have been converted to large open spaces for community use. By the same definition, the number of building permits for towers arising illustrate a city in flux. The ceiling height of land use and definition has not been reached and is continually being redefined. Thus, the city is continually growing, morphing and changing and so is its bus stop system.

The pictures produced between 2003 and 2004 illustrate Surrey through its array of building and community-forming. To this extent from the past and in reflecting on this series

today, I must comment that I have come to admire the Surrey transit system for its scale and what I will say is an equalitarian arrangement. All districts, despite socio-economic class and location, have a transportation grid near or through them and the possibility of accessing public transportation is not limited but affirmatively designated by the city through the placement of the stops.

I was interested in documenting every bus stop in Surrey since it is the second largest city in BC but is often overlooked in terms of its cultural potential. The city is extensively networked and defined by numbered roads and a light rapid transportation system.

Viewers of my work are left to examine minute details within the image plane to assist in identifying locations against the map. Signifiers are reduced to bus stop signage so locations become abstract and viewers consume images on a more immediate level, similar to the rapid scanning attention of someone on a daily commute. The gridded photo composite, thus, presents a blizzard of site-specific, but decontextualized 'visual data' to visitors.

The net artwork enables users to select their own routes and see each bus route street as a self contained series in order to explore Surrey's geographic boundaries.

In all development phases, I attempted to question what type of information is pertinent to the creation of info-architecture, and how each viewer consumes information with different preferences and relationships based on history, location, and experience. This project has employed a found or

'readymade' information scheme, the bus map, in a new visual scheme of information and mapping. This selection of images subvert ordinary information cues, and questions the audience's ability to process relevant information and understand new information schemes—in the context of art and location, from the perspectives of Surrey resident or visitor, and from the perspective of a contemporary artwork becoming an image archive across time.

In producing *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC*, I've been influenced by artworks such as Simon Patterson's *The Great Bear*, Ed Ruscha's photobooks, Bernd and Hilla Becher's phototypological grids as well as Alan Sekula's critical documentary practice.

Overall I remain interested in challenging audiences' perceptions of how information is consumed, documented and interpreted. On a formal level my project documentation explores ideas of image and colour, while also examining issues around social history, archiving and information architecture.

Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

Pages 32–49: Images from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)
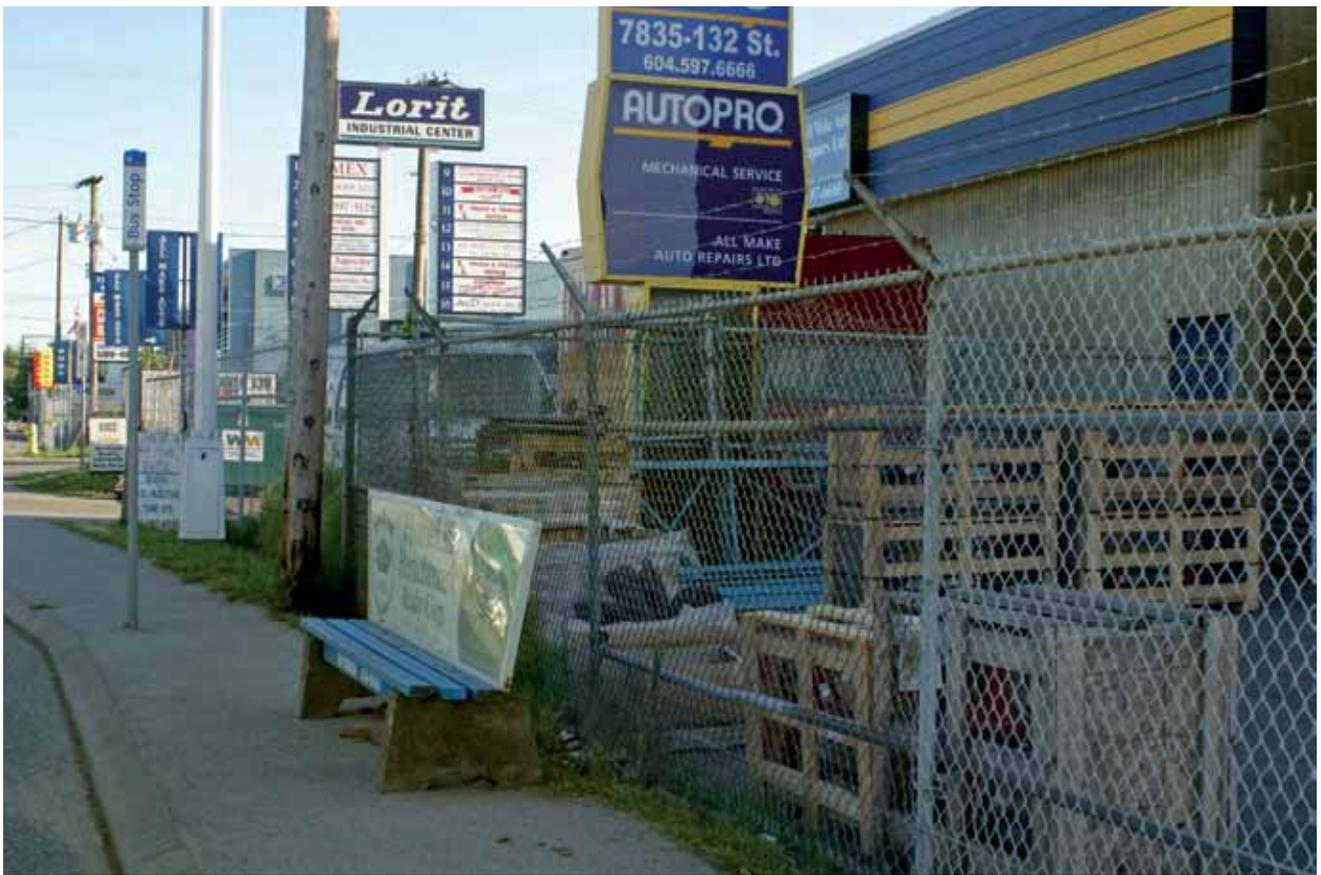
ZOOM
HERE ＋ －

★ Click here to
enlarge or
reduce the map.

Pitt Meadows

Port Mann

River
Junction

108th

Fraser
Heights

•SURREY GUILDFORD 104th

CITY
CENTRE

CEDARHILLS

90th Ave 96th Ave

Tynehead

Green Timbers

88th Ave

Fort Langley

SYLVIAGRACEBORDA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

80th Ave

★ Use the links
below for more
information.

DELTA

Strawberry Hill

Burke Road

140th Street

152nd Street

168th Street

Fraser Highway

72nd St

91

NEWTON

124th St

99A

64th Street

60th Street CLOVERDALE

BRITISH COLUMBIA

10

10

PANORAMA RIDGE

15

99

176 STREET

EVERYBUSSTOP

▪ ABOUT THIS
PROJECT

▪ ABOUT THE
ARTIST

▪ RANDOM SORT
SLIDE SHOW

▪ DOWNLOAD
SCREENSAVER

▪ DOWNLOAD FAV
BUSSTOP

South
Surrey

152nd Street

40th Avenue

184nd Street

192nd Street

208th Street

streets

Kerry
Park

Campbell
Valley
Regional
Park

216th Street

224th Street

232nd Street

240th Street

248th Street

256th Street

STOP PAUSE PLAY RWD FWD

★ Use the buttons above to control the movie.

Crescent
Beach

24th Ave

20th Ave

140th Street

24th Ave

99A

16th Ave

avenues

8th Avenue

Click on
image to
view photo.

White Rock

Marine Drive

0

Semiahmoo Bay

ZERO AVENUE BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Structured Spaces:
Artistic Coding of the Urban Environment

RYAN STEC Director, Artengine

Before the new millennium, GPS had limited reach as a public technology and even less so as a terrain for artistic production. In the early days of the internet's intersection with mapping, we most often printed out maps with custom directions to take with us into the city. As mobile technologies became more sophisticated and powerful, maps transformed into something new—dynamic layerings of spatial information rather than static paper objects. This transformation was driven by military development (GPS remains today a licensed service of the U.S. Military), institutional research and commercial innovation. Despite the important and powerful forces that have shaped our use and experience of maps, artists have, nonetheless, found a way to have an impact.

Throughout the 1990s, with the internet on the precipice of its global impact, artists like Sylvia Grace Borda, experimented (and developed skills) with some of the most transformative technologies of the late 20th century. HTML and JAVA played a key role in exploring new terrain for artistic activity, and these and other technologies became the early 'raison d'être' for Artengine.

Born in 1996, we strove to become an independent space for artists to develop new technological skillsets and participate fully in the digital revolution we understood was upon us. One of the key features of Artengine during its first decade of work was an entirely networked existence, however our early work also demonstrated a persistent interest in the material dimension of those same networks. Some of the most important works we invested in from artists such as Sylvia Grace Borda, Germaine Koh, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, and Adrian Göllner all had components ground in the material world. Whether this was because these artists could not leave their material practices behind or that they saw the rich potential of blurring the lines between networked reality and our everyday lived experience would require a more in-depth reflection.

< *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004), prototype website showing beta functions, such as downloadable images, location search, and screen saver

Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC (2004), home page of published website

Of the many works we were involved with in these early days, Borda's project, *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC*, has had probably the most enduring impact. Much of Borda's early digital work focused on art histories as well as geometric forms and structures such as *Barcodes* and *Minimalist Portraits*.[1]

While in Ottawa she was starting to shift her interest in how to harness the potential of having large amounts of content be mapped, interactive and made accessible online. This direction aligned with Artengine's synergistic interests in new representations of temporal phenomena that are spatial, but with a spatiality that is not dominated by location and static form.

The original interface designed by Borda and in collaboration with Sean Beldon of *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* included zoom functions in order to move closer into the map, capacities to download 'snaps' of the road system, as well as locative pins letting you know where you were on the map as you explored the road system. These features were beyond the scope of what was possible at the time in programming.

The mapping and subsequent database representation of the hundreds of photographic images comprising *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* became a co-collaboration with programmers at Artengine, including Michael Lechasseur, Mathieu Bouchard, as well as communications designer Sean Beldon from FireBox.

The amended and now live site of *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* was programmed to focus on the key facilities to let viewers to explore the map and the corresponding bus stops.

In designing the structure and interaction for *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC*, Borda understood the restrictive nature of display and output devices. She realized that large datasets, such as a city's structure as envisioned through a set of pictures of bus stops, could be mapped and made interactive as well as appear as personalized space to a user—even as the image data bank used to support it would operate in conjunction. Borda was fascinated with how the computer and the web as autonomous machine platforms could be personalized. Through Artengine, Borda was able to explore how computer logic and coding could be used to create visually exciting structures and to explore the relationship between the form of a city's urban plan and code.

Borda joins a long tradition of artists engaging with cartography in their practice, but her work may have more artistic connection with new media projects such as Natalie Bookchin's *Databank of the Every Day* (1996) than it does with cartographic interventions like Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin's *Map to Not Indicate* (1967). Both Borda and Bookchin's projects delve into the ordering logic of the computer and the database technologies that drive them, both of them offering up new experiences of space and time. Both also demonstrate predictive qualities as well about our current networked lives. In Borda's case the interface was a prescient example of how traditional maps would transform into the ubiquitous Geographic Information Systems, in the form of map apps, with the help of locative technologies and real-time updates.

Importantly the collaboration further raised the profile of the database, as a technology and

a cultural object, which can provide productive common ground for artists and designers to contribute to a broader dialogue around spatial and temporal representations in maps and mapping. This dialogue is important because, in general, the world-making act of cartographic representation lacks a temporal dimension. Prior to the proliferation of mobile devices, a typical map (e.g., 1:1250 city-scale maps) used an idealized temporal perspective that negates many temporal phenomena, such as ecological rhythms or daily and seasonal cycles, prioritizing that which is perceived as solid and static. However, transforming the objects-based technologies of maps into the distributed technologies of GIS could provide new ground to reimagine the representation of temporal phenomena in maps and mapping.[2]

Thus, it was Borda's vision and the coding work at Artengine that came together and would enable her photographic project to be carried out as a successful visual and mapping experiment that ultimately worked to create both an objective and personalized user experience. That the project has received such long-term interest and appreciation is a testament to the project's ability to both understand and represent the physical landscape and as well as the codes that sometimes define it. Artengine is proud to have collaborated with Borda and to have contributed to this project. It not only inspired our long and continued exploration of the artists role in using technology to help transform the perception and experience of the urban environment around us, but arguably played a role in shaping how temporal and mapped data appears visually online today.

Notes

1.   Borda's artwork *Minimalist portraits* (2000) used a conceptual schema to map and read the visual art world. For this series she appropriated in name and form well-known hard-edge or minimalist artists so that they became consequently a by-product of their own 'signature style.' Borda adopted a system where the hard edge artists' birth and death dates were translated into tonal fields and plotted against a CYMK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) scale to produce a tone representative of the artist's life. http://www.sylviagborda.com/digital-art.html.

2.   This relationship between representations we make and our understanding of the world is explored by scholars in a number of fields. In architecture, Dalibor Vesely makes an important contribution in *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (MIT Press, 2004). More precisely, in the relation to maps, Denis Wood asserts that 'far from being pictures of the world maps are instruments for its creation; that is, they are not representations but systems of propositions, arguments about what the world might be' (Wood, Denis. *Rethinking the Power of Maps* [Guilford Press, 2010], 8). I have explored, in more depth, how these ideas of the database and the map transform our understanding of time in *Organized Time: Temporal Representations and the Possibilities of the Database*, Ryan Stec, http://drainmag.com/organized-time-temporal-representations-and-the-possibilities-of-the-database/.
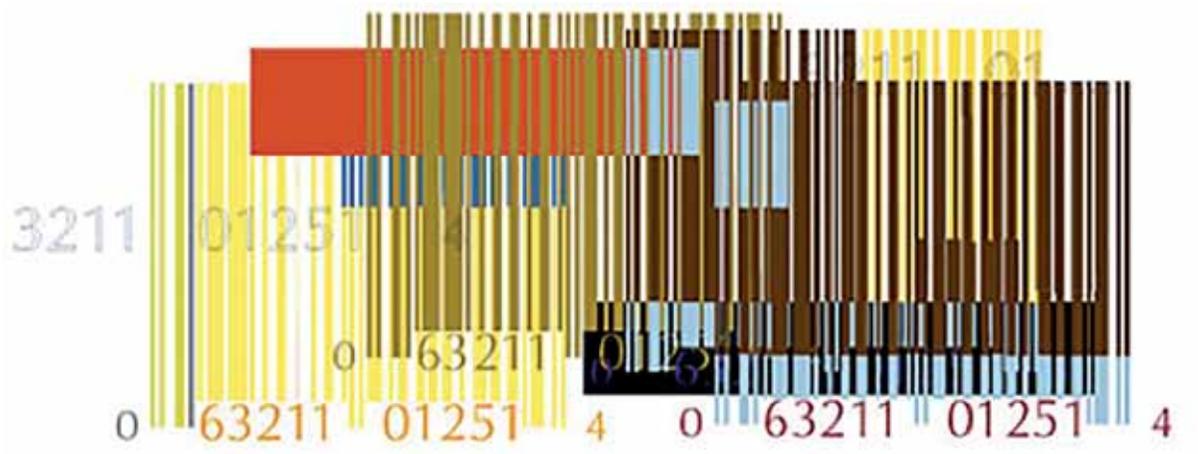
Formative digital artworks developed during the late 1990s
and early 2000s period: *Minimalist Portraits: Donald Judd* (2001)
(*top*); *Barcodes: Four Chicken Noodle* (1999) (*bottom*)

Roundabouts, concrete, construction: is this your idea of a world heritage site?

It's not a wind-up – Eddie Docherty meets the artist who says East Kilbride is a 'monument to utopianism'

THE term Unesco World Heritage Site generally produces visions of the Egyptian pyramids, the Great Barrier Reef or maybe even the Great Wall of China. If a Canadian academic gets her wish, however, the town of East Kilbride could join that illustrious list.

To many who live in the town, her claim will make their heads spin more than negotiating East Kilbride's 60 roundabouts.

However, for Sylvia Grace Borda, lecturer in visual art and theory in the department of Art History at the University of British Columbia, East Kilbride has a rich architectural heritage that should be preserved and celebrated.

In 2007, East Kilbride will celebrate the 60th anniversary of becoming Scotland's first New Town. New Towns were the post-war Labour government's answer to the terribly overcrowded and squalid housing that blighted many British cities in the pre-war years.

They were intended to be everything the slums were not, containing homes that would be spacious, in scenic locations, close to workplaces, accessible to educational and social establishments and have their own cachet. However, half a century on, the New Town application is generally regarded as a euphemism for bad planning, sloppy architecture and rotten designs.

When the residents of Cumbernauld, Scotland's other perceived "national sink", called for their town centre to be demolished, it proved for many that the New Town idea had been a flawed theory from the beginning. Despite this, Borda believes the concept of New Towns should be mimicked rather than maligned.

The Vancouver woman's love affair with East Kilbride's architecture began in the spring of 2005 when she was invited by South Lanarkshire Council to oversee an urban cultural programme at the town's Arts Centre.

She had form for seeing magnificence in the mundane, as in previous London's bus stops. So it was not long into her three-month stay that she began snapping many East Kilbride buildings, particularly the schools that were earmarked for demolition. She also began to research the histories of many of the constructions she was capturing through her lens.

These stories confirmed her suspicions that many had been designed by some of the UK's most celebrated architects such as Sir Basil Spence, Jack Coia and Alexander Buchanan Campbell. Sir Basil Spence's best known work is probably Coventry Cathedral, rebuilt after the war to a radical design, while Jack Coia was behind the building of many postwar Scottish churches and the award-winning St Peter's Seminary, which overlooks the Clyde.

Alexander Buchanan Campbell designed the Dollan Baths. He cited as an influence the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange who designed the National Gymnasium built for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

By the time she was due to return home, she had more than 8000 images – not only of schools and office blocks but of walkways, railings, brick walls, green spaces and even lock-up garages. She had also amassed a rich and deep well of information that proved to her that the town was a genuine attempt to build what she termed "the city of the future". She was desperate to share this new-found knowledge with

MODERNITY IN THE FRAME: Sylvia Grace Borda's striking images of East Kilbride – which she calls a model for egalitarian living – include schools, shops, offices, houses and playing fields.

locals, and returned with her best 150 photographs for an exhibition.

Her enthusiasm also led to the release of a book, EK Modernism, which contains many of her stunning pictures. While readers may view some of her claims as outlandish, many can't fail to see East Kilbride in a new light after viewing it from her perspective. Borda says: "Many buildings in East Kilbride have a great amount of detail which means a lot of thought has gone into them. This, combined with the use of some expensive building materials, meant they were costly. The money spent on Duncanrig Secondary School when it was originally built would be the equivalent of around £80m today.

"Part of the town's architectural attraction is also the message and aims behind its planning and construction. For example, the planners and architects who designed it paid special homage to liveability, sustainability and community coherence.

"The town is a monument to the post-war utopian impulse to create a 'city of the future'. In my opinion, that's an ideal and a concept we should celebrate, not hide."

Borda argues that the planners of East Kilbride were not only attempting to construct a coherent, comprehensive living community, they were also aspiring to create a model for egalitarian living.

"One of the slogans of the Labour Party during the 1945 election was 'years of chaos and mismanagement ended on the beaches of Dunkirk. Months of careful planning led to D-Day'.

"The party was making a statement that the postwar years would be focused on the greater public interest, and architects reflected this by thinking about how urban planning could bring about a truly modern society.

"It partly explained my difficulty in identifying which architect worked on which projects in East Kilbride, as the Town Corporation took the decision not to publicly name which architect was working where to maintain an egalitarian equilibrium among the varied communities."

"The town is a monument to the post-war utopian impulse to create a 'city of the future'. In my opinion that's an ideal and a concept we should celebrate, not hide."

Borda argues that the planners of East Kilbride were not only attempting to construct a coherent comprehensive living community they were also aspiring to create a model for egalitarian living.

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Part of the attraction is the message and aims behind the planning

EAST Kilbride was given the first New Town title in 1947, following the passing of the New Town Act in the previous year. The East Kilbride Development Corporation was established to create the proposed domestic and industrial utopia.

A massive house-building programme began running in conjunction with aggressive marketing of the town to large companies. This attracted enterprises such as Rolls-Royce, which opened a factory in 1953, the year in which the 1000th house was built. By the time the 10,000th house was opened by the then PM Sir Alec Douglas Home in 1964, East Kilbride was the model for town planning, and architects and designers from around the world were visiting it regularly.

With striking structures such as the Dollan Baths (with the first Olympic-sized pool in the country), the Saltire award-winning Murray flats and vast, open green spaces, East Kilbride was the darling of the construction catwalk.

However, like many glamorous, young things, they don't always age well. When actor and former East Kilbride resident John Hannah said Scotland was a "strange, little, wet, fried, angry place," many locals felt he was describing the Murray area of the town from where he came. On another occasion, he compared East Kilbride to Milton Keynes – and it wasn't meant to be a compliment.

Many share Hannah's sentiments since for them, East Kilbride is a dull, charmless Legoland with enough concrete to bury a whole New Town of Jimmy Hoffas.

One man who disagrees with John Hannah, but does not quite share Borda's enthusiasm, is East Kilbride historian Bill Niven. He has lived for many of his 73 years in the town and was its Provost between 1969 and 1972. For him, the early developers were indeed pioneers who did a marvellous job; however, they also made some fundamental mistakes.

He says: "East Kilbride has two big problems for me – there's no railway station or open green space in the town centre. I also wonder whether the New Town developers ever successfully managed to merge East Kilbride's past with the future they were trying to build.

"East Kilbride had more than 1000 years of history before the New Town, and I wonder if they ever successfully bridged the two. For example, in the mid 1960s, there was an attempt by the Development Corporation to demolish the old Maxwelton weaving village for flats.

"It was eventually saved, but perhaps it revealed a reluctance to preserve the past."

LORI McElroy is the Sustainable Development Officer at the Lighthouse Foundation in Glasgow; she also grew up in East Kilbride.

She believes that even with the mistakes, today's architects could still learn a lot from the town's planners – and find the answer to the missing railway station.

She says: "There are a lot of lessons to be learned from East Kilbride New Town, as it had what we now call sustainable living. People lived and worked in the same place, hence there was no early move to relocate the railway station.

"Okay, it was a different era, but Victorian heritage, why not protect that from the 1950s and 1960s?"

However, while it is one thing to preserve your environment, it is another to say it deserves Unesco World Heritage Status.

There are 27 such sites across the UK – four of them are in Scotland. Borda believes East Kilbride could be a fifth.

She says: "It is Scotland's best example of post-war modernist planning and because it's had extremely limited redevelopment so far, it's a great example to show to people. New Lanark is currently a Unesco site and for me, East Kilbride is a modern version of it."

To acquire this very prestigious title, a community must be considered as having "outstanding universal value." It is easy to see why locals standing on the tarmacadamed town centre don't quite arrive at, well, the Borda line.

Bill Niven says: "Maybe it comes from living in a new town and being around when it was developed, but I'm not convinced. I'm not against it, but there are 30 other new towns across the UK so I don't see why East Kilbride would be a special case.

"So it looks like East Kilbride will not quite be joining the esteemed company of the Pyramids, Barrier Reef or Wall of China. But, please, let's have no more comparisons with Milton Keynes."

Sylvia Grace Borda's EK Modernism is on sale at the East Kilbride Arts Centre and The Lighthouse, Glasgow; where it can be bought at a discounted price of £15 (RRP £25).

EK MODERNISM Net Artwork (2005) and C-41 Photographs (2005–2010)

Artist's Statement—A Reflection on Two Cities

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

I n addressing how new towns like East Kilbride in Scotland were conceived as a one-stop solution for urban rejuvenation in the early 1950s, I began to consider how these centres were driven by modernist concepts in urban development and social planning. Unlike older urban developments, new towns offered defined social spaces where neighbourhoods were gridded to accommodate schools and shopping centres; where industries were clustered on the town's edge estates; and where local road transportation systems were developed strategically around neighbourhoods to enable safer commuter transit.

East Kilbride is an outstanding example of New Town architecture and represents one of the most comprehensive modernist cities in the UK. Located just 12 miles from Glasgow, it has retained the vision of High Modernist architecture since its inception. Even though Scottish New Town modernist architecture is less than a half century old, only a few key contemporary buildings are surviving in Scotland today, as most of them have been altered, allowed to fall into disrepair or were redeveloped due to new civic regeneration needs.

My project *EK Modernism* was highly influenced by my travels and time spent responding to *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC.* I similarly decided to create an online contemporary image archive of the town's built environment (eknewtown.com). I produced an epic body of photographs (over 8,000) and declared the whole town as an artwork. My conceptual strategies opened up further audience debates about how art can play a wider role in redefining and assigning values to places often considered on the periphery.

< Article published by *The Herald* (Glasgow, 2006) about *EK Modernism* and raising the profile of East Kilbride as a potential UNESCO World Heritage site

Images from *EK Modernism* (2005), Westwood neighbourhood (*above*) and Dollan Aqua Centre (*below*)

Images from *EK Modernism* (2005), Kirktonholme Primary School (*above*) and Whitehills neighbourhood (*below*)

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

Report a problem

Shifting Perspectives

LIZ WELLS Professor in Photographic Culture, University of Plymouth, UK

The position from which we look influences both what we see and how we see it. Where we stand as viewers, or as photographers, determines and limits our perspective. "Perspective" refers to the formal construction of pictorial images. As a system of drawing it dates from the early Renaissance. Perspective constructs the illusion of looking into actual space; the world is represented to us as we would experience it were we actually present. It follows that we experience visual representations ego-centrically; it seems that the world is organized in relation to us as individuals. Even when the image content is new, the picture organization is reassuringly familiar. But 'perspective' also references opinions and responses to experiences. As such there is a resonance between perspectival aesthetics as a way of seeing, and points of view, ideas and attitudes, that, if nothing else, reminds us of the extent to which vision is culturally prioritized as the primary rationalist sense; indeed, a link between seeing, knowing, and understanding is embedded in the English language. Do you see!

Standard camera technology is founded in looking from a single viewpoint. By contrast, satellite imaging has facilitated developments such as Google Earth that allow us to navigate unknown places from unfamiliar perspectives, by extension unsettling familiar viewpoints. Exploring the affects of new visualities is central to Sylvia Grace Borda's artistic investigations. For *Farm Tableaux* (2013–2015), Borda worked with John M. Lynch, a photographer for Google Business Street View to stage scenarios of farm labourers at work in Surrey, BC. The scenes are thematically and aesthetically akin to realist painting wherein the central focus is on people and everyday life.[1] The project reminds us of the economic centrality of labour and the harshness of work conditions even despite mechanization.

< Dri Tamis, Sylvia Grace Borda, Ron Tamis, and John M Lynch, discussing production of *Farm Tableaux* at Rondriso Farms (July 2013) (*top*); Google Street View portrait of Dri Tamis in his tractor (*bottom*) from Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Her inquiry into food production was further explored in *Mise en Scène: Farm Tableaux Finland*, made in Oulu, northern Finland (2016). Here, she worked with her subjects in locations such as a flour mill or a reindeer farm, choreographing how they would stand, checking what gestures would best facilitate 360-degree scanning. The farm workers as collaborators had to stand still for up to 40 minutes whilst the Google camera rendered them three-dimensionally. Although technologically sophisticated, her method was slow; she spent months visiting people and exploring specific places in order to gain some insight into regional culture and to generate interest, trust, and support for her experiments. Her projects also offer new viewing experiences. As audience we can 'wander around' agri-industrial scenarios in virtual space whilst in the gallery, using a phone app to complement the experience of viewing large photographic tableaux. Alternatively, the image can be explored smaller scale via a computer screen. The pace can be gentle, allowing for slow looking and a reflective response to the circumstances portrayed. Given current accumulation of imagery and the speed of flow of the streams of visual data that characterize broadcast, online and social media, *slow looking* has become unfamiliar yet, arguably, without reflective engagement our responses to images and the implications of what we learn from them can only be superficial.

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda), after Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* (1565), from *Mise en Scène: Farm Tableaux Finland* (2015)

Technical developments allow artists to extend ways of seeing. In the twin-screen installation, *Aerial Fields* (2013) Borda explores 'drone' vision, in effect, a bees-eye view.[2] She mounted video cameras on drones to observe farmlands from above. As a project it posed some challenges. Drones are not easy to control; they drift, and are affected by pressure and wind shifts. In terms of real time filming, given the limits of battery power, voyages were planned for 12 minutes, with the drone turned back to base after 9 minutes. In other words, the potential and limits of the technology influenced visual possibilities.

The resulting video footage was edited into parallel sequences. In one, the angle of viewing is raised, whilst in the other, we are closer to the crops in the fields. This has a disorienting effect as we have to keep adjusting our sense of intimacy or distance. Surrey Art Gallery installed Aerial Fields as a twin screen video on a large outdoor IMAX screen, circa 40m x 100m (i.e., paired moving images, each on a 4:5 ratio). The film played daily from September 2013 to January 2014, 4:30 p.m. to midnight, allowing audiences insight into farmlands at a time of day when the area would be dark and thus imperceptible.

Borda catching the video drone at Medomist Farms Ltd. (August 2013) (*below*); *Aerial Fields* projected on the IMAX-scale UrbanScreen at the Chuck Bailey Recreation Centre, Surrey, BC (October 2013) (*bottom*)

Video still from *Aerial Fields* (2013), illustrating Gemma McNeil and Doug Zaklan harvesting onions at Zaklan Heritage Farm

Of course, there is a distinction between actual encounters with a place and how we imagine the experience of being there. In this instance, this must have been heightened not only by the unfamiliar angle of vision but also by a dreamlike distance between the actual chill of urban winter and the illusion of the natural light of summer.

As an artist, Sylvia Grace Borda is concerned with themes and subject-matter and also with the integral linkage of image content, aesthetic manner of depiction and camera technologies. Drawing on her experience in art history, museum studies and fine art, and her interest in optics and the psychology of perception, she explores aesthetic affects. She acknowledges her specificity as an artist through always including a portrait of herself with a camera somewhere in her work as in her project, *Farm Tableaux*. For her this acts as an artist's signature and a means of asserting authorship. We are also reminded of the agency of the artist and the camera.

Notes

1. See late 19th century French painters, particularly Manet or Courbet.

2. Drone, 1, a male bee; 2, an indolent person; 3, a pilotless aircraft or missile. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1993.

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda), Medomist Farms Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Mirroring Artist and Photographer at Work: A Visual Essay

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

The trompe l'oeil is a French phrase meaning 'deceives the eye,' used to describe paintings that create the illusion of a real object or scene. The technique dates back to Greco-Roman murals in the use of painted detail such as a realistic depiction of a door or window as part of a fresco. I would like to reconsider trompe l'oeil in the context of photographic imaging.

As a form of signature in the Google Street View artworks, for example, I have positioned myself as a discrete portrait in each of the tableaux scenes. Typically standing some 500–800 metres away from the main scene with a camera in my hand, I remain hidden behind the larger Google Street View camera apparatus that captures the environment around me. In this way, I avoid being blurred by the Google algorithm, bringing into play a facet of trompe l'oeil at hand. The resulting portraits can be compared to Hippolyte Bayard's *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* (1840), in which his action of self-portraiture is today recognized as a conceptual staged action. Bayard's portait was in reaction to the lack of adoption of a positive paper imaging photo process he invented. His process did not gain an audience compared to other French promoted imaging technologies such as the Daguerreotype plate process.

My collaborator, Google Trusted Photographer John M. Lynch, worked with me to stage these self-assisted portraits in a chosen location navigable from the main scene. Dependent on the time of day, a glimpse of a second camera apparatus enters the image plane—a shadow cast from the recording, i.e., the Google Street View camera. Each portrait offers the viewer a set of contradictions to negotiate in order to understand the artwork and the intimacy of labour of the depicted subjects. The artist is similarly mirrored at work, and nearby, the actual tools of the photographer are referenced through shadows or through the imaging of tripod legs. These tracings

< Sylvia Grace Borda captured with shadow of panosphere camera and tripod recorded in the Google Street View tour of Medomist Farms Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

will always remain digital reproductions of space, which can never 'satisfy emotionally' the actual depicted events and complex arrangements behind the stagings.

Will viewers adopt the emergence of this authoring as a new trompe l'oeil? Or can we consider this as a more layered sense of death akin to what Roland Barthes refers to as every image offering an instance of stilling and ending one's own existence by itself being captured?

In a recent discussion with my collaborator, John M. Lynch, I have learned that Google Street View staff often modify Google Street View submissions to streamline them within

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda) at Clover Valley Organics, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

their platform. It is likely that the Google Street View review team have similarly modified the embedded artworks. For instance, the Farm Tableaux portrait work at both Rondriso and at Zaklan Heritage Farms are no longer accessible via the platform. One wonders if it was determined that there was no longer any merit in providing the serendipitous viewer an opportunity to explore a set of discrete farm road pathways that emanate from the barns and out into the fields. As such my self-portrait at the end of a pumpkin field at the Rondriso Farms, staged as an ode to Jeff Wall's *The Thinker* (1986), has been removed from the online web work.

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda), after Jeff Wall's *The Thinker* (1986), *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Though for the production of the book (see above), I decided to re-insert a new portrait (2019) at Rondriso Farms to become the book's title page and another trompe l'oeil. If you look carefully on the ground one can see the book placed in the image. All stagings from Clover Valley Organic Farm, and Finley's Rhododendrons have sadly gone offline as they no longer represent the actual terrain in existence. These farms have been sold, and now the land has given way to housing developments—such are the dynamics of urban-rural boundaries. Google Street View eerily mirrors back the erased boundary between the physical and digital landscapes.

Hippolyte Bayard considered his *Portrait of a Drowned man* as an act of protest for the

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda) by forage harvester and wagon at Rondriso Farms—a trompe l'oeil with the *Shifting Perspectives* book placed in the scene, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2019)

sake of remembrance. Hippolyte's self-portrait, in terms of photographic history, has since become a fulcrum for dialogue on artistic intent and understanding photographic histories and processes. Similarly the Google Street View portraits, as they become disconnected from their original online platform, serve as reflectors from which to discuss new image construction. The embedding of a portrait signature further highlights these images as mediating tools of remembrance as well as protest—and a way to mirror and rethink the artist and photographer as an author of a contemporary trompe l'oeil.

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda) at Finley's Rhododendrons, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda), pictured with a bus stop as an ode to *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004), photographed at Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

FAST.

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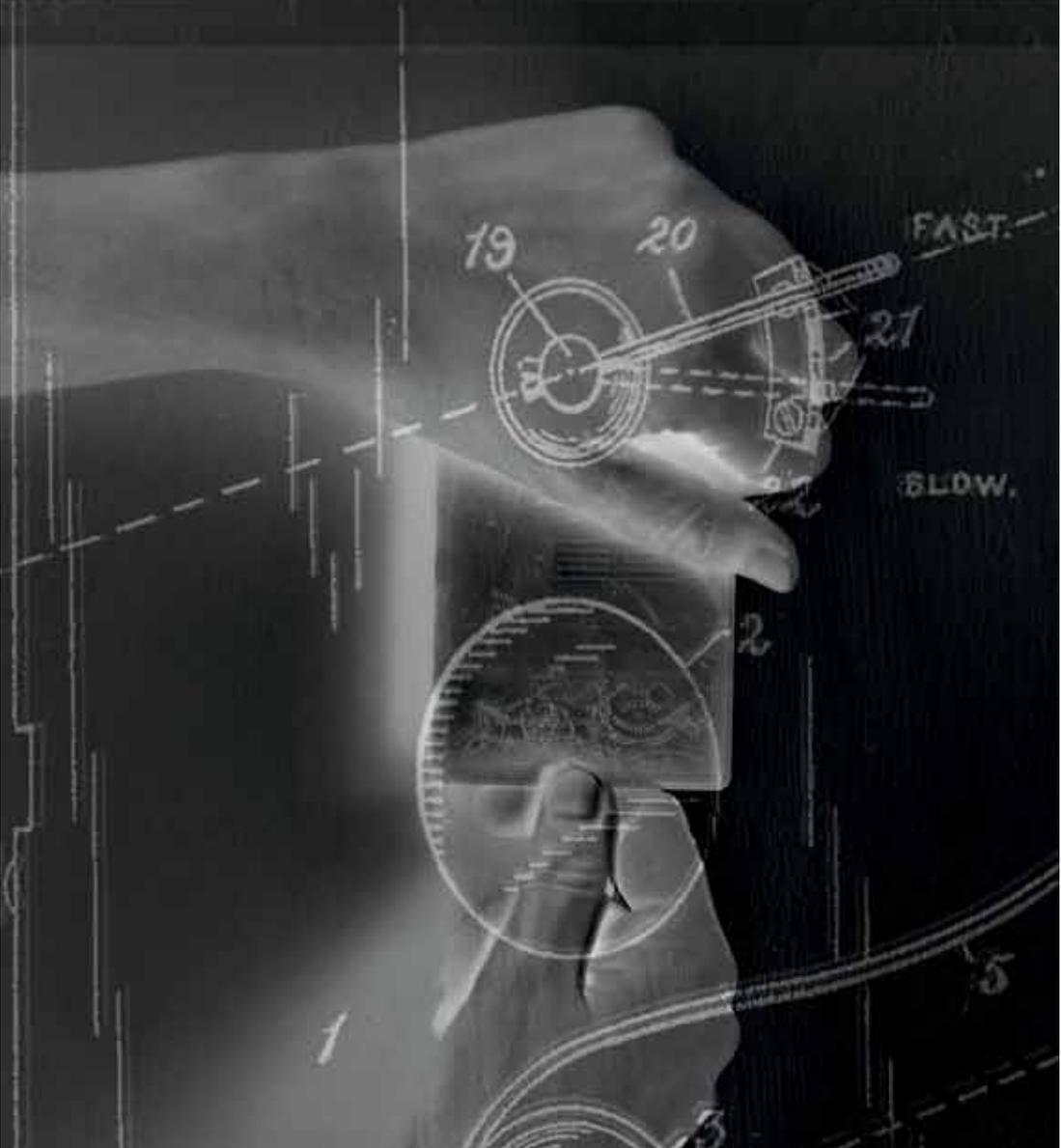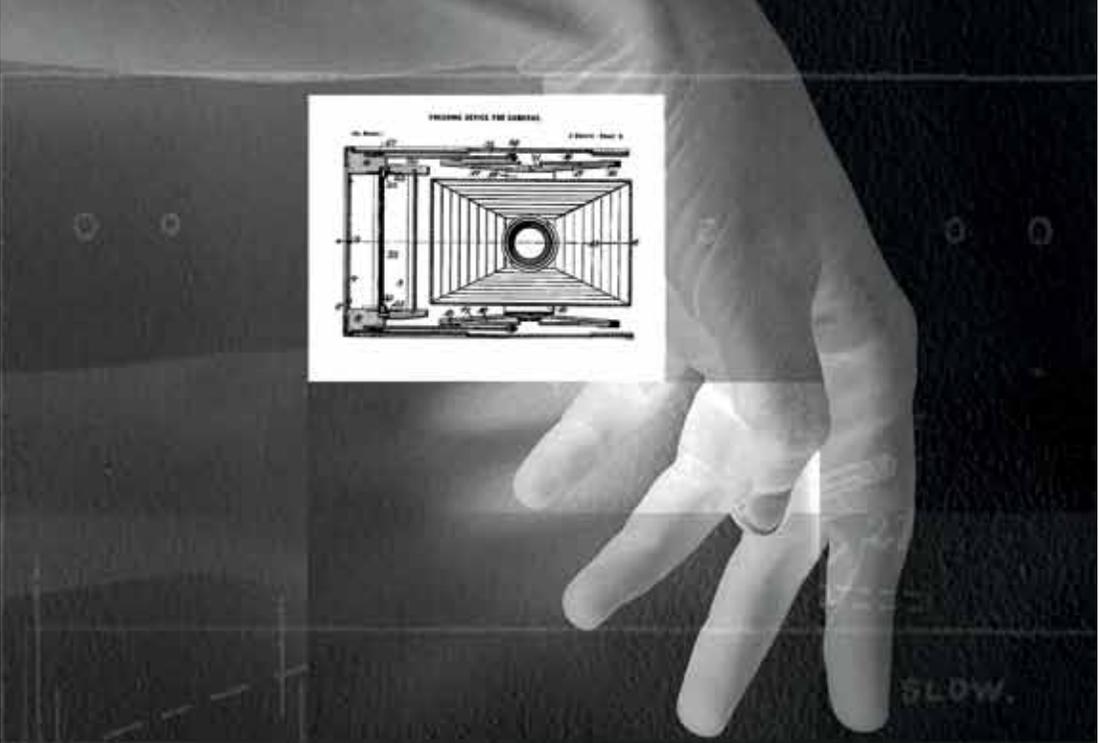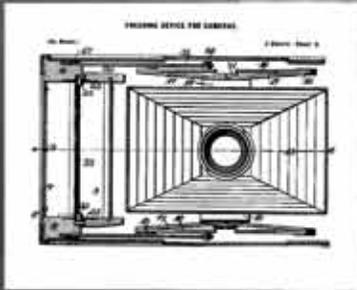
Slow Photography

DOROTHY BARENSCOTT

Professor in Art History, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Ultimately, photography is subversive, not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks. —**ROLAND BARTHES**[1]

When we examine the world through the photograph, we are invited to observe. It is through the act of observation that we come to notice and perceive, to register information, to regard with attention. How and why and through what means a photograph is created is seldom the focus. Instead, we are most often seduced by the immediacy of the image, bypassing considerations of space and time to apprehend what is most veracious and instantly visible. In today's technologically accelerated and distracted screen culture, that process has only intensified. Images from the world of entertainment, news media, our family and friends, advertisers, and even the world of art, co-mingle visual environments— the multiplication and proliferation of photographic images overrides the capacity for critical reflection. The question arises: who has the time to stop, to slow down, and to think?

For Sylvia Grace Borda, the answer to that question begins with her approach to the production of art. In her practice—which spans photography, filmmaking, installation, public art, and architecture—Borda employs conceptual strategies that not only challenge the mechanism of representation, but also work to capture audience attention and interest through the mechanisms of observation and attention. Raised in Vancouver, British Columbia, but moving between Canada and her parent's European homelands throughout her childhood, Borda explains how observation was key to "seeing, examining, moving from one environment to another" and asking bigger questions that reveal the "gaps and inconsistencies between narratives" and the nature of misrepresentation.[2] This, as most children of immigrants learn, inculcates the capacity to see from multiple perspectives. Borda would pursue her interest in visual art and attend the University of British Columbia's Fine Arts Department both in the early 1990s and 2000s. It was there that her powers of

< Image from *Seeing Technologies* (2015)

observation would intersect with the aims and interests of artists and academics associated with the Vancouver School of conceptual photography—practitioners who, as art critic Kenneth Baker describes in concise terms, made "photographs of high intensity and complex content that probed, obliquely or directly, the social force of imagery."[3]

At the heart of Borda's practice is the camera. Whether examining the apparatus and its history, experimenting with the limits of lens-based technologies, or challenging the function of still photography, she brings continual awareness back to the invisible workings of the picture-making process. But what does it mean to observe and represent in today's culture of speed?[4] In response, the call in recent years to slow the system and interrogate the logistics of perception has resulted in a rich variety of 'slow movements' globally that have sought to bring renewed attention to acts of exploration, reflection, and deceleration. Canadian journalist Carl Honoré, whose international bestselling book and manifesto *In Praise of Slow* helped introduce mainstream audiences to the concept, put it in its simplest and most Canadian of terms: "Slow activists are not out to destroy the capitalist system. Rather, they seek to give it a human face."[5] In Borda's projects, the function of nostalgia, often called the traditional companion to progress in moments of cultural crisis, must therefore be carefully considered. So too her particular use and understanding of conceptual photography. To be sure, Borda's engagement with themes of urbanism, food production and agriculture, sustainability and social engagement, together with the history of

photography and cameras, mirror a growing and shared desire on the part of the public to take stock of technologies and systems that appear to be progressing too quickly, or turn back to ones that are in threat of disappearing. In this sense, Borda is far more aligned with the political and social aims of the slow movement than invested in the more circumscribed aims of a photo-conceptualist or conceptual documentary practice. Working within and between the contours of today's visual art and screen cultures, Borda is both pioneer and disruptor.

Farm Tableaux

Borda's *Farm Tableaux* (2013) initiates a dynamic and provocative conversation around photography, illusion, and embodied visual perception, a conversation that is firmly located in the past as much as it is the future. Working with Google Trusted Photographer John M. Lynch, Borda sought to represent farming and food production practices in carefully staged 'living pictures,' moving from land and labour to processing and consumption. Using multi-lens cameras that record both images and geo-data simultaneously, Borda and Lynch collaborated to produce complex photographs that when digitally stitched together produce the illusion of a seamless experience of lived time and space.[6] As Borda explains, the premise for the project emerged in connection to the nineteenth century technique of stereoscopy, a method through which two-dimensional images are enhanced to provide the illusion of three-dimensional depth: "Like early stereoscopic images, you are potentially holding an entire farm in your hands."[7] Mapping a range of locatable

points that are viewable today as Google Street View images, the *Farm Tableaux* images produce the same kind of spectacular encounter and mass audience engagement that was a vital part of not only stereography, but also the painted panorama phenomena of the 19th century. As an urban artifact, the power of the panoramic image was to invite audiences to see and potentially embody what was previously unseen or new through the process of envelopment, but also to correspond to what was relevant in the contemporary world through a dialogue with the past.[8] It is this same dynamic that animates *Farm Tableaux.* Visual vocabularies of form and content that reference traditional Dutch and French landscape painting comingle with visual cues of contemporary photographic art practices and postmodern themes that celebrate the banal and everyday.

The idea of a tableaux, a term taken from the world of theatre, refers to the calculated staging through which a playwright arranges actors to tell a story. In Borda's project, the use of calculated staging emerges as "a dialogue between actual people and the artist," and a way of "talking it through" and setting the scene in close concert with her subjects.[9] The time Borda spends consulting with local farmers, getting to know and listen closely to their concerns, and developing the level of intimacy needed to gain access and cooperation from her subjects cannot be emphasized enough. As Borda argues, "you are working with individuals to shape their own memory in the now. You are engaging more directly with the 'actors' as it were."[10]

Direct engagement and raising awareness underpin Borda's Google Street View work in Surrey, a city located in the suburbs of Vancouver and among Canada's fastest growing municipalities where she confronted the prospect of representing a place undergoing rapid social and economic transformation as a result of a complex demographic makeup and unique urban challenges. "I was thinking in thirds," Borda explains, "industrial, agricultural, urban" where a number of farms were being parceled off, creating not only an unease of what would happen next, but a desire on the part of farmers to demonstrate their relevance to a place transformed by urban development.[11] Moreover, *The Future Lives Here* motto of Surrey serves to negate the city's past connection to farming and the critical role food sovereignty has historically played in the region. As part of her process, in collaboration with Lynch, to undertake the dynamic photographing process of *Farm Tableaux*, Borda invited a young farmer's representative to produce statistical data proving that farming still contributes millions of dollars in revenue to the region. "Paris of the North, that is how I see Surrey," remarks Borda, ". . . you don't often see a city that will change so rapidly in your own lifetime."[12] Indeed, looking closely at the photographic series on Google Street View today, there is a close connection to the kinds of tableaux scenes one would glimpse in the works of Edouard Manet and the Impressionists—pictures of urban transformation that capture fleeting and contingent moments of modern life, bringing the margins to the centre of representation, and representing what art historian Thomas Crow has described as the process of "boundary transgression," which seeks to disrupt established norms of the subculture represented.[13]

The Vancouver School

If techniques of mise-en-scène and the tableaux set the framework for how to view Borda's recent photographic projects, then these mechanisms are also the ones through which she has defined herself when working as a visual artist at home and abroad. In this sense, Borda is very attentive to her particular position as a Canadian contemporary artist being from Vancouver but residing in an idea of a 'post-Vancouver School of Art' where the practices of staging, observing, and subverting signs associated with the landscape and human environment are ever-present influences:

> Working on the periphery challenges everything you know about art in terms of its distribution, in terms of content arrangement, in terms of aesthetics, fighting for a value system, and asking how you can you assign value to a location that has never had value as a system before.[14]

As a younger generation photographer in dialogue with the city's influential and relatively recent art history, Borda also continues to engage with many of the conceptual art and new media traditions of a place that has in recent years gained great visibility in the art world. From Jeff Wall to Ken Lum, Stan Douglas to Rodney Graham, and Ian Wallace to Roy Arden (artists who have all had either a direct hand or measure of influence on Borda's art training and mentorship), the art practices associated with the Vancouver School during the period of the late 1960s through the early 2000s helps situate and orient the larger art world to both a geographical place and an urban art scene that has been branded with qualities such

as "intellectual rigour, stringent conceptual refinement, and precision . . . and a deeply critical commitment towards the politics of the image.[15] But the very notion of a Vancouver School is also problematic and highly contested. Art historian William Wood argues in an essay exploring the subject that the label is largely ephemeral and points to "inclinations and predispositions locatable within the region (and saleable to an international market)" that are more about signaling the dematerialization of the art object, together with "the abandonment of allegiances and disciplines associated with modernist movements, and their medium specificities."[16]

The Vancouver School, as Wood goes on to argue, while somewhat unstable as a category, maintains a certain legitimacy if the word 'school' is emphasized, describing how artists associated with the movement credit their university teaching, along with their critical and historical writing, as fundamental to their art practice. Moreover, the Vancouver School is closely tied to the critique and interrogation of modernism and the push for a reinvigorated avant-garde. Notably, Serge Guilbaut, a Vancouver-based French scholar working at a formative moment in the Vancouver School's development, has suggested something of a reconceptualized model of the avant-garde operating in Vancouver, implying the sustained need for artistic experimentation with counter-traditions and a push towards educating artists and art historians in the history and theory of modern art movements.[17] We can see the legacy of this disposition towards engaged critical thinking and writing, along with a strong modernist thread, running through Borda's art

practice, signaling not only the high stakes and determination involved in pushing for the avant-garde gesture, but also the consequences of upholding sustained institutional critique at the expense of art world trends that favour more easily categorized and commodified art.

The Vancouver School is also distinctive as it has evolved at far remove from the cultural heritage and institutional structures that inform strong European art traditions stretching back several hundred years. The self-conscious and self-reflexive nature of many Canadian artists, not just from Vancouver, emerge in relationship to their location, living and making art in a nation that is only 150 years old. At the furthest reaches of the Canadian West Coast, "Vancouver is still effectively a frontier city" declares Ian Wallace, and it is this character of the frontier and "being a place on the edge" that "makes the concept of the avant-garde particularly pertinent to Vancouver as a place for contemporary art."[18] Vancouver-based curator and art critic Scott Watson, an early historian of the city's art scene, adds that "In Vancouver, which is barely one hundred years old, and mainly populated by people who have come from other places, no one can assume an identity which corresponds to the *genius loci* of his or her particular culture."[19] Borda's upbringing, like that of many first-generation Canadians, reflects this subject position. Raised both in Vancouver and abroad through close contact and long stays with relatives in Europe, Borda describes her curiosity with questions of identity and representation as emanating from the experience of being raised by parents who themselves were displaced during WWII, and then coming to experience multiple

and competing narratives and worldviews throughout her childhood. At the same time, Borda, like many Vancouverites, is raised with the awareness that Indigenous First Nations people have occupied the city and country they live in for centuries. Importantly, much of the land in and around Vancouver is still contested, unceded, territory, foregrounding a constant and underlying dynamic of unresolved claims played out in Vancouver's social, political, economic and cultural life. This results, as Watson keenly observes, in the constant pressure on the part of Vancouverites to "attempt to define and assert place."[20]

Indeed, for many Vancouver artists, the crisis of representation around identity and place is closely related and given expression through explorations into the crisis of traditional art forms. Watson links this impulse to the interest many Vancouver School artists historically have had in the visual culture of the mainstream, the urban, and the everyday: "The appropriation of the technology and style of the mass media gives to the popular culture a truth it would otherwise not have and without which it would be impossible to think"[21] The turn to photoconceptualism as a dominant methodology in the Vancouver School—a form of photography that is staged to represent an idea, often calling into question the means of representation—therefore emerges out of what Wallace describes as the encounter of late modernism with the dominant features of the modern city.[22] Early practitioners of conceptual photography in Vancouver during the 1960–1970s, such as Ingrid and Iain Baxter (of N.E. Thing Company), drew on traditions of serial photography and the art

book, such as those pioneered by Ed Ruscha, together with investigations into performance, installation, and interdisciplinary practices that would incorporate the use of photography as "idea-works and their sites, as language games and thematic inventories and as reflective investigations of the social and architectural landscape."[23] Later, throughout the 1980s–2000s, the Vancouver School would take up many different iterations of the photoconceptualist model through experimentation with multiple and overlapping forms of image based technologies, including analog and digital photography, film, video, and digital imaging via the computer. Other formal features, including the production of large-scale photography, backlit light boxes, and the use of clean lines and typography, and minimalist aesthetics, reinforced connections to the world of commercial, pop, and advertising visual vocabularies. As we see today with Borda's many projects involving the camera, the photograph, and art works that make use of popular image based technologies (such as her recent work with Google Street View), these are investigations into images and ideas that seek relevance with a broader public.

In terms of content, the themes and narratives taken up by Vancouver School artists are largely connected to same crises around representation, identity, and place that they are thinking and writing about when experimenting with form. In terms of identity and place, the natural setting of Vancouver and its associations with aesthetic beauty, indigeneity, and the wilderness remain in constant tension with the reality of a rapidly growing urban centre that attracts large amounts of tourism, capital, and immigration. As a result,

the landscape, with all of its many metaphors, is a consistent and potent subject matter carrying forward Canadian art traditions stretching back to the work of the Group of Seven painters in the early 20th century and modern British Columbian artists such as Emily Carr and Jack Shadbolt. In the hands of Vancouver School artists, the narrative content of landscape is transformed and subverted through conceptual art, unpacking ideas and stereotypes associated with representations of Canadian and Vancouver spaces through an exploration into its many erasures and invisible mechanisms. Whether visualizing the abstractions of capitalism, raising the specter of surveillance, or evoking the process of archiving and recording the city, the shared concerns of Vancouver School artists centre on challenging the visual vocabulary of the picturesque, superficial, and nostalgic seen in commercial and popular representations, or past art traditions, that seek to represent the land and cityscape. In Borda's practice, these are the same themes and narratives that animate the most potent and critically informed aspects of her art, revealing a concern for real spaces and identities, and bringing attention to the means of representation as it seeks to conceal as much as reveal.

Departures and Arrivals

The long shadow of influence cast by the Vancouver School onto new generations of artists has yielded positive and negative effects. Ironically, this is in part a reflection of Vancouver itself, which has rapidly transformed from a largely unknown city to among the world's most

desirable, recognized, and expensive places to live in roughly the same fifty-year time frame. As art historian Sharla Sava observes in her examination of the Vancouver School legacy, "the interwoven evolution of modernism and modernization has been both sudden and late."[24] On the one hand, the increased visibility of Vancouver artists on the global art scene has yielded welcome opportunities for local artists to exhibit internationally and receive mentorship and residencies world-wide, but on the other hand, the expectation to adhere to the many of the same strategies and methodologies of an older generation of Vancouver artists yields tensions, especially around continued experimentation and new directions. As Sava argues, after the 1990s, "the counter-tradition became firmly entrenched as the dominant tradition, and it is as *tradition* that younger practitioners encounter this aesthetic tradition."[25] What Sava formulates as a result of the new counter-tradition, or post-Vancouver School, of the past few decades is "both a product of, and a reaction against, the political aims of photoconceptualism."[26] Moreover, as the first generation of artists in the Vancouver School achieve increasing levels of international notoriety, raising both interest and value in their art, there is the reality that many of these same artists have either moved away from Vancouver or become international art brands in their own right, separating the artists and art works from their origins. This points to an important underlying factor in today's reaction against the old guard of the Vancouver School—the shifting and evolving complexity of global capitalism that go hand in hand with an expanding and proliferating range of new imaging technologies. Borda, as among

this new generation of post-Vancouver artists, recognizes this dynamic implicitly: "Images are moving in a much more fluid, populist way . . . I am interested in the notion of the open-multiple that gives people wide access . . . I'm willing to take the risk of working in the Vancouver School traditions, but can we add other layers?"

Borda's examination of the relationship between core and periphery, a residual theme of many Vancouver School artists, is intensified and extended to broader global concerns in her art projects. Importantly, Borda zeros in on the need to extend and update the discourse around many photoconceptualist projects, now largely decontextualized from their former radical aims as they enter into museum or private art collections. As Borda explains, "form and content alone can be a dangereous driver . . . capital distribution is no longer part of the conversation," locating her concern for what is lost via the institutionalization of conceptual art. Early projects, such as *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004), where Borda spent a year documenting, photographing, and producing a digital gridded composite of 800 individual bus stops across 370 square kilometres of the Vancouver suburb, were conceived as a way to produce "an informal portrait of the city's own topography, and urban histories"[27] while immersing herself in the local politics of transportation, economic access, and demographic shifts of a growing city that had remained largely ignored or stereotyped by the public as a dangerous and criminal place. In later projects—such as *EK Modernism* (2005–2007), an image archive that looks at architecture of urban rejuvenation and 'new towns' outside Glasgow, Scotland, or *Churches: Coming to the*

Table (2012) a project that depicts Northern Ireland's modernist churches through the motif of a diner table gathering where exchange and dialogue occur—Borda positions herself as the outsider aiming to discover and reveal the relationship between core and periphery. As Borda explains, "I like being the other from somewhere else; I can ask the wrong thing."[28] This archival impulse in Borda's practice must therefore be understood within the framework of real world interventions, and not just an intellectual exercise in conceptual art. Her projects align with what art critic Hal Foster has recently identified as a new modality in contemporary art practice—"archival artists . . . drawn to historical information that is lost or suppressed."[29] Importantly, these are art projects that may utilize digital or new imaging media to represent their concerns, but the 'interactivity' of the projects is not abstract or immaterial.

Installation image of *Churches: Coming to the Table* at Belfast Exposed Gallery (2012)

In this sense, the crisis of the medium, which has remained a central focus of the Vancouver School, remains at the heart of Borda's evolving interests as an artist. Within her practice, however, is the recognition of the intensification and acceleration of visual imaging technologies linked to social media and networked cultures on the Internet. As a pioneer of topographic Internet art, extended now to the experiments, hacking, and play seen through her strategic interventions on Google Street Maps, Borda works within an avant-garde mindset that seeks to disrupt and experiment. She begins by asking how she can occupy a medium that has not been thought about for art, and then works to reveal its potential and limitations. Importantly, for Borda, these questions are not just seeking to create new conversations in the world of art, but also seeking to engage in broader social and political conversations concerning visualization and perception in today's web-based culture. These are also conversations that have a long historical trajectory. At the core of our contemporary visual culture sits the camera, and it is precisely Borda's interest in having audiences stop and think about the apparatus and process of image-making, along with its particular history and technological changes, that distinguishes her work from many other artists working within photoconceptualist paradigms. In related projects such as *Interrogations of a Camera* (2011–present), *Seeing Technologies* (2011–2017), *Cameras and Watercolour Sunsets* (2013–present); *This is not a camera* (2013), *Impressions* (2013), and *Camera*

Image from *Cameras and Watercolour Sunsets* series (2019)
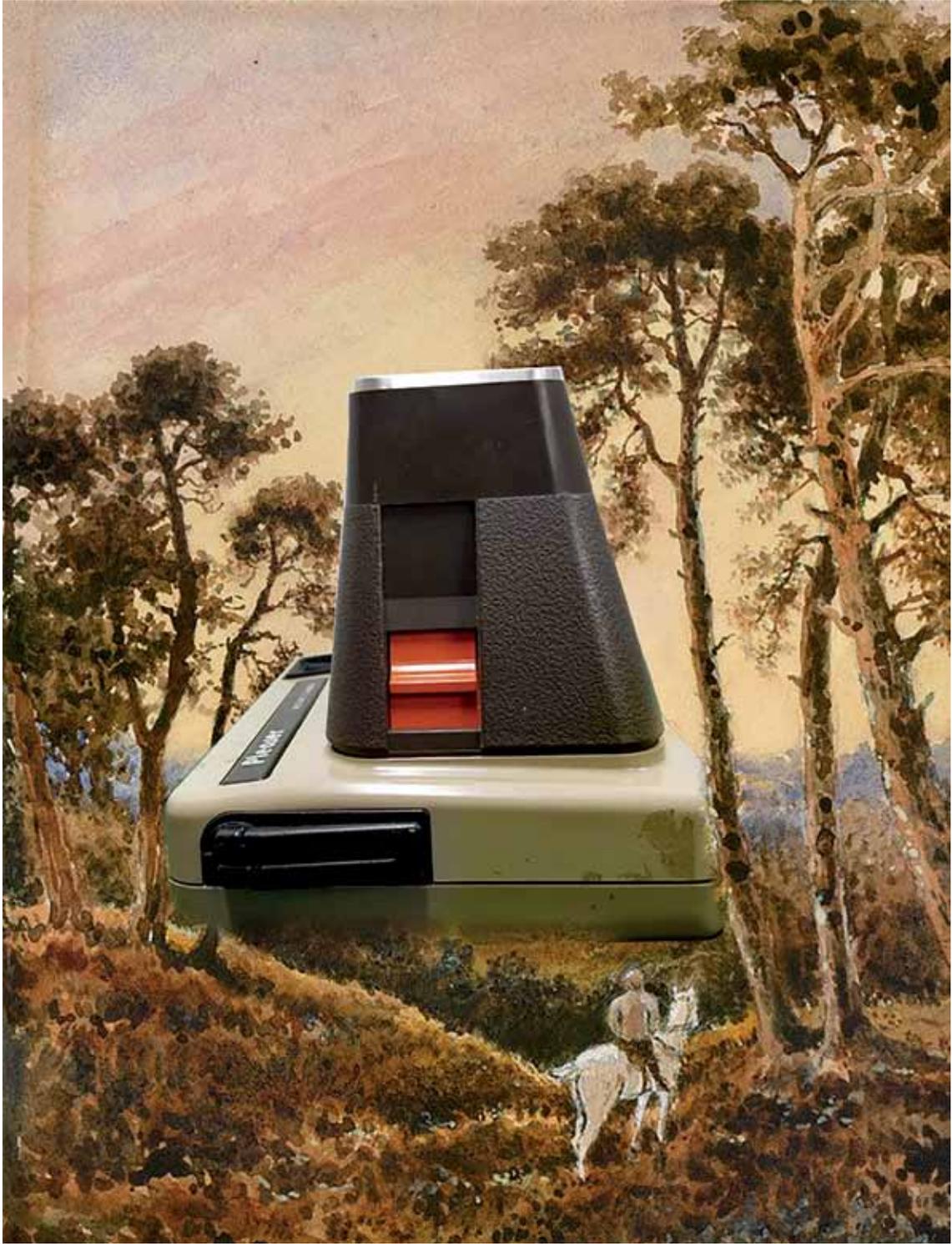
Still Life—A Memento Mori (2013), now part of a growing body of ongoing explorations into camera technologies, Borda drives our attention to what art historian and theorist Jonathan Crary has identified in contemporary culture as the "unrelenting rhythm of technological consumption."[30] As Crary goes on to describe, and we can see mirrored in Borda's attempt to bring audience awareness to the central role that cameras play in our lives, the role of the apparatus has never been more significant.[31]

Borda's desire to bring awareness to the invisible mechanisms of our visual culture extends to the role that active social engagement and audience participation play in her art practice. Expanding from Foster's descriptions of the archival artist to represent "alternative knowledge or counter memory,"[32] Borda is an artist willing to relinquish both control and authorial intent when facilitating the social dimensions of her art practice. As she explains, staging subjects, as she does in the *Farm Tableaux*, requires her to both earn the trust of the community that she seeks to represent, but also to gain their close involvement and consent in the act of making the image, which in the case

<∧ Images from *Cameras and Watercolour Sunsets* (2019)

of the Google imaging technology forces the photographer to position the camera inches from the subject's face. This cooperation necessitates a level of intimacy and trust that is often evacuated in our picture making processes today, where image based technologies in the hands of anonymous users, or even artists, can create, distort, and distribute images (of anyone and anything) without consent or regard for outcome. In contrast, Borda enacts the long tradition of artistic portraiture and the strategies of tableaux painting that require close and sustained observation, care, attention, and connection from the subject. This fits, as she describes, in "a strong art historical framework" that creates

segues for audiences into many different kinds of content, ". . . a kind of memory-making, yes, but wanting to give voice/representation to the under-represented and marginalized."[33] Projects ranging from *Flora Watch* (2010), a community training program to teach people to create their own photograms of local plants (and which is now a program implemented at a young offender's prison); *Lumsden Biscuit* (2016), a community project drawing on inter-generational learning to create edible artworks through the act of photography and baking; and *Apple Mural* (2016), a collaborative mural project in Azipute, Latvia, that transformed exterior walls of select urban buildings into panoramas signifying connections

Image of shortbread and photogram, *Lumsden Biscuit* (2016)

to surrounding rural foodways, all point to Borda's ongoing social advocacy through art.

A consistent thread working through these and other aspects of Borda's socially engaged practice is the interest in nature, land, and sustainability. This focus emerges with the recognition of the potential to reach and engage audiences through a connection, and attention to, to the natural and ecological world around them. "Our biggest dilemma is that we are disconnected, especially from nature," states Borda, "when something is being paved over, we do not know what we are missing."[34] Within the Vancouver School context, these themes are also linked to the legacy of early art interventions by conceptual and land art practitioners working in the city, seen in projects executed locally such as Robert Smithson's *Glue Pour* (1970), which involved staging and photographing the tipping of a large container of toxic material into the pristine wooded environment of a West Coast forest (which was also located, although undocumented at the time, on traditional Indigenous territory of the Musqueam people). And even while there has been a tacit acknowledgement of the connection to an Indigenous presence in the work of many Vancouver School artists, there still remains a lack of full critical engagement with the range and diversity of local Indigenous traditions and ways of conceptualizing themes around nature and ecology. Borda has attempted to bridge this divide in at least two different ways in her art practice, by first working within the spirit of First Nations sovereignty movements that seek to utilize art in new and unexpected ways to gain public attention about ecological

and sustainability issues. Borda sees her interventions outside of Canada directly influenced by her admiration for the long history of political commitment that First Nations people of Canada have had in raising awareness around the environment. Second, Borda engages in art practices that recognize the presence of an active kaleidoscope of nature not completely dependent of the active intrusion of human actors. In projects such as *Snow Cameras* (2016), where an ephemeral apparatus is created wholly from snow and ice, and *Hunting Cameras* (2016), in which cameras are placed and left in natural environments to document without

Snow Cameras (2016), by Borda in collaboration with J. Keith Donnelly

human intervention, there is an awareness of what environmental humanities researcher Margery Fee describes as a form of Indigenous visualization of the natural world.[35]

This brings us back full circle to the role of the landscape and its fraught representation, which has remained such an important guiding
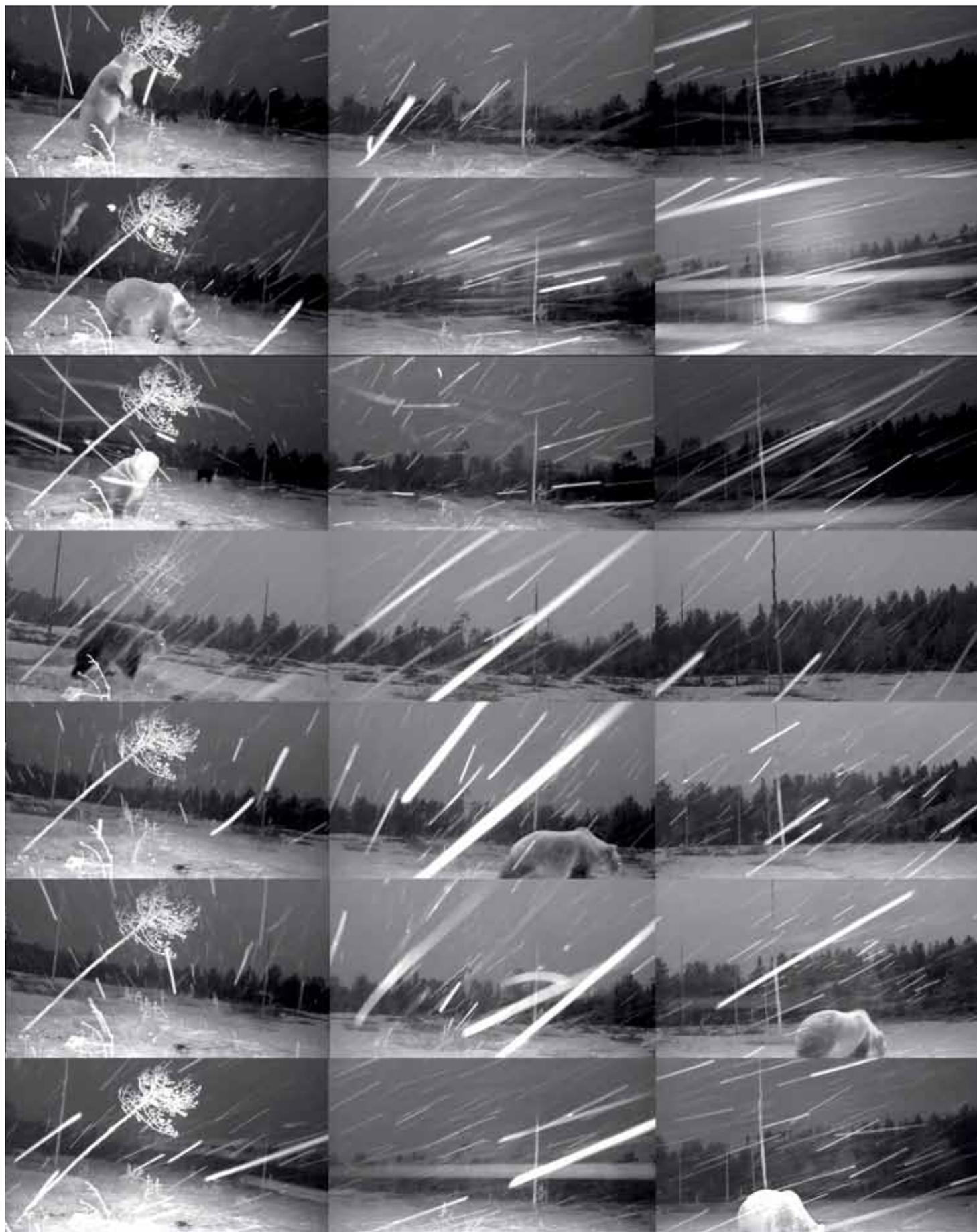
theme in both Borda's work and that of the Vancouver School. In many ways, these are themes that also inform a Canadian perspective on the world at large. Canadian thinker and new media guru Marshall McLuhan stated as much in his 1967 treatise "Technology and Environment" where he famously stated: "Environments are not just containers, but are processes that change the content totally. New media are new environments. That is why the media are the message."[36] To be sure, in a world increasingly transformed by the human impact on the environment, where climate change, overpopulation, and worry over resource sustainability, are shared global concerns, there is even more urgency to bring critical awareness to how we collectively think about and represent the Anthropocene. In Borda's practice, this urgency signaled by McLuhan through reference to new media is ever-present and related to the most pressing environmental concerns of the contemporary world.

Conclusion:
Undiscovered Vocabularies of Observation

In conversations with Borda, and through examinations of both her early training and projects in Vancouver, and then later reflecting on her many and varied projects outside of Canada, the discussion returns to one central question: how does an educational diaspora move forward? For Borda, as an artist from Canada, reconciling her practice to the influence and legacy of the Vancouver School, she has staked her art practice on continuing to work within many of the same forms and traditions

that inform the most rigorous dimensions of Vancouver photoconceptualism. Shaped through the interrogation, but not complete abandonment, of modernism, and attending to the crisis of the medium, hers is an art practice that maintains the potent and radical presence of the avant-garde gesture. Borda's art, in her own words, is "hybrid and unexpected,"[37] working within and between image based technologies stretching backwards into the moment of photography's invention, and into the future where new media forms emerge alongside advancements in cyberspace. But the evolution of her practice into the 21st century acknowledges the vulnerabilities and contingencies inherent in a world transformed through global capital, increased interdependence, and a complex entangled image economy. Borda's experiences as a contemporary artist moving between Canada and other places around the world confronts her with unique challenges unseen by earlier generations of the Vancouver School, ranging from the institutionalization and commodification of conceptual art, to a growing skepticism and outright crisis in parts of the art world concerning contemporary art's capacity to spark viable change. As Borda explains, her pieces are also precariously positioned, as they are always under constant threat of disappearing.

To return to the question posed at the outset of this examination—who has the time to stop, to slow down, and to think?—we can answer this question by calling upon the artist. In Crary's account of the speeding up of our contemporary world, he speaks of the "brevity of the interlude" before one technological invention replaces

another, pointing out that "the acceleration of novelty production is a disabling of collective memory, and it means that the evaporation of historical knowledge no longer has to be implemented from the top down."[38] This presents artists with both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to attract people's awareness to the reality that a culture of speed, technology, and distraction plays. Here Borda likens her goal of engaging audiences in sustained observation to that of the execution of a blind contour drawing, encouraging internal and external conversations, asking questions of what one observes, how one sees, how one makes sense of the world, and what the connection between the two might be.[39] But the opportunity also exists to find ways through art to create pauses, extended observation, and the slowing down of technological processes, to question the grounds upon which information and knowledge is created, represented, and recorded. As Borda remarks, this involves patiently building an art practice over years, from one project to the next, and moving with awareness and attention to each project. It is more than about the production of art, it is "breaking the expected order of things . . . and there is no vocabulary for what this is."[40]

Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 38.

2. Sylvia Borda, interview with Dorothy Barenscott, July 13, 2016.

3. Kenneth Baker, "Photography with an eye for social relevance," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 9, 2008.

4. Paul Virilio's account of *Speed and Politics* in a time of capitalist expansion ends with an ominous conclusion, stating that: "the reduction of distances has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space." Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006), 149.

5. Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slow: How A Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (Toronto: A.A. Knopf, 2004), 17.

6. Katherine Parhar, "Farm Tableaux," *Photomonitor Magazine UK*, September 1, 2016, http://www.photomonitor. co.uk/2016/07/sylvia-grace-borda-farm-tableaux.

7. Borda, interview.

8. Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2000).

9. Borda, interview.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 21.

14. Borda, interview.

15. Bart De Baere and Dieter Roelstraete, "Introducing Intertidal," in *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists*, eds. Scott Watson and Dieter Roelstraete (Vancouver: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2005), 10.

16. William Wood, "The Insufficiency of the World" in *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists*, eds. Scott Watson and Dieter Roelstraete, (Vancouver: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2005), 65.

17. Serge Guilbaut, "The Relevance of Modernism," in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, eds. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), xii. Guilbaut is Professor Emeritus of art history at the University of British Columbia.

18. Ian Wallace, "The Frontier of the Avant-Garde," in *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists*, eds. Scott Watson and Dieter Roelstraete (Vancouver: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2005), 52.

19. Scott Watson, "Terminal City: Place, Culture, and the Regional Inflection," in *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931–1983*, eds. Luke Rombout et al. (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983), 226.

20. Ibid., 227.

21. Ibid., 253.

22. Ian Wallace, "Photoconceptual Art in Vancouver," in *Thirteen Essays on Photography*, ed. Martha Langford (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 1990).

23. Ibid., 96–97.

24. Sharla Sava, "Cinematic Pictures: The Legacy of the Vancouver Counter-Tradition," in *Vancouver Art and Economies* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007), 49.

25. Ibid., 54.

26. Ibid.

27. Borda, interview.

28. Ibid.

29. Hal Foster, *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*, (New York: Verso, 2015), 41.

30. "Operational and performative capabilities assume a priority that overrides the significance of anything that might once have been thought of as 'content.' Rather than being a means to a larger set of ends, the apparatus is the end itself." Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, (New York: Verso, 2013), 44.

31. Crary, 24/7.

32. Foster, *Bad New Days*, 41.

33. Borda, interview.

34. Ibid.

35. "Many Indigenous thinkers regard all life as embedded in and dependent on a web of relationships that require constant care, an animate world of 'who' rather than of 'what.' In this perspective, the land itself is alive and has much to teach us." M. Fee, "What Can We Learn From Dining With Bears? Indigenous Stories, Worldviews, and the Environment," in *Canadian Culinary Imaginations*, eds. Shelley Boyd and Dorothy Barenscott (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

36. Marshall McLuhan, "Technology and Environment," reprinted in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven,*

Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art, eds. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 48.

37. Borda, interview.

38. Crary, 24/7, 45.

39. Borda, interview

40. Ibid.

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v > Images from *Hunting Cameras* (2017)
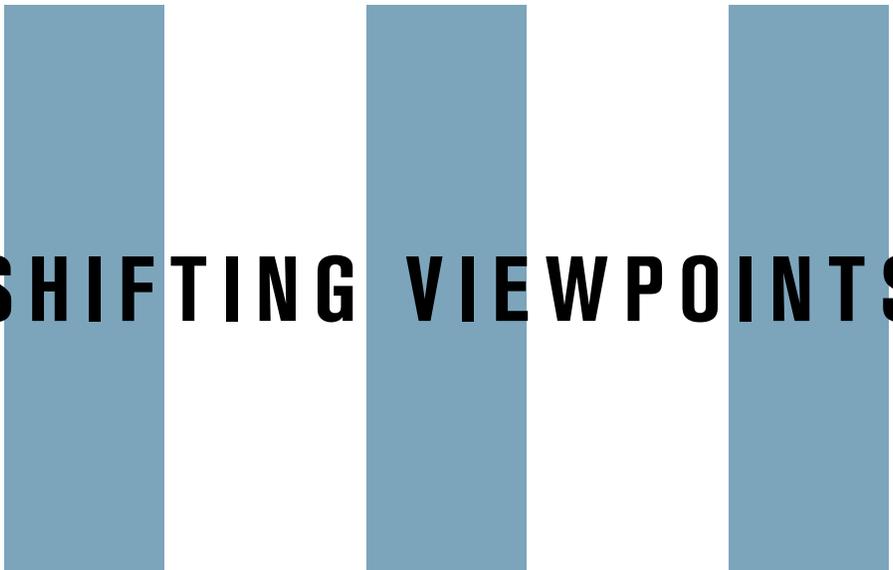
SHIFTING VIEWPOINTS

Farm Tableaux Dimensional Photography, Google Street View (2013)

Artist's Statement

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

The 19th century French photographer, Eugène Atget (1857–1927), worked in the early twilight hours to capture with his camera numerous scenes without disruption. Atget was able to create visual indices of Parisian streets, gardens, lanes, and canals, as well as urbanized and rural areas. Atget regarded his resultant photos as technologically produced *aides memoires* that could assist artists and planners in studying the minute details of everyday spaces before their disappearance to modernization.

For historical artists, many *aides memoires* and larger opuses of artworks (e.g., paintings and photographs) depicted the landscape. These works were always reflective of the immediate technology available to them. As such, these works could largely encompass one viewpoint within the artistic medium.

With these considerations in mind, I wondered if I could create a photographic artwork that could enable multiple viewpoints. This capability would support different narratives that could underline the tensions between historical and contemporary perceptions of land and labour and the external forces which impact them—a critical rationale for the photographic series, *Farm Tableaux*.

Subsequently, in approaching the *Farm Tableaux* series, I started to think about Google Street View as a new accessible medium which enables the public an opportunity to explore multiple points of view across a set of fixed camera positions or nodes in the landscape. In *Farm Tableaux*, a main focal point is the depiction of farmers enacting a daily activity in the contemporary context of labour. I wanted this physical point to become a dynamic scene—intimately viewable around the figures themselves and the surrounding landscape. The tableau concept, a French term for a 'living picture' comprising a group of motionless figures representing a scene, was aligned with the idea of multiple viewpoints

< Portrait (Sylvia Grace Borda) at Clover Valley Organics. *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

and what Google Street View might be able to support.

I was able to approach Surrey farmers for permission to capture images of their changing farmlands, and secondly if they would collaborate in the staging of a farm tableau that would be embedded in Google Street View. Each of the volunteer farm participants who had the task of standing motionless for up to 40 minutes in order to be captured by the Google panosphere cameras.In this way, I reverse-engineered photographic practices in which slow shutter speeds were the norm for studio photographers up until the late 1840s. The early studio cameras required the sitters to remain still (and often stiff) for several minutes at a time.

The resulting *Farm Tableaux* series is a complex layering of visual narrative. It is a nod to Atget in the face of modernization and a disappearing way of life, but the work further references the mid-19th century tableau series of farm labour produced by English pioneering photographer, Henry Peach Robinson (1830–1901).

In its placement within Google Street View, I have additionally taken the notion of portraiture and tableaux, and purposely stretched its boundaries. I have taken the overlooked subject of farmers and ultimately transformed them into three-dimensional portrait sitters captured in multiple viewpoints caught in time and space in an aspiration to expand and shift our notion of photography, net art, and worthy subject.

Originally five Surrey, BC farms were captured in the Google Street View engine in 2013. Since the shoot, many of the farms have had their routes altered to short exploratory

paths in order to conform with Google policies of place-recording—though a number of farmers and artist's portraits are still available within the engine to explore.

Farm Tableaux artworks can be accessed online through the following links:

- **Medomist Farm Ltd**, Surrey, BC, Canada http://tinyurl.com/gr4us75

- **Clover Valley Organic Farm**, Surrey, BC, Canada http://tinyurl.com/jv9rhc2

- **Finley's Rhododendrons**, Surrey, BC, Canada https://goo.gl/maps/805gN

- **Rondriso Farms**, Surrey, BC, Canada http://tinyurl.com/z8oqhcc

- **Zaklan Heritage Farm**, Surrey, BC, Canada http://tinyurl.com/jhgy5sv

Clover Valley Organics, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Clover Valley Organic Farm
Surrey, British Columbia

Linda and Michael Steele tending to their crops at Clover Valley Organics, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Chris Klapwijk at Finley's Rhododendrons, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Vern Finley pruning her garden plants at Finley's Rhododendrons, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Sue Klapwijk raking leaves at Finley's Rhododendrons, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Composition after Roy Arden's *Landfill, Richmond, BC* (1991), taken at Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Ron and Dri Tamis moving soil at Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

After Jeff Wall's *Diagonal Composition* (1993), Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013); (*overleaf*) Kevin Bose changing the water feeder at Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Still life after Jean Chardin (1699–1779), Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Gemma McNeill harvesting beans at Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Doug Zaklan and Gemma McNeill harvesting beans at Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

George and Evelyne Zaklan sorting the harvest for CSA boxes at Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

Aerial Fields Video Loop, 33 minutes (2013)

Artist's Statement

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

n developing a series of films focusing on agricultural production in Western Canada, entitled *Aerial Fields,* I explored farming and art as intersections of cultural production. Whilst there remains a quiet inherency within the lives of growers to see their habits as unworthy of comment, let alone the focus of art, this project tracked labour and cultivation methods through aerial field imagery.

Aerial Fields attempts to fill a void—depicting Surrey and Fraser Valley growers at work and thereby creating new indexical records of farm operations from unexpected perspectives. Not typically associated with artmaking, a video-equipped drone was employed as a way to revitalize the position of the artist/video-maker as both naturalist and observer.

My choice in the use of the video drone was two-fold. Firstly, as a photographer I am interested in using the camera beyond what the eye and hand can capture. Historic artists such as Jean Francois Millet and Eugene Atget, whether with easel or camera, they were only able to capture farmland from a ground perspective.

In this project I caught through aerial footage vastly carpeted and dense plantings rendered as continuous horizontal planes—something rarely experienced in art or life. Secondly through the physical separation of the recording device and the new visual perspective it enables, the concept of surveillance also comes to the forefront as part of my experiment. Of note, the term 'surveillance' means to watch or observe from above. In drawing from this fact that observation is at the core of artistic practice, I see my work as a set of observation studies or *aide memoires* which are a type of rapid sketch arising in the 19th century and often illustrating the shifting urban and rural landscapes at the time of the industrial revolution.

< Documentation of *Aerial Fields* drone flight at Collishaw Historic Farm (*top*); Captured images of Collishaw Historic Farm, *Aerial Fields* (2013) (*bottom*)

By using a remote controlled drone—a device often synonymous with surveillance—I reverse the process of aesthetic study and observation. By offering the public a series of tracking shots across the landscape, the viewers experience observational perspectives that have lacked a pervasive presence in Western Canadian art creation. The ability to 'reclaim' this visual space and record from low aerial viewpoints creates new study perspectives whilst also reflecting on the use of drone technology. What is seen, how it is recorded, and the fact it enters the public domain through an art exhibition—all heighten and challenge the viewer's ability to embrace the possibilities of what constitutes an artwork, and the opportunity to experience 'another view of Surrey' moving it beyond a typical urban definition.

In the adoption of remote technologies, I offer audiences a unique perspective from which to examine farm lands in Surrey and the Fraser Valley, and technological points of perspective from which to draw new visual maps.

The artwork was specifically edited to configure to the 100-foot-wide wall at UrbanScreen. Some scenes offer IMAX-inspired overhead shots of sweeping crops caught by the drone device. Other scenes are edited to be read as a diptych. In these scenes, a long shot is juxtaposed with close-up details, offering viewers multiple points of perspective that form singular narratives.

v Video still from Hansra Farms. *Aerial Fields* (2013)

> Video stills from Sundog Farms (*top*), and Fearing Farm (*middle and bottom*), *Aerial Fields* (2013)
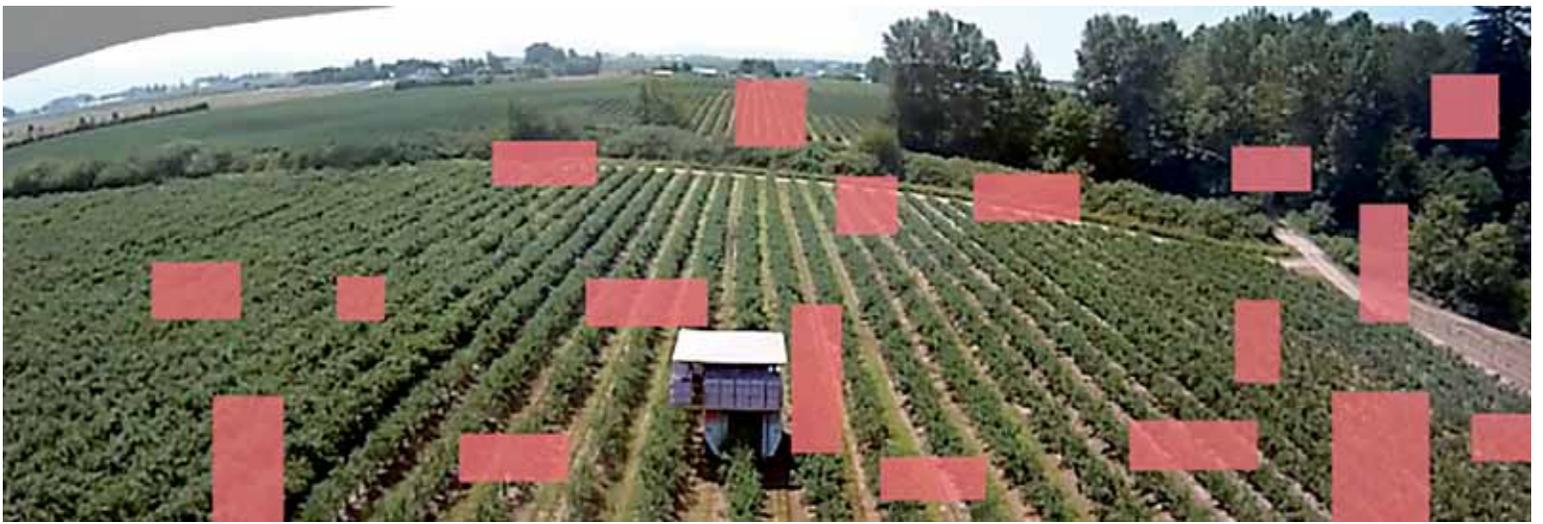
< Video stills from *Aerial Fields* (2013), including window overlay for projection on UrbanScreen, blueberry harvesting at R&R Farms;

∧ Corn fields at Medomist Farms Ltd. (*top*), and hay baling at Rondriso Farms (*bottom*)

^ *Aerial Fields* (2013) as projected on the Surrey Art Gallery's UrbanScreen at Chuck Bailey Recreation Centre (January 2014)

> Detail showing tree canopy from above Finley's Rhododendrons
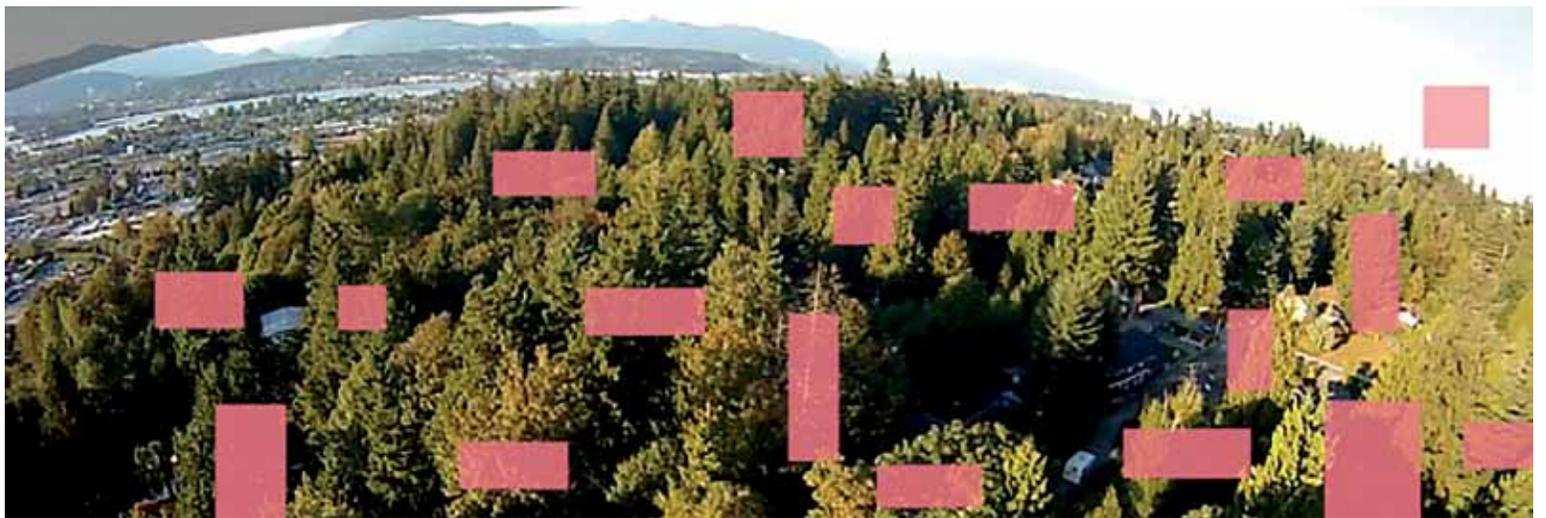
Farm Work Double Channel Video, 48 minutes (2013)

Artist's Statement

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

The lack of visibility of farming practices, and of contemporary debate about the placement of farming in the arts, puts it in a category of disregard.

For this series, I spent nearly seven months following farmers as they prepared, planted, tended, and harvested their crops through a Spring, Summer, and Autumn growing cycle. My multiple camera views of farmers at work, with their crops and animals in the landscape, highlight contradictions in which my images promote an aesthetic appreciation of the subjects at work and, simultaneously, illustrate the hard reality of farm labour. By filming farm tasks in real time, I appropriate concepts in art film to reveal a type of life and vitality not often exposed to public view. My works open up and question the objectified and dated 19th century paintings of farmers and farms, illustrating them as places that deserve closer examination outside the scope of Victorian romanticism.

< Video still of Pat and Sue Harrison sorting blueberries by hand at Collishaw Historic Farm, *Farm Work* (2013)

Video stills showing the delivery of poults at Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Work* (2013)

Video still of the work yard at Fearing Farm, *Farm Work* (2013)

Video still of blackberry bushes in silhouette at Fearing's Farm, *Farm Work* (2013)

Video still of tomato bushes in silhouette at Zaklan Heritage Farm, *Farm Work* (2013)
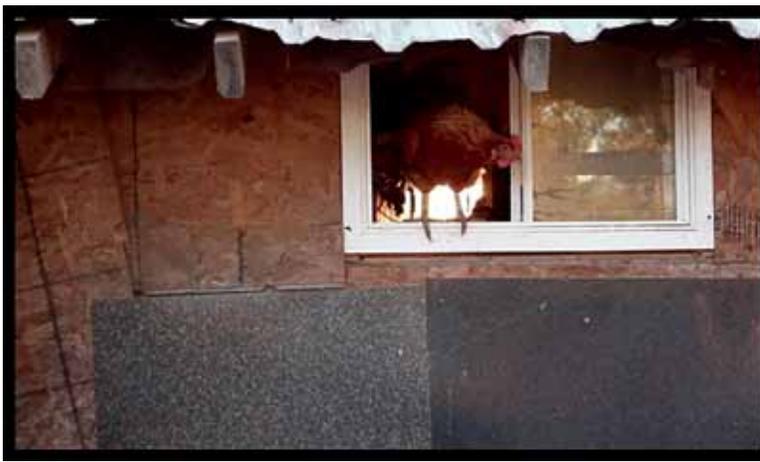
Video stills of the owner, Mr. Hansra, tending to his chickens at Hansra Farms, *Farm Work* (2013)

∧ Video stills of tomatoes (*top*) and sunflowers (*middle*) at Zaklan Heritage Farm, and interior images (*bottom*) of the turkey barn at Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Work* (2013)

(*overleaf*) Video still of potato harvest at Rondriso Farms, *Farm Work* (2013)

∧ > Video stills of workers leading the blueberry harvest at R&R Farms Ltd., *Farm Work* (2013)

Video stills of dairy production at Cedarbrink Dairy Ltd., *Farm Work* (2013)

Video stills of corn fields and barn images at Rondriso Farms (*top*), and workers preparing for the potato harvest at Rondriso Farms (*bottom*), *Farm Work* (2013)

Stereoviews:
Two points of perspective if not Three 38 Stereocards and Viewers (2013)

Artist's Statement

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

n stereo photography, also known as stereoscopy, the process of presenting two offset images separately to the left and right eye of the viewer enables two-dimensional images to have dimensional depth when seen through a stereoviewer. Victorian stereoscopic imagery was closely aligned with ideas of opening a dimensional world of places for viewers to explore first-hand through the photographic image. In *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three*, I use analog stereo-film techniques so that observers can have an increased sense of information about the three-dimensional objects being displayed. By nature of its format, the series makes direct reference to the two points of perspective required to produce a stereo image. In this way, I capture still photographic images of farming crops across seasonal timeframes from when crops are planted to when they are ready for harvest. The stereo process I use metaphorically and virtually allows the viewers to experience farming in close intimacy and dimensional detail. Since farms are often closed enterprises in which the public has limited familiarity with the seasonal and labour cycles, this series highlights some of the overlooked details associated with cultivation practices, as well as farm and land management.

Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three also plays subtly on the fact that I have selected my stereoview images to display both as diptych and three-dimensional works. This dimensionality is especially underscored in the capturing of unexpected abandonment in a farm field by focusing on a set of life-sized marble figures still left in their crates. The nameless figures scattered about in a field can be perceived as personifications of the seasons framed in the stereoviews—Summer and Autumn. The statues themselves, like the farm crops, are impacted by weather and invasive weeds, highlighting the vulnerability of the land and seasonal change. Critically, the figures direct our viewpoints as they gaze out into the land creating an unintentional third perspective.

Aura Stereoscopic Video Loop, 6 minutes (2013)

Artist's Statement

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA
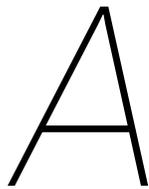
Aura investigates the relationships between time and place as manifested in 3-D real-time recording of hay being stored in a barn. In this piece, I combine image representation and memory as lived experiences but I also allude to the 'aura' of a space. By extending and playing with

close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand it manages to assure us of an immense field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and our furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement... does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. (Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 236)

As in my other works such as *Stereoviews: Two if not Three,* the structure of this artwork is treated as an optical device in which the doubling of images, use of enclosures and mechanical motion evoke a unique cinematic experience, a cinéma trouvé. The recordings are slow-moving close-ups or still framed compositions in which the subjects are revealed through an abstraction of place that hints at its purpose.

Aura also offers the viewer an ability to examine and experience 3-D video through a stereoscopic viewer. The combination of digital video and analog optical presentation further illustrates my belief in pioneering new approaches by merging and constructing artworks from past technologies.

< Video still from *Aura* (2013)

IV

SHIFTING LEGACIES

Farming and Art: An Unlikely Collaboration

RON TAMIS AND FAMILY Rondriso Farms, Surrey, BC

Since the 1950s, the Tamis family has been living and farming in Surrey, British Columbia. The farming enterprise started with my father and mother as a dairy farm in 1958. In 1980 they bought the property we farm now and originally, it too was a dairy farm for my brother. Due to a heart attack my Dad was forced into semi-retirement and switched farms with my brother, who combined all the cows and quota into one farm, while my dad started his beef herd. After 10 years and more heart complications I was invited back on to the farm and given the opportunity to do what we do now. While the farm has changed over the last 60 years, we continue to raise cattle and grow a variety of sustainably grown GMO-free field crops using cultivation processes that limit the use of spraying, while my brother continues to dairy farm with his production and pedigree award-winning herd started by my father.

The current Tamis family farm I manage, under the name *Rondriso*, has the same passion as was adopted by our parents. We want to continue to put food on the table for our community and neighbours. According to Brenda Schoepp, granddaughter of Henry Bose (and a member of one of the oldest farming families in Surrey), this is critical in realizing the importance of small farms in our community: "My grandfather used to say that once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman and a preacher, but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer." This concept of farming as part of our daily lives is lost in most industrialized cities.

Early on, Sylvia Grace Borda was committed to the idea that her art would serve the farming communities, as echoed in her project title *This one's for the Farmer*. And she wanted to illustrate how important locally grown food supplies are to the health of the community. She argued that if we understood the labour and knowledge applied in farming, we would better appreciate where and how food comes to our plate.

< Video still of Simmental cattle herded at Rondriso Farms, *Farm Work* (2013)

What has been particularly amazing about Sylvia coming to undertake artwork at our farm was that she posed us with an unexpected challenge—one of artistic collaboration. While observing her processes, we learned from Sylvia that dedication, creatively working together, and being respectful of each other's craft can create extremely thoughtful responses. In the earliest stages of its creation, it was hard to know what Sylvia was planning and how it would conclude. We were amazed at her video *Farm Work* and the time she spent watching us in the fields, from cutting hay to picking corn or herding the cows. She attempted to show how the small-scale farmer works the way of their land. When a person is trying to come up with ideas for a piece of visual art, spending time in the company of farmers may seem odd, but what she captured were the very nuances of the work and labour that would otherwise be invisible to another person, and are needed to bring a farmer's hard work to everyone's attention.

< Borda preparing to video hay baling at Rondriso Farms
v Video stills from *Farm Work* (2013) shot at Rondriso Farms
> Poster advertising Meri Ojanen's talk (2014)

Related to this, Sylvia remarkably moved from documenting farming practices in Surrey to winning an international arts award that took her to Finland, where she created artworks that reflect upon and appraise small and mid-sized farming practices in Scandinavia. Sylvia was fortunate to meet up and work with Meri (Ojanen) Remes, the then-young farmers representative of Finland's largest farming union MTK, with over 80,000 members. Sylvia did not forget her time in Surrey while abroad, and she assisted in arranging for Meri to come from Helsinki to visit our local farming community and even speak at Surrey City Hall about how Finnish farming practices could help resolve local land management issues.

Meri spoke out about how farmers have rights and access to relief workers, wherein other farmers can assist with family operations, so that everyone can get much needed rest and brief holidays away from their holdings. Meri also spoke about farmers' concerns about how land succession happens. This is now a problem we are faced with. In having three growing sons, my 43-acre holding barely allows for my family to generate enough income through the year, let alone with increasing drainage problems due to the increase in high density development. The ability to split my parcel of land to allow for all my children to farm is not feasible, and instead I am left with a crisis of knowing that the place where my children were born and raised will now not sustain them into the future. I may, in time, have to consider selling the farm in order to gift my boys enough funds to buy farmland elsewhere in the province, or to start their own lives in other professions.
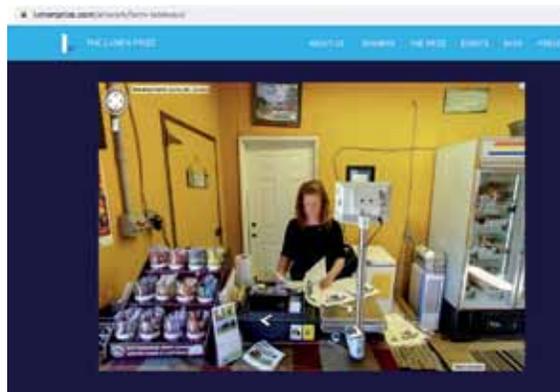
Lumen Prize profile page of *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2016), winner for best web artwork (*top*);
Pam at farm shop, Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013) (*bottom*)

We were also privileged that Sylvia brought another colleague to our doorstep, John M. Lynch, a Google Trusted photographer, to undertake work and develop *Farm Tableaux* at our farm. We were delighted and surprised when our Google Street View scenes were selected by the Lumen Prize committee for a prestigious digital arts award.

What most people will see in the Google pictures is a glimpse of our farm operations across a day. What I see in Sylvia's pictures is an extension of my own 'family album.' Often, supermarkets hire actors to be farmers, so we are never directly depicted—with Sylvia's project we were proud to be the subjects of her artworks.

The City of Surrey continues to grow rapidly and when we reflect on Sylvia's art, we realize a number of her partners and our colleagues have simply left their farming productions. Farmers are under constant pressure to sell their properties for potential re-development in Surrey for housing or to form other land holdings. While the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) was set up some thirty years ago to protect farmlands in BC, we feel urban planners have forgotten the need to visit active, as well as older generational farms, in order to understand some of the concerns that are present in terms of managing or even trying to expand a farming footprint in what has gone from an area once dominated by farmlands to a residential and commuter belt city.

Farming shouldn't end up at an art gallery or civic archive when it disappears altogether, but

Ron Tamis on tractor, Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

should remain upmost in the minds of people from cities and other communities is recognition of the importance of showing the variances in the landscape and the people who work there. An awareness of what's there often helps something like farming to be recognized as a significant part of our community. What Sylvia showed to us, is that artists, not unlike many farmers, do not make their best creations with people standing over them as mere spectators, but when working in true collaboration. Sylvia worked with all of us and as someone who captured our stories and lives, she also made

something visually beautiful for others to see, ponder and experience in a new way.

Sylvia's project gave farming a legitimacy and freedom of expression to be experienced as part of the visual arts. It made farming into an activity worthy of examination. These are the things that have since been turning over in my mind since the exhibition. We indeed need more students, local residents, artists, researchers and a host of others, to understand what's here.

Farming and art are worthy of further support. We trust Sylvia's project will continue to jumpstart more conversations between

Simmental cattle entering the barn at Rondriso Farms, *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

farmers, planners, and the public in creating an understanding of how a balanced civic folio can see more stakeholders work together to build a truly robust food system. There's nothing more satisfying than knowing your carrots, lettuce, and beets came only a few 100 meters away from your home.

Sylvia taught us there's no reason why we shouldn't challenge how family farming is looked upon by societies. Her refusal to give up has given us a platform and hope. Hope is something that evolves through creation and action. Once there is hope, it becomes contagious and assists in others moving forward to create more positive outcomes for their communities.

For all of us, in an era of attempting to curb climate change, reduce food miles, create local food networks, and etcetera, it will be more critical to family farms like ours across urban and rural cities in North America to be part of the solution. We can feed our communities, but we need everyone's support to make it happen. Let's start the dialogue: how can we help each other? Hope and good will are already there.

Video still of Ron Tamis with his dog, Coupar, *Farm Work* (2013)

Reflections on Artmaking:
The Part That's Hardly Ever Spoken About

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

1. In the Beginning . . .

My parents enjoyed travelling Highway 1 on the King George Highway winding its way out of Vancouver in their new Volkswagen Beetle for a leisurely drive. To head out to Surrey, no less!—And this is how I spent the first 12 years of life. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s a visit to the Surrey Art Gallery (in its former footprint) was a cultural adventure for my family, not only to see the most recent contemporary art exhibitions, but to participate in some of its new art education outreach programs. Even in those days, Surrey Art Gallery was the second largest public art gallery in Metro Vancouver, and remains so to this day.

If we weren't at the Gallery, my family was heading off somewhere to visit more of rural Surrey and its surroundings so we could do 'U-Pick' from endless rows of strawberry fields, or buy freshly collected harvest from local farmers for our evening meal. So my parents journeyed us out as a family to Surrey as a place where we could wander around its rural farm food stalls or explore the Arts Centre and adjoining Bear Creek Park.

As a sessional lecturer at UBC, and later Assistant Professor in Digital Arts at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, I had a renewed acquaintance with Surrey. My Surrey-based students felt at odds with this growing suburb that at the time lacked a real centre, and was a location where services and culture were often being negatively defined by the news media.

However, as a young lecturer I continued to trek to Surrey to visit its parks, be engaged in art programming at the Arts Centre, and to visit long-time family friends in the north and east of Surrey. It was during this time that I became acquainted with the opening of the TechLab and encouraged my own students to experience the latest digital media

< Images from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

art. It was one of the few sites of visionary arts curatorship in this field at the time.

Subsequently in the last 15 years I have worked on various arts projects in Surrey. Among them, projects like *Glocal* (2008–2010), Surrey's first UrbanScreen initiative, which gained international attention at events such as the Balkans Triennale. Similarly, the postcard project *(Sub)Urban Exchange* became part of an international collaboration with the East Kilbride Arts Centre, and became a source of inspiration for future youth arts engagement programming undertaken by The Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Art, Architecture, and Design.

Exhibiton of *Glocal* images at the Balkans Triennale, curated by Sanja Kojić Mladenov (Novi Sad, 2009)

So this journey to Surrey starting in my formative years has fortuitously become and continues to be a part of an evolving arts persona—the City as an ever-transitioning space across the suburburban and urban.

2. Why Surrey? It's Just a Suburb . . .

> Possibly the word 'suburb' itself is an issue. A suburb is defined as a satellite area which has developed on the fringes of a larger city. Already in this definition, the suburb is compared to a more resourced urban zone. In assigning the locative term 'suburb' to a place, we are positioning it in terms of a sociopolitical framework. The city has resources and structure, whereas the suburb has basic amenities and loosely structured housing. The fact, that the 'suburb' exists to take on a city's overspill and to manage the excesses of residential, industrial and economic growth, is regularly ignored.
>
> (Borda, "Defining the Suburban," in *(Sub)Urban Exchange* catalogue, Surrey Art Gallery, 2007)

Surrey, over the last 20 years, has undergone rapid densification and redevelopment, changing everything from the assignment of rural land to its own sociocultural histories. Surrey's civic motto was *City of Parks* until 2009, before it changed to *The Future Lives Here*. The City is moving forward to pave a future of housing, citizens, amenities, trade development, and more—and this will continue into the foreseeable future as one of the largest growth centres in the province.

Since the beginning of my art development in Surrey, I have always considered it 'my Paris of the North.' Perhaps an odd declaration, but Surrey reminds me of Paris from the 1850s before Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891) was instructed by Napolean III to redevelop it from a medieval-like city into the megacity of wide urban boulevards that we know today.

The Paris before Hausmann's plans was one of mixed districts that included an arrangement of ad hoc drainage canals, cottage

houses, churches, small farms, a variety of haphazard housing projects, and small family stores lining the alleyways. This old Paris was recorded mainly by photographer, Eugène Atget (1857–1927) before these districts were being cleared for the Hausmann modernization plan. Atget's photographs reveal a city contrary to our understanding of today's Paris. Like Surrey today—it was a place of layers of habitation, shops, trade, religion, and local farming—mostly self imposed. This old Paris had a different scale—it was relatively flat in comparison to the boulevard-lined apartments and road works that

would follow. While many of us think of Paris today as the original city, it evolved over several generations, moving from the old to the new and avant-garde, until its form has become what we know and recognize.

What is unique to Surrey is that its agricultural land, urban, and transport planning are in constant flux in order to build a world class city. Planners are working at a rate to 'in fill' the City with many developments, leading to a whole new form of City. All of this is happening within my timeframe of living in the Lower Mainland. Surrey is likely to become a mega-city within the next generation

Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

of inhabitants. While cities change and evolve, it's unusual to be privy to see urban transformation at this scale within my lifetime. These changes can inevitably bring tensions, inequity, and differences, as well as whole new ways the city considers transport, food security, and education, among other liveability factors.

Just as the City of Surrey represents an urban evolution, I reflect on my Surrey-based artworks and what I have learned in terms of legacy-building through the arts.

3. Reflections on the Suburban

Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC

When I started, for instance, with the production of the photographic series *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC,* in 2003–2004, I had not expected that what was observed would later become part of urban planning and place-making. By walking great swathes of the City by foot and later biking it, I produced an internal map of the City and its hundreds of bus stops. I also learned about some of its unwritten histories from stereotypes to pressing public issues.

My artwork about Surrey was a test of sorts—by illustrating different facets of the City without prejudice I encountered some of my own artistic hopes and other unexpected dynamics within the project. I sincerely wanted to push the boundaries of urban representation. This would be a means for locals and visitors alike to discover more about the City and what could make it more democratic, sustainable, and an equitable place to live. To achieve the vision, my art history training led me to borrow from

photographer Ed Ruscha's conceptual artwork *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966) in order to create my own conceptualization of a place that was critized for lacking a contemporary art core.

By engaging first hand with the City of Surrey as a large scale landscape, in what seemingly appeared as a simple task of walking to and recording bus stops, I encountered responses that I couldn't have expected. Everything from residents who were annoyed at me standing on public pedestrian sidewalks doing my camera work, to wrongly thinking I was a land developer taking snapshots of their neighbourhoods and homes for future projects.

Equally, I entered so-called bad neighbourhoods, where I was often followed by heavily clad leather jacketed men on their motorbikes. While they never approached my directly, I am sure they mistook me for a young undercover female police officer with camera in hand, trying to locate drug houses—which unfortunately Surrey was associated with until some years ago.

What *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* offered local citizens was a chance to see their City in its entirety without bias. The Gallery reported that on weekends visitors would come and either set up a beach blanket or fold-up chairs, waiting patiently to cheer for their local bus stop when it showed on the screen. The press nicknamed the work 'the venus-fly trap' as visitors often stayed for the whole duration of the film loop (more than 40 minutes).

For outsiders or regional guests, *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* illustrated the diversity in design, layout, house construction, industrial zones, and green belts that the City had to offer.

< Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

It was intended that *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* would be a transparent project, from its title to to the activity of recording all of its bus stops. In this way I had opened up Surrey to its audiences. The project also filled a growing demand—a tool that could portray in a neutral manner through the arts a more adaptable and amenable City. The accompanying Internet art and online media map provided residents with neighbourhood visualization points that potentially sparked new ideas of how to explore and to redefine the City as their own.

In resolving the issue of how to illustrate neighbourhoods in a map-like format, *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* was a sort of forerunner to Google Street View. The Internet version of the art project offered viewers an opportunity to build and expand their existing knowledge of the City and extend it. This would ultimately move them beyond silos and stereotypes to what was really present, as shown in the photos.

A Story of Surrey and East Kilbride

> In the UK, the term 'New Town' has been an equally misunderstood concept, much like that of a suburb. Communities in both living situations can feel inferior in terms of civic pride, despite the high visionary and social aims of suburban planners. This lack of pride often negatively impacts how local residents feel about where they live. (Borda, "Defining the suburban" in *(Sub)Urban Exchange* catalogue, 2007)

In completing *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC,* two journeys were completed. One journey as a contemporary artwork, and the other as an archive of place.

Some key questions arose as part of these journeys:

- How does an artist overcome public barriers or misconceptions of a place through the arts?

- How does one make, gather, collect, and combine data about places in order to impact our ideas about visual art or even planning and local social history?

- How can a visual art platform help visitors/users better understand art and architectural input?

- How can an artwork be both contemporary and act simultaneously as an archive?

These questions would come to fruition in chronicling another suburban City from another part of the world: East Kilbride, Scotland.

Surrey, BC, from a decade ago to the present has and remains Canada's fastest growing city and as a result is experiencing changes in terms of its original urban plan and physical arrangement. The City centre area is continually being redefined and built as the village cores (Surrey being made of 12 older community areas) melts away to give way to this new destination area. Whereas East Kilbride is Scotland's first New Town, built as an outgrowth city from Glasgow. This development allowed for better accommodation of an overpopulation from Glasgow, and industries to be developed from the ground up.

While these two very separate locations became places that I walked and photographed

Postcard produced by a secondary student in Scotland for the *(Sub)Urban Exchange* exhibition hosted at the East Kilbride Arts Centre and Surrey Art Gallery (2007)

in detail, I also started to understand these two areas relationally as well.

Interestingly, both East Kilbride and Surrey have few photographic postcards or tourist ephemera to promote the city among local residents and visitors. East Kilbride residents are left to assign their town with images synonymous with Scotland's historic and medieval past rather than with its own recent history associated with Modernist social urban development. In Surrey, residents are exposed to ephemera mainly related to adjoining attractions of Vancouver, the US-Canada border, and natural beauty in the province, despite the city sustaining many loved urban parks and several nature reserves.

These latter observations led to the development of the project (*Sub)Urban Exchange* (2007) in which I invited youth to chronicle their own neighbourhoods.

(Sub)Urban Exchange

Assigning cultural worth is complicated. By our nature, we often value what others express. We seek information to affirm our lifestyle choices, and ultimately, where we choose to live. For example, in defining an urban city, we often compare it to major cultural capitals. World class cities are defined against known markers such as population diversity, recognized museums and entertainment areas, shopping districts, schools, and capital wealth. Our comparisons about a place in relation to another being similar, worse or better is also informed by what we have seen, read, or heard. In this way, what might be of value to one person about a city may be valueless to the next. This is more complicated when it comes to assigning value to a suburb.
("Defining the Suburban," 2007)

In (*Sub)Urban Exchange,* my brief was to mentor students from across primary to

secondary schools in East Kilbride, Scotland, and also to guide students from Enver Creek Secondary School in Surrey, BC, to explore its adjacent neighbourhood of Whalley as a way to understand on-going civic change. A key objective in leading this joint exhibition was to collaboratively promote each partner location as places where people were proud to live, work, and play, and to emphasize this through the exchange of photo postcards and stories between the participating schools. These postcards were displayed locally in their retrospective home-based civic art galleries.

Surrey and Scottish schools were involved in the project from April to September 2007. The *(Sub)Urban Exchange: EastKilbride.uk <> Surrey. ca* led to multimedia screen, web and print exhibitions in the foyer galleries at the Surrey Art Gallery. A parallel exhibition was staged at the East Kilbride Arts Centre where student and artist-led works were displayed. In the Scottish exhibition, the public also had access to sticky post-card adhesives. They could stick their own favourite photograph of their town on the front and send it away to friends with their own thoughts about being from East Kilbride.

An exhibition catalogue was produced, including an essay where I attempted to describe the relationship between the two cities, to assign value in the work developed in these communities, and to give resonance about the need to chronicle cities in transition.

On reflecting what was accomplished and has since emerged, it has become apparent that the City of Surrey has undergone another defining moment. It has become a city in its own right—no longer a suburban outpost.

4. Documenting Disappearance

There is no doubt that Surrey has continued to develop, grow and focus on creating its own cultural centre—a location where the Central Library, City Hall, and soon-to-be-built Art Museum will establish itself. New places are constantly being designed in order to enhance where local residents can gather to enjoy themselves and share experiences—whilst older areas with which both residents and memories are associated seem to be disappearing. In the 'downtown core,' the advancement of business districts and universities (Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University), plus the addition of big box shops, high rises, and a metro line, have all helped the city to attain a vibrancy and density where once stood smaller shops and single house dwellings.

Few might recall that Surrey has a far-reaching agrarian history—and the City's shifting boundaries were once enclosed by more farmland and forests than dwellings. As part of commission work at the Surrey Art Gallery, I piloted my first agri-art work with a research exhibition entitled *Field Studies*. The title was a play on the role of a social geographer and the reality of an artist out in the field. Not least, I was spending all my time literally in the fields of local farms—some of which no longer exist, having disappeared due to urban encroachment, or the aging population of farmers with less young people having an opportunity due to limited and escalating land costs to pick up farming as a career.

Throughout regions of Canada, a high percentage of agricultural space is also inhabited and worked on by a small percentage

Image from *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004)

of the country's overall population. While these agricultural spaces are critical to maintaining a healthy food supply, modern day thinking about contemporary life has become nearly synonymous with urban existence with little thought given to the role of farming. But farming is not just confined to the 'countryside,' in Surrey rich agricultural land is situated between urban and industrial developments. This juxtaposition puts it in a space largely removed from public view or consciousness.

In *Field Studies,* I attempted to re-address the meaning of contemporary Canadian farming in urban life and its representation through art production. In art sources, representations of the agricultural world are still dominated by romantic depictions of the countryside and farmers working by hand tilling the land. This romanticized view also underpins farming as a pastoral retreat free from modern developments. Arguably today's farms are locations of food production supporting growth in market and tourism economies on par with urban economic forces. *Field Studies* (2011)*,* which evolved into a subsequent project, *This one's for the Farmer* (2012–2013), firmly positioned farming practices and the role of the artist working with these subjects, in the contemporary world.

Overall, such projects as *Field Studies* and *This one's for the Farmer* had a mission to generate local pride and help to forge a new identity based on re-examing food sovereignty through the arts.

In reflecting on these projects food is increasingly becoming critical to how contemporary lifestyles are defined. As farming changes, education about farming practices must similarly grow in order to reduce the gap between the consumer and food. Without this, the disappearance of small rural and suburban farms will continue to rise in Canada, and new alternatives to food production will need to be considered.

5. Working with an Artist— Creating Public Legacy

Reflecting on artmaking across a number of commissions has highlighted some common threads about creating legacy for the public. There is always the 'vision,' but artmaking does not lead one there. It is a much more involved process of generosity and engagement.

Becoming a socially engaged practitioner.
Being an artist in residence at the Surrey Art Gallery and in other places, I can reflect on how my practice has evolved through research, public and educational engagement and exhibition.

The success of art projects lies in an ability to engage and capture community interest—it shares much with social entrepreneurship in that there is often a goal of addressing a shared issue and transforming the approaches of the audience, the viewer to lead to an awareness or understanding, or even a solution through the facilitation of the arts.

Projects need context to be sensitive to a community and/or place.
Undertaking research and engaging with different groups, I have been able to respond to emergent ideas through photography,

archival study, community discussion, and school outreach. Consequently, I learned how local and non-residents perceived Surrey and its many public amenities. Their thoughts became my guide on how I might approach the development of the artwork, and how to make it as accessible as possible.

Open and free access to content can build audiences. Chronicling Surrey's transit grid through its multiple bus stops and equally capturing in the frame many of the adjacent paths, buildings, and parks within each of the bus zones, for instance, allowed me as an artist to model the city into artwork. The choice of a web-enabled artwork for *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004) to complement the physical exhibition, led to greater distribution and access. Equally the art series *Farm Tableaux* (2013) could capture the interests of online audiences using the Google Street View platform anywhere in the world. Audiences could interact with the net art according to their own interests and at their own leisure.

Intimacy, immediacy, and ownership are enhanced when viewing text or visual content on a personal device. These became key ideas in bringing about a public artwork to a wider distributed audience—and especially to raise awareness about other overlooked places which could equally represent contemporary art, such as farms and bus stops.

It's not enough to represent the subject to the public; there is an equal need to illustrate its value. Throughout my project delivery, community engagement was recognized through direct

discussion and exchange. As an artist I learned that having the public participate, re-create, re-interpret, and respond to my projects assisted in the work being better understood by them. Since the public was engaging through similar exercises performed by myself in the art-making process, there became a greater foundation for dialogue and synergies between the participants, and particularly the recognition of shared values.

The ability to illustrate the breadth of Surrey through partnering exhibitions in Canada and Scotland also highlighted the work and attracted new audiences and associated value. Before the meteoric rise of social media, favourable reviews in the *East Kilbride Newspaper*, *UK Herald* (Scotland), the *Georgia Straight* (Vancouver), and *En Route* (Air Canada's national airline magazine), provided an immediacy and opportunity for a wider public to experience the social and urban landscape of Surrey, BC.

To legitimize a project, public participation can enhance experience. The ability to *share and feel ownership over the content* is what ultimately enhanced the experience of participation across the works. For example, during the production of *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC*, the public were asked to help photograph bus stops in their neighbourhoods in order to add to the project's growing archive— and in line with the City's rapid transit growth.

In *Farm Tableaux,* the portraits of farmers at work acted as a family album for participants to share within their own communities. The use of Google Street View provided a greater capacity to share

and create ownership—and for many here and abroad to find shared resonance in this identity with land, labour, and family.

Learning together creates a stronger community. Since Surrey is not a typical city associated with tourist ephemera it was proposed that I could readdress this by asking students to make their own postcards (*Sub)Urban Exchange* (2007). School participants were invited to think about and record what they thought made their location interesting.

In delivering school workshops both in Surrey and in East Kilbride, I invited students to undertake what I termed 'architectural archaeology'. In this strand, students were educated about their immediate local areas through guided tours of their built environment. As part of their exercises, students were encouraged to document their tour and also to chronicle it before its footprint would change through pending regeneration by new urban development (e.g., the removal of low level and single home dwellings) in favour of new high rises, schools or multiplexes. Both student communities learnt that they are not alone in their local experiences and suburban relationships to larger metropolitan areas.

Community engagement can continue to build on successes and create new opportunities. The Surrey Art Gallery in co-ordination with civic teams extended the artwork *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* (2004) with a set of public responses by creating a series of senior walking tours. The City team invited the public to record

their own neighbourhood bus stops as part of healthy living and walking. This result created opportunities for community members to share their own narratives about their local places.

Each volunteer member of the public became an 'art star' through this process, and this naturally led to an *increased awareness of civic history* and art-making processes. Continuing opportunities with public involvement are arising with the Gallery in the creation of a set of education learning packages responding to the artworks. The vision for the forthcoming Interactive Art Museum will extend the boundaries further—a fluid partnership of public and curatorship.

Critically it can be said that this process of engagement is the real legacy that arises through art creation. This is perhaps the most desirable outcome for anyone in an arts partnership. It links directly to community, a form of cultural empathy—however far or close, without often a need to define the community, other than through an empathetic association of place or curiousity, or just a moment of self-learning. Like all those years ago, when I was travelling to Surrey in the family Volkswagen, what kept us coming back were precisely these connections.

> Postcards produced by secondary students in Surrey, BC, and East Kilrbide, Scotland, for the *(Sub)Urban Exchange* exhibition hosted at the East Kilbride Arts Centre and the Surrey Art Gallery in 2007

POSTCARD

EAST KILBRIDE was nicknamed garden city because the large green areas which could be seen from many windows. It was intended to be focused around the schools, which cost around £350 000 in the 50s which is a lot of money to day.

(Sub)urban Exchange:
EastKilbride.uk <> Surrey.ca
A postcard exchange between young photographers from East Kilbride, Scotland and Surrey, Canada.

Lisa Roberton

Photo Taken June 2007

1,600 students attend classes at SFU Surrey's current campus location. In September 2006, Simon Fraser University opened its permanent campus in Surrey's Central City building, which is an award-winning architectural complex that will be home to over 5,500 SFU students within the next ten years.

(Sub)urban Exchange:
EastKilbride.uk <> Surrey.ca
A postcard exchange between youth photographers from Surrey, Canada and East Kilbride, Scotland.
August 18 - December 9, 2007 at the Surrey Art Gallery

Lynda Nguyen

Grade 11 Photography

"Central City"

Artists, Archives, and Exchanges

RACHEL NORDSTROM

Photographic Collections Manager
University of St Andrews Library, Special Collections

To appreciate the work of Sylvia Grace Borda it is important to understand the broad-reaching roots of her photographic practice and the inspiration she has found over the decades in three seemingly unconnected nations: Japan, Scotland, and Canada. Borda is a Canadian artist but works extensively in Scotland. Scotland played a pivotal role in the early experimentation and expansion of photography. Japan, with its deep appreciation for the visual arts and historic photography and a well-supported cultural heritage sector, is where Borda first encountered the interplay between historical photography and contemporary practice.

Borda's photographic journey documenting the farming arts does not start in Japan, but the first spark of inspiration for key bodies of her work does. During the late 1990s, while undertaking cultural research in Tokyo on behalf of the Vancouver Museum, Borda embarked upon a large body of work that would form *Capital Cities*, a comparison of Tokyo and London metro systems. It was during this time that she met curators from many heritage institutions, but most importantly for this narrative, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, now the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum. The Museum's exhibitions regularly focus on historical imagery and reference the origins of photographic technologies and historic practice. Borda also noted how the curators included artistic response to, and re-interpretation of these older processes within new artforms. This duality of past and present stuck with Borda and came to the fore through her later experiences in Scotland.

In 1839, the way we saw and documented the world around us changed. The invention of photography was not an isolated event: for over a hundred years, the scientific community had been experimenting with ways to capture images *through the agency of light alone,* and to fix those images to a surface. Daguerre's announcement in Paris in January of 1839 spurred Henry Talbot of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, England to announce

< *Straw Bales at St Nicholas Farm* (c.1945), George Cowie Collection, University of St Andrews, Scotland, ID: GMC-FA5 (*top*); Stereo card of hay bales from *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three* (2013) (*bottom*)

his unrelated photographic process. This process was not as refined as the daguerreotype process and still needed some further improvements before it could become a viable image-making system. Due to the complicated nature of patent laws in Britain, the development of Talbot's photographic process stagnated in much of the world with the exception of Scotland, where a small group of determined scientists in St Andrews, Fife refined the process to become a viable positive-negative photographic technique. This fostered an extensive lineage of photographers and a fully engaged photographic community stemming from a shared history and passion for the medium that blends art and science. As a result, several key archives across Scotland hold significant photographic collections which extend from early to contemporary works. It was within one of these archives, at the University of St Andrews Library's Special Collections, where Borda first encountered a lesser-known group of images within the extensive George Cowie Collection during her visits between 2012 and 2013.

This farming series, which consisted of a couple of hundred images documenting local agricultural practices and related social events in Fife from the 1930s through to the 1960s, struck a chord with Borda. In Surrey, BC, she noted how the city had gone through a major revitalization project in the preceding years, which put increased strain on the local farming community. These themes echoed other Scottish urbanization projects she had worked on in East Kilbride and Glenrothes. Among related archival holdings at St Andrews there were several *stereoviews*—a common and engaging photographic format which gripped nearly every household and photographic publisher in Britain for the latter half of the 19th century.

Borda's first encounter with stereo imagery had been fifteen years earlier during her time in Tokyo and this reappearance of the stereo format paired with farming imagery led to the creation of two significant bodies of work addressed in this publication: *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three* and *Aura*.

Partly influenced by the works of photographer Karl Blossfeldt, Borda uses simple subjects and close framing—but with the third-dimensionality of depth through the incorporation of stereo—to create an added layer of engagement. Her stereoviews, in some cases, read like botanical illustrations informing the viewer of a specific typology of flora. This also reflects back to the prolific Scottish photographer of the later 19th century, George Washington Wilson. Wilson used stereophotography in much the same way, to disseminate visual landscapes through an immersive experience. While stereoviews are historically associated with the leisure entertainment of Victorian Britain, Borda's work has mapped landscapes, as well as farm activities—becoming simultaneously a visual archive of agricultural practices and a contemporary art project.

Borda next embarked on the production of *Aura. Aura* is an intimate video installation in which viewers sit in a booth, holding a stereo-viewer, which blends two slightly different images into one view, giving the illusion of depth to the audience. Her work is unusual in that the video

Video still from *Aura* (2013)

is shown as a stereo-diptych. The video, six-minutes long, shows bales of hay being stacked in a barn. While the background normally does not distract from the subject, she has played with the featureless area between and around key elements in her image plane. The negative space is emphasized by grains of dust as they float across the frame and at times occupy most of the scene. Shot using high speed film, these particles are reminiscent of grainy analog photographs. These aspects of the video may often go unnoticed by viewers, but the movement of the dust, hay and grasses within a three-dimensional plane is undeniably mesmerising.

Unlike two-dimensional photography, Borda's arrangement of elements within her three-dimensional pictorial plane strikes a balance amid the interplay between a strong foreground and key background anchors or points of interest. Her use of a handheld

stereoviewer in her exhibition work creates an intimate and unexpected space. The farms become tangible places, something one can grasp in hand while also explore with the eye.

Few artists incorporate historic art-making processes, methodology, techniques, or formats into their subject material in the way Borda has. This is a strength of her practice. She moves the viewer along different terrains through her personal view of farming which aims to shift perceived stereotypes and share the often-overlooked working operations.

Equally, exhibition curators often overlook the potential for contemporary artistic inspiration which is contained in archives and historic collections. However, these outcomes can surpass the limitations of time and geographical place. Bringing this story full circle, we have recently been reminded of the cultural importance Japan places in the history of

photography through the exhibition *The Origin of Photography: Great Britain*. The University of St Andrews undertook their largest ever loan of 1840s photographic material to the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum in early 2019. The chief curator, Keishi Mitsui, was keen to fully articulate the importance of Scottish photography and impress into the minds of visitors a sense of awe and inspiration for the achievements made by the first photographers in documenting landscape and people. It is here, within these visual encounters with art and photographic archives we hope people from all areas of society find inspiration and interest.

I am encouraged by the path of Borda's artistic work, and stimulated by her early exposure to photographic art and archives in Japan and Scotland, among other geographies.

∧ Beet picking (1950) *George Cowie Collection* (*left*), courtesy of University of St Andrews, Scotland, ID: GMC-27-5-3; Video still of potato harvesting at Rondriso Farms. *Farm Work* (2013) (*right*)

> Table stereoviewer with images from the series, *Stereoviews—Two perspectives if not Three* (2013) (*top*), and a stereo artwork from this series (*bottom*)

She has embarked on a journey of expression and discovery which has so far lasted over two decades. The importance of engagement with and meaningful discourse surrounding the visual remnants of the past breathes new life into collections and keeps them relevant to the contemporary practitioners of photography. This is what artists must conspire to do: take motivation from the spaces, meaning, and contexts they encounter, then interweave these threads into their practice.

Report a problem

Closing Reflections

LIANE DAVISON

S ylvia Grace Borda's work has long deserved a publication that would document the significance of her contribution to the realm of contemporary photographic art—both in Canada and internationally. This book offers multiple perspectives on the various projects she has undertaken, often commissioned by Surrey Art Gallery. Each project, as you will see, has been unique, and all use photography as a practice of both investigation and picturing.

While the writing included in this publication shares her deep conceptual engagement with photography, Borda has also explored, and continues to be fascinated by, all forms of photographic technology. She has built and created works using the ancient form of the camera obscura. And it was no small accomplishment to overcome multiple barriers to become the first artist to create a digital work within the virtual realm of Google Street View. Her portfolio demonstrates experimentation with many other forms of photographic strategies and devices, from photograms to stereoscopic digital videography.

Her earliest photographic series included singularly beautiful and thoughtful images of international modernist architecture—specifically airports and rapid transit stations—well informed by the precedents of documentarian photographers such as Bernhard "Bernd" Becher and Hilla Becher. This early interest in modernism and cities persists as a theme throughout much of her work. She has travelled the world and discovered surprising similarities between otherwise very different cities. This is apparent in projects connecting Surrey and East Kilbride, one of Scotland's modernist new towns, and the urban organic farms nestled in the suburban neighbourhoods of Surrey and Scandinavia.

Along the way, Borda has overcome both technical and physical challenges to complete each project and create her photographic series. She was one of the first artists to use drone technology at a time when Canadian aviation regulations required their operators to have a pilot's license. She first started working with digital photographs long before the existence of gigabyte computers and before terabyte portable storage devices
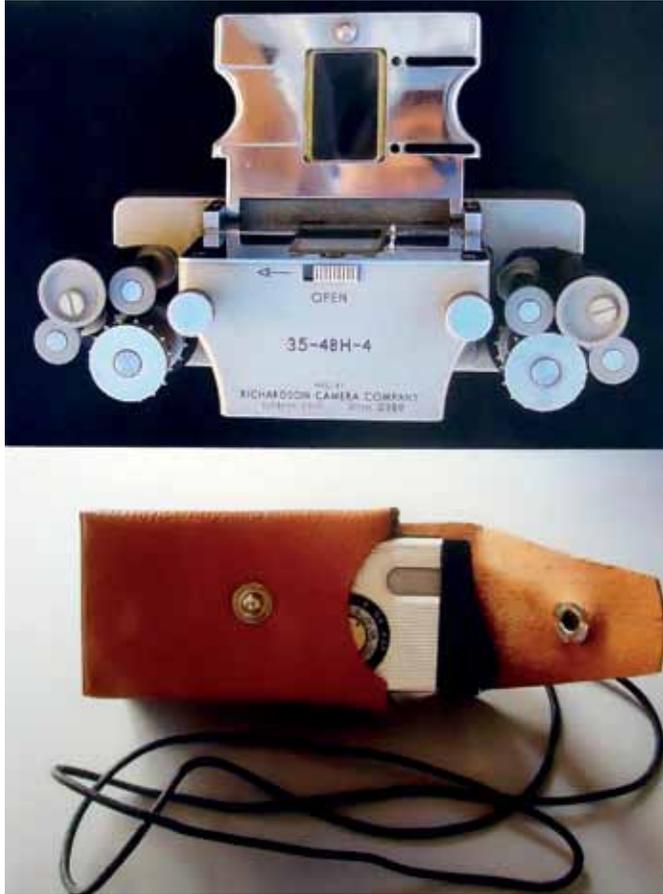
< Artist's initials (SGB) and camera gear as captured at.Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

had even been imagined. She had to store her images using magnetic tape, and leverage her network of friends to access the industrial computers used by the film industry to edit them; now, we have the same power and storage capacity on our mobile phones.

What remains most impressive to Surrey Art Gallery is the portrait Borda created in 2004 as a result of walking, biking, driving in cars, or riding on buses along every transit route in the City of Surrey—an area encompassing 370 square kilometres. She generated a database of over 1600 photographs, documenting every bus stop in the city, and produced a snapshot in time of a city that continues to undergo dramatic change as it urbanizes.

Borda's camera(s) are a witness of a place and time. But it is the way in which she works with the media provided to her by cameras that produces art—and her artworks will be meaningful for generations to come. We knew this the first time we witnessed Gallery visitors' fascination with the exhibition of *Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC* and we were grateful to acquire this artwork into the Gallery's permanent collection.

Surrey Art Gallery is honoured to have had the opportunity to partner with Sylvia Grace Borda on numerous projects over many years and, now, to share with you the work of this extraordinary artist.
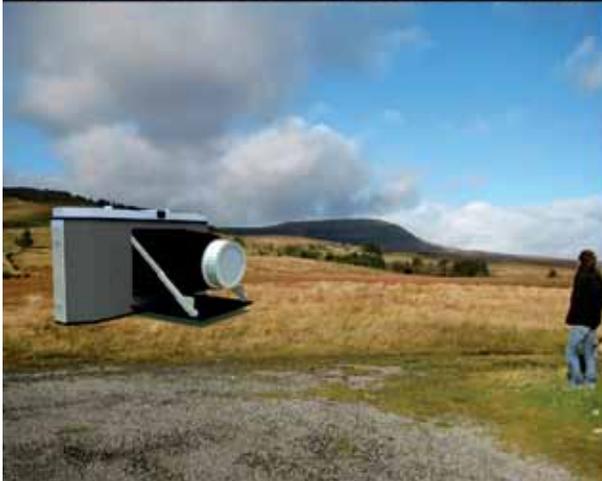
AFTERWORD
Reflections on the Emergence of the Dimensional Photograph

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA

With the advent of photography, the public was introduced to a medium that could reproduce the likeness of a person or a place, similar to what could be perceived by the eye. A critical point of difference between this visual perception and medium of photography is the 'framing' or composition that the camera lens is positioned to record.

The dawn of stereoscopic photography was an early means to negotiate the limitations of the still photograph. Stereo views were produced when two mounted positive prints of the same subject positioned side by side were viewed with the aid of a handheld device of two lenses placed 2.5 inches (6 cm) apart to simulate the position of the human eyes. The effect results in an illusion of depth—aka a three-dimensional scene. The opportunity for the public to experience multiple viewpoints or immerse oneself in depth and space are otherwise constrained in analogue photography.

The emergence of digital photography, combined with geospatial capabilities such as Google Street View, has created the possibility of multi-dimensional imagery. Through the use of compound stitched images and interactive nodes, a viewer cannot only traverse up and down a road system, but can navigate around a particular place. As an artist, I am interested in exploring if a dimensional photograph can be aesthetically created, allowing one that moves the viewer beyond factual street meta-information into the realm of art.

In considering the dimensional photograph in terms of spatial and relatable places, I decided to focus on the subject of farms and farmers. Farming has been a classical subject for painters through the centuries. However, since the rapid public adoption of photography from the 1840s, representation of the farm and its operations largely disappeared as a subject. Fast forward to the present day. Google Street View has prioritized the recording of

< Artist and panosphere camera as captured at Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)

road systems, but has rarely captured 'off road' systems leading to farm settings.

What has arisen is a pioneering effort to produce a dimensional image based on older scenic modalities (such as the tableau—a form of pictorial diorama) and migrated into the Google Street View engine. In the resulting artwork *Farm Tableaux* (2013–), each staged image of a farm and its working operations was captured by a Google Street View camera. Each scene consisted of a number of individual still frames or panospheres that appear dimensionally in Google Street View to provide the viewer with a navigable diorama from a fixed perspective.

The concept of the dimensional photograph is again re-emerging from its stereoscopic origins. In Google Street View one can now search online for farms and related locations, yet most viewers may still come across these images serendipitously rather than by any specific interest in art photography. As a Canadian photographer, I envision the embedded artworks in relation to a post-Vancouver School of Art model. Whilst the likes of School founders, such as Jeff Wall and Stan Douglas, for instance, engage actors to play parts in their dioramas, I was resolved to work directly with farmers and tradespeople to stage actions within a scene to depict their day-to-day operations. A layered staging also incorporated my self-portrait in a discrete location 'off-piste' from the main scene. These hidden portraits are both an act of self-portraiture and form of digital signature.

The representation of self in this context prompts the question (among others): how can we can perceive new types of authoring in a multi-dimensional plane?

I continue to extend these boundaries by repositioning perspectives from the characteristics of digital immersion to the bucolic features of late 18th and 19th century paintings. Similarly, the socio-economic and local geo-positioning of events become an integral to the fabric of the work. In this way, the staged photographic artworks produced by members of the Vancouver School of Art, such as the iconic photographic *Mimic* (1982) by Jeff Wall and Rodney Graham's *Halcyon Sleep* (1994), serves as drivers of how my own artworks are conceived. With one clear exception—I have opted not to reproduce dioramas at the same scale or through the same economies of display. My photographic compositions reside within Google Street View to be intimately examined in the palm of one's hand or directly navigable on a laptop screen or desktop computer.

Susan Sontag exclaimed photographic framing always excludes other views. By contrast, the potential of the dimensional photograph is the reconfiguring of the notion of the 'fixed frame' as something that is much more intuitive and open-ended. In the scholarly discourse of digital arts and photography, I argue that there is an overlooked opportunity. Modestly put, it is time for the legitimization of *dimensional photography* as a process and a practice in contemporary photographic historiography.

Lest we lose sight—this emergence is simply greater than a mere oddity.

> Kevin Bose changing the water feeder in the turkey barn at Medomist Farm Ltd., *Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC* (2013)
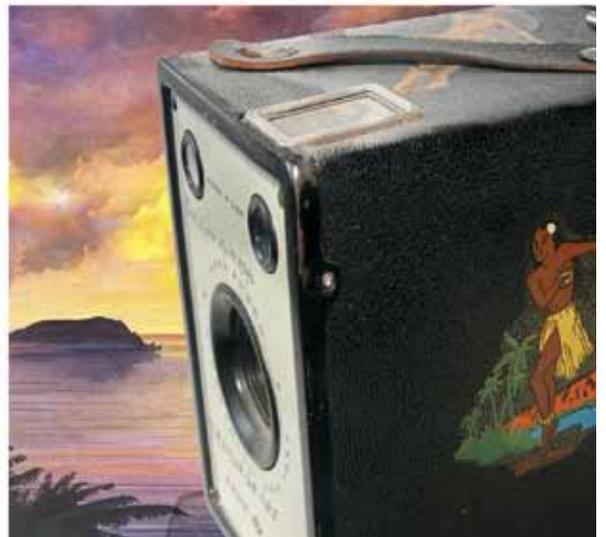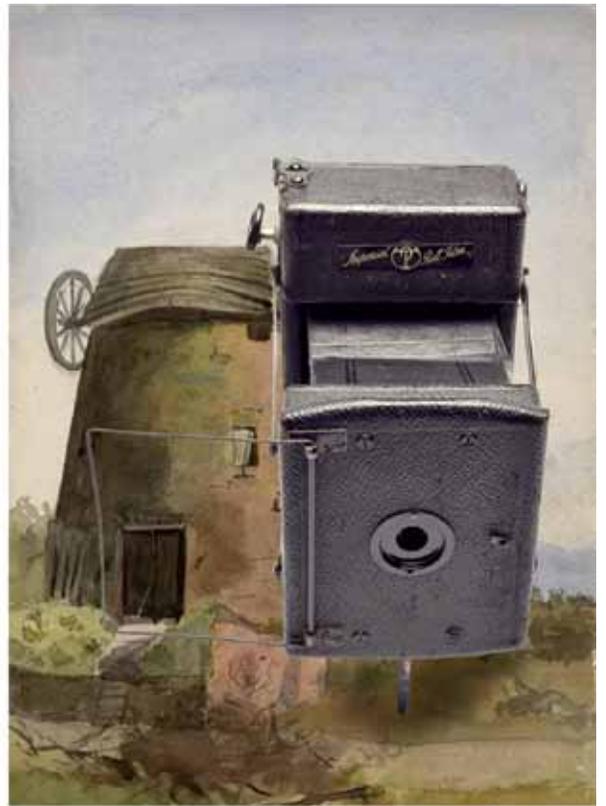
∧ A selection of images from *Cameras and Watercolour Sunsets* (2013 and 2019)

Sylvia Grace Borda: A Timeline of Art Production

Capital Cities

London and Tokyo: 1997–2000, Taipei: 2004
200 x silver gelatin prints (11 x 14 inches)

Tokyo, London, and Taipei are seemingly unlike cities that share cross cultural histories—undetected, perhaps, by sight but are well-documented in print. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), the Japanese Emperor commissioned English and German engineers to construct a rail system for Tokyo. Later these ideas were translated to Taiwan's emergent transit system when the country was under Japanese rule (1895 and 1945). Hence, the past and current rail systems within Japan, and to an extent in Taiwan, are based on a European model of transportation and architectural structures. Interestingly, materials that originated from London's docklands during the 1880s may have become part of Japan's transportation grids. The exhibition photographs are arranged in grids with limited labeling, to de-identify the places from which they originate. The level of ambiguity within each image aids in framing a discourse about social migration and supermodernist architecture where these temporary holding spaces for the working/commuter classes become universal and non-descript. Each of these concepts question one's position within the grid of a modern transportation system and, likewise, within an urban city scheme that symbolizes a new gentrification of subcultural zones.
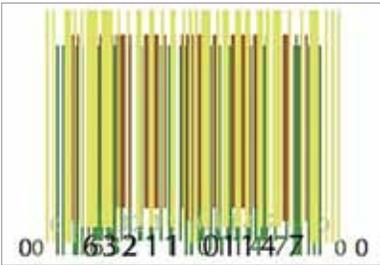
Barcodes

Vancouver: 1999–2003
Digital iris prints (various sizes)

In this digital series, I address the ideologies of modern art movements, Pop, and Hard Edge abstract painting, in their most reduced forms. In using Warhol's soup can silkscreens as my base typology, I cite a critically acclaimed series of artworks and reduce them to their most basic indexical form, the barcode. In translating Warhol's iconic images into coloured barcode forms, the relationship between the viewer and the object becomes ironic as two movements condense into one, and consumer iconography is addressed again in a most unexpected way. The overlapping barcodes in my compositions lose their indexical use and become an abstract field of lines reminiscent of the Hard Edge compositions of late modernist painters like Newman and Noland.

Dimensions given as width x height

Minimalist Portraits

Vancouver: 2001
Iris prints (4 x 2 feet), Net artwork
Available for interactive viewing at https://web.archive.org/web/20040607085630/http://www.galeriesawgallery.com/

In *Minimalist Portraits* I address the ideologies of non-representational composition—that is the range from Neoplasticism to Hard Edge abstract painting—in their most reduced forms. My recitations invoke a familiar form of the monochrome squares and grids commonly associated with artists, such as Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, etc.), while seeking to move away from the ideologies associated with the original paintings. A series of Minimalist artists' birth and death dates are plotted against a CYMK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) scale producing a new tonal system or representation of the artists' lives.

Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC

Surrey, BC: 2003–2004
See pages 28–48

EK Modernism

East Kilbride, Scotland: 2005–2010
800 x C-41 prints (8 x 12 inches)

East Kilbride (EK) is Scotland's first New Town. The town of EK illustrates a bold negotiation between traditional garden city planning and the emergence of innovative Modernist design strategies for civic living. In this series, I adopted a bold conceptual strategy in dialogue with J.Keith Donnelly, the last New Town artist in East Kilbride and Arts Officer for South Lanarkshire to "make the town into an artwork" by documenting every civic Modernist building slated for demolition. In so doing, the artwork started revealing East Kilbride's visionary urban plan, and concurrently the role of art in representing a physical place as a social agent.

Beauty

Vancouver: 2006, London: 2012
Iris prints (various sizes)

Selling beauty products offer everything to consumers, from youth to new identities. The products are attractively packaged, making them both portable and aesthetic objects. In this series, barcodes from cosmetic products are offset with their textual disclaimers. One field reads as a conceptual statement, while the other mimics the construction of a hard-edge silkscreen. Together, these text and visual fields critique the false solaces these products offer to viewers and consumers.
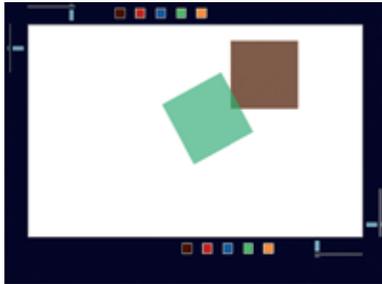
PROUN

Vancouver: 2006–2007
Net artwork

El Lissitzky began a body of work in the 1930s entitled "Prouns" (an acronym for "Project for the Affirmation of the New" in Russian). These non-objective compositions drew from Malevich's Suprematist concepts that painting could spiritually transcend and blur the distinctions between real and abstract zones. The net artwork is devised to follow Malevich's proposal and El Lissitsky's subsequent responses to this proclamation. Could abstract and real spaces be blended together so that their distinction in space and time dissipate? For the net artwork, the complementary concepts of design and mass distribution live in the same spirit of the Russian constructivist ideologies. The viewer of the net artwork can direct an 'open' composition in order to create a functioning utilitarian object. The series consists of 10 animated works in which the computer user can freeze frame an arrangement on screen and print out an artwork to take away. The ability to print a tangible object from the computer is a subversive re-articulation of ideas behind the creation of the open multiple. The repeated movement of the objects over the compositional field is similar to a film loop. In regard to the interface: the handles allow the user to set the speed of the moving square, its direction and colour.
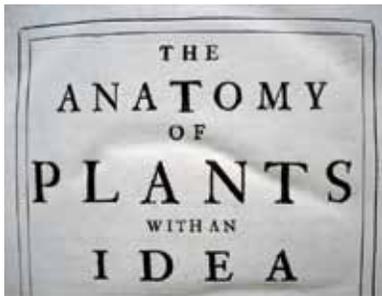
re-collect-ing

Belfast, Northern Ireland: 2008
100 x c-41 prints (8 x 12 inches)

re-collect-ing consists of a suite of images recording incidental compositions observed when browsing through historical teaching collections located at Queen's University Belfast. Each photographic work is composed to prompt the viewer to question the existence and juxtaposition of the recorded objects.
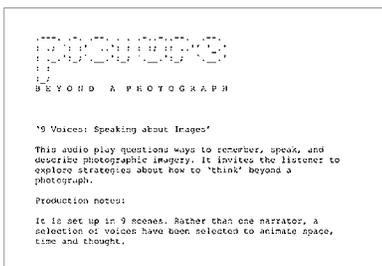
'picture: Beyond a photograph'

Austria: 2008
radio play—12 text panels

Artwork was commissioned for a Viennese exhibition in which photographs and image-making are referenced by text panels. The text translated into a radio play in lieu of images.

A Holiday in Glenrothes

Glenrothes, Scotland: 2008
350 x C-41 prints (8 x 12 inches)

Glenrothes was designed as a Modernist building enterprise. During the 1960s new residences and businesses were built around public art and park-like settings throughout the town. The town flourished at the same time as the emergence of colour photography. The representation of the banal as a photographic subject in artists' books such as *William Eggleston's Guide* (1972) and Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places* (1976) was a concurrent development. In a similar vein, I was curious to explore Glenrothes as if I were a late-1960s photographer of the commonplace. In my images there is an interplay between the familiar and the banal representation of urban landscapes.

Building Material: Art & Architecture, Ireland Vol 19

Ireland: 2009
Visual essay "20 modernist structures in Northern Ireland I love"

In the special issue of *Building Material,* photographers including Thomas Demand, Jane and Louise Wilson, Moritz Küng, and Corban Walker were invited to produce visual essays about the built environment. For this issue, I produced a visual essay about urban modernist architectures on the island of Ireland. The essay entitled "20 modernist structures in Northern Ireland I love" gave reference to my selected images of an exploratory photo-journey undertaken in 2008–2009.

Cameras and Watercolour Sunsets

Vancouver: 2009–2010, 2012–2013, 2015–present
220 x C-41 prints (various sizes)

This artwork is a repeating series in which an analogue camera is placed on the horizon of a sunset in a watercolour painting. The camera lens in each image hovers in place of the sun in these digitally constructed montages. Images are constructed from amateur photographs of cameras and watercolour paintings found on auction websites. Like Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* this series offers the viewer a set of contradictions to negotiate in order to understand the work. The cameras and watercolour paintings are referenced by name in the title but by medium are reproductions, which do not 'satisfy emotionally' the actual objects and/or depicted events. I have called these artworks 'digital readymades' as the found images collapse time, media, and locations together.

Public Artwork: Camera Obscura Viewing Chamber, County Cavan, Ireland

Cavan, Republic of Ireland: 2009–2011
Production sketches, digital montages, AutoCAD files

This public artwork initiative involved a number of agencies in the border counties between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland over several years with the aim to produce a large scale viewing chamber for public engagement. At the height of The Troubles, Northern Ireland and the border counties were the most photographed in the world. Watchtowers were common features on the horizon, giving government forces a superior view to movements on the landscape. From surveillance to press photography, the public was not in a position to view or control its own images or how these were captured and distributed. This artwork was developed as a means to invite the public to learn about the act of observation and study through the camera obscura. A large scale camera was planned to be positioned on the border areas between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Seeing Technologies

Ireland: 2010, Scotland: 2015, Vancouver: 2017–present
60 x C-41 prints (various sizes)

Seeing Technologies is comprised of a series of images of hands interacting with photographic and optical devices. The prints appear as black and white negatives, allowing the viewer to see the image through an altered perspective that directly alludes to darkroom image processing and rendering. In one instance, the viewer is given the opportunity to reflect on these images as representations of devices that record and document. In another, the viewer may respond to the technology as a process that has, up until recently, been contingent on the use of the image 'negative' in order to produce a positive.

Flora Watch

Northern Ireland: 2010–2011

On invitation from Belfast Exposed and the Belfast City Council, I designed and delivered a community arts engagement program, *Flora Watch*, which sought to bring in contrasting ideas of how nature and scientific observations could create a positive means by which to envision the landscape—and to foster custodianship.

Twelve community leaders, including a community worker from the Divis Community Centre, representatives from HM Prison service and Belfast Metropolitan College, and a recent photo graduate, were all apprenticed in photogram techniques—each transferring these skills back into their own communities through workshops.

Flora Watch outputs developed by participating youth at over 20 local community centres were later exhibited at the Belfast Exposed Archive Gallery.

Orchards: Bramley Apples

Northern Ireland: 2010–2012
100 x C-41 prints (various sizes)

Over 90% of produced apples are diced for the bakery trade or made into apple sauce production. Very few of the public including locals are familiar with the Bramley from Northern Ireland. This series creates a contemporary portrait about the growers and their crops. It focuses on the labour of harvesting, and maintaining the land. Fruit production under EU trade regulations has changed the output of farms in Northern Ireland—since these trade regulations determine what variety and amount of each fruit can be grown and traded. *Orchards: Bramley Apples* gave rise to the development of two larger suites of work comprising of '*This one's for the Farmer*' and '*Farm Tableaux Finland*.'
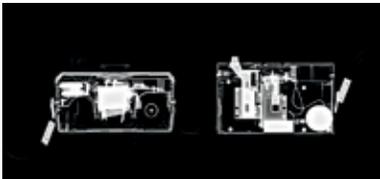
Interrogations of a Camera

Vancouver: 2011
Photograms by X-ray (various sizes)

Interrogations of a Camera explores the construction and deconstruction of brand-name and obscure analog cameras captured by X-ray. The resulting images appear similar to photograms or blueprints revealing the camera's internal structures. The aesthetic language and arrangement of the camera mechanisms are reminiscent of both Rodchenko's Russian constructivist artworks and Man Ray's industrial material photogram studies. The viewer is prompted to question how narrative can be derived from physical and abstract forms, and challenging perceptions of what constitutes an artwork.

Working River

City of Richmond, BC, Canada—No 4 Pump Station and Public Dyke Park Walkway: 2011
Photo Aluminum panels (various sizes)

Working River is a large-scale photo-montage that wraps across a public water pump station located at Number 4 Road in Richmond, BC. The art engages viewers to reflect on their relationship to the adjacent Fraser River and surrounding landscape. In particular, the views around the civic Pump Station are illustrated through an aerial survey map, and contextualized with early 20th century images of the region of those industries and activities that continue to be associated with the river.

Churches: Coming to the table

Northern Ireland: 2010–2011
14 x photo screened dinner plates (12-inch diameter), and **video loop** (32 minutes)

Coming to the Table explores the notions of a dinner table as a place of gathering and exchange of conversation. In this work, the plate settings on display illustrates the range of Modernist Churches found in Northern Ireland. It also alludes to the country's shared tabling of power in order to overcome The Troubles and to establish its own Parliament. The photographic embellished dinnerware set becomes symbolically a powerful reference representing Northern Ireland's faith buildings.Most of the Church buildings do not overtly

illustrate their associated faiths in architectural form or appearance. Rather than illustrating divide and distinctiveness through individual faiths, the Modernist churches are a type of collective unification through architectural composition. Each example defies how each should be read or situated. The project is supported by a video (40 min) in the installation that provides a loop of images from the full set of individual Modernist Churches for viewers to observe. Ultimately *Coming to the Table* acts as a conceptual and reflective work alluding to the broader conditions that are defining Northern Ireland's contemporary landscape. At a literal level it mimics the viewer's own entrance and approach to the table that completes the title's self-proclaimed invitation.

Sylvia Grace Borda (middle) with Acconci designers: Pictured—Ryan Macyauski, Julian Rose, Vito Acconci, and Jorg Thöne

Art House

Scotland (Phase 1): 2008–2011, New York and Iasi, Romania (Phase 2): 2012–2013, Canada (Phase 3): 2014–present
Sketches, AutoCAD files

Based on the East Kilbride initiatives around *EK Modernism* and the New Town ideals, an arts partnership with Scottish artist, J.Keith Donnelly (B+D) formed to address the challenge of designing an entry level home retailing for $20k, 30k, 40K, or 55K. What would it look like? What could it offer? And how could it be generous to a home-owner in a way that current dwellings are not? Subsequently, the concept of the 'ART HOUSE' began development in 2008. A set of key prerogatives arose in which design factors would accommodate a flexible modular dwelling to reflect a more mobile and fluid society. Equally the house would minimize its eco-foot print by being constructed in a manner in which its maintenance contributed not only to the on-going longevity of the home, but would shake up the way in which the house market assigns value. In summary, *ART HOUSE* was designed to offer a radical approach to building affordable houses that were both artworks and dwelling places. An invitation was extended by Vito Acconci at the Acconci Studios in New York for the artists to develop their ideas further in 2012.

Art House: Artists' Book

Richmond, BC: 2014
Public Art Development and launch of the 'Art House' concept in partnership with the City of Richmond, BC

Through the City of Richmond Public Art program, a grant was awarded to produce an artist book to engage the public with the concepts of the 'Art House.' The work continued as a collaboration with Scottish sculptor, J. Keith Donnelly. The artists' books are now part of the public art collection housed at City Hall in Richmond, BC.
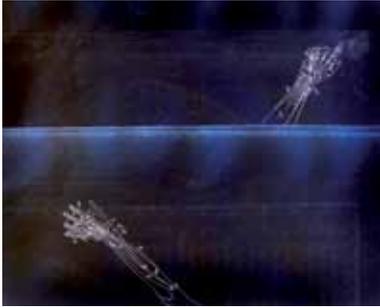
Impressions

Vancouver: 2013
40 digital cyanotypes (various sizes)

In *Impressions,* I address the relationships between culture and technology by blending digital and analog photography principles together. My work borrows from Sir John Herschel (1792–1871), the founding father of the cyanotype or blueprint, the idea that photographic process would revolutionize the copying and distribution of visual content. In this series I create a condensed history of photographic ideas by capturing literally image impressions of 16th–17th century works to become independent aesthetic works. My colour reversed digital renderings of etching impressions are produced as image negatives. The original hues of the etched papers when reversed become blue appearing much akin to photographic cyanotypes. In this series the viewer is given a window to explore and transcend a visual strata of time, technology and observation through a fusion of digital and pre-photographic aesthetics.

This is not a camera

Vancouver: 2013
36 Holmes stereo viewing cards

In this series, I photographed film cameras with the intention of utilizing 'advertising' conventions as found on online sales sites, such as eBay. Like the design of online sale sites, my product images are profiled in recto, verso, and side views. However in a subversion of this convention, the resulting camera photos have been produced as diptych ('stereo') image cards for Gallery visitors. The project's title conceptually challenges the Gallery visitor both in terms of what is represented and what is not, and importantly what can be experienced on different visual planes.

This one's for the Farmer

Surrey, BC: 2013

Typically, farming is not the subject matter of contemporary art: it remains hidden as an activity seen by most as a fleeting moment, often from a moving car traversing along the highway. In *This one's for the Farmer*, the subject becomes central to the digital compositions in which carefully staged camera views to create unconventional portraits of modern-day farmers and their cultivation practices. I attempt to elicit a contemporary art dialogue about farming, its practice and possible misalignment within an individualistic society. After all, where does food on the dinner table come from, if not from farming? *Farm Tableaux* (see pages 99–117), *Aerial Views* (see pages 118–125), *Farm work* (see pages 126–139), *Stereoviews: Two points of perspective if not Three* (see pages 140–147), *Aura* (see pages 148–149).

Self-portraits in Farm Tableaux

By asserting my presence corporeally as a photographer at work in the panosphere portraits embedded in Google Street View, I attempt to alter one's understanding between the concept of real and staged spaces. Who is photographing what and why. In the sequence of tableaux shots created in collaboration with Google Trusted photographer, John M. Lynch, a series of spatial and temporal illusions steers the

viewer's gaze towards an open ended dialogue in how the images represent places, people and the temporalities of their labour. This project offers an opportunity to reconsider the transmission and histories of authorship, and distribution, in which both the farmer and female artist are subjects equally worthy of contemporary art representation and commentary.

Camera Histories
Glasgow: 2013

Typically the camera is not the subject matter of a photograph: it instead stays hidden between the photographer and the image, associated with the act of documentation and recording, rather than the focus of being an image itself. In *Camera Histories*, the camera apparatus is the central subject of my digital compositions, in which found and staged photographs of cameras are montaged to create unconventional portraits.

Camera Histories comprise several photographic portfolios brought together for exhibition, including I*nterrogations of a Camera*, *Seeing technologies*, *Cameras and Watercolour sunsets*, *This is not a camera*, *Camera Still Life—A Memento Mori* and *Farm Tableaux*.

Camera Still Life—A Memento Mori
Vancouver: 2013, 2015, 2017
110 C-41 prints (various sizes)

In *Camera Still Life—A Memento Mori*, I have juxtaposed a set of 'still life' photographs of cameras available for sale on online websites. While cameras and product photography are closely associated, the idea of analog film cameras becoming viable subjects for digital imaging tools is again at odds with typical photographic depiction. The juxtaposition demonstrates a direct and fast-paced evolution, and highlights the questions of the place of film cameras in a digital world. It further questions the photographer's authority of being an image-maker. For this series, I have salvaged other photographers' images to complete these works—another play on *a memento mori* in a digital and transient context.

Farm Tableaux Finland
Finland: 2014
Google Street View panosphere portraits and C-41 exhibition prints (36 x 24 inches)

Farm Tableaux Finland: Mise en Scène comprises photographic images that illustrate food culture in a way that moves us beyond lifestyle magazines and TV reality shows. These farming and food production images reflect the on-going realities of farm-work from field labour to food processing. Finland holds half of the world's arable land north of the 60°N latitude and produces everything from reindeer meat to greenhouse grown lettuce. While developing this portfolio, I was directly involved with participating farmers and food stakeholders in the realization of the artworks. This series pushes the boundaries of what constitutes contemporary art photography whilst also defining a new 'commons' comprised of pervasive online media and the concept of the tableau vivant. The series was made in collaboration with Google Trusted Photographer, John M Lynch, during Autumn of 2014.

Lumsden Biscuit

Scotland: 2015–2016
Photograms, Photogenic biscuits

Produced in partnership with the Lumsden Village Community Association and the Scottish Sculpture Workshop (SSW), I worked with local community members in Lumsden, Scotland to produce short bread artworks. Through a photogram series of Lumsden flora, I harnessed the poetic oppositional qualities of the photogram: its use of shadow and light, movement and stillness, presence and absence. These photogram qualities were directly translated into a carved shortbread mould form for use in short-bread making. The outcome echoes labour-intensive processes behind plant growing and maintenance, and the traditional labour invested in centuries of shortbread craftsmanship.

Hunting Cameras

Finland: 2016
C-41 prints (various sizes)

This series about hunting cameras is an exploration of how machine vision and remote sensing can become art. I collaborated with local hunting groups in central and sub-arctic Finland to create an image database from source images captured through the use of hunting cameras mounted on trees in the Finnish forest around Mustarinda. This mass assemblage of images offers a contemporary portrait of Finland's wilderness landscapes. I continue to explore how remote sensing tools and community engagement can be the foundation of contemporary art, and by extension how these can facilitate dialogue around environmental custodianship.

Snow Cameras

Finland: 2016
Snow sculptures (various sizes)

In Hyrynsalmi, Finland, I collaborated with Scottish sculptor, J. Keith Donnelly, to create a set of ephemeral and biodegradable cameras, each made from snow and ice. Each structure incorporated both a lens and a movable screen, transforming the sculpture into a camera obscura. The camera obscura has been used since antiquity as a way to project images of the natural environment onto a screen for observation and recording. The artworks became reflectors for the viewers in addressing environmental change in the Anthropocene context through the transience of the project image and the snow object itself. This notion came to sharp realization as the camera structures started to collapse in temperatures that rose above 5 degrees Celsius. Mustarinda, for example, has been known to have lingering snow until early June, but weather patterns are becoming more unsettled with warmer precipitation coming into the springtime period.

EK Modernism: Canada Series

Scotland: 2017
52 C-41 prints (8 x 12 inches)

A number of streets in the former New Town of East Kilbride, Scotland are named after Canadian cities in honour of the number of Scots who emigrated to Canada between 1950 and 1965. My mini-series project made in collaboration with former New Town artist, J. Keith Donnelly, is a specific subset developed from the larger endeavour *EK Modernism* (2004–2010) and illustrates a number of East Kilbride's Canadian named neighbourhoods (e.g., Vancouver Drive, Edmonton Place, Manitoba Park, Ontario Park, Yukon Crescent, etc). Remarkably in this former Scottish New Town, parts of Canada from the West Coast to East and up North were depicted in over 40 streets, which take about one hour to walk around. Consequently, this artistic endeavour illustrates how named areas of Canada were integrated in Scottish urban planning and as a reminder of this new country's adoption by Scottish citizens. For Canadian audiences, the series reads as an evocative link to migrant heritage, and as a utopian approach in Modernist ideals that such a vast country as Canada could be condensed to a six kilometre square radius.

Apple Mural

Latvia: 2017
Mural (approximately 28 x 49 feet)

This town mural project was in partnership with SERDE Arts Centre, Azipute Regional Planning office and Azipute Tourism Board in Latvia. I worked with urban planners and professional artist/painters to propose a set of apple–themed wall murals for the historic town centre of Azipute. The first mural created illustrates one of the most significant regional crops: cooking and eating apples.

Through the mural production and its launch, the artwork is part of a civic effort in supporting community regeneration, local food production, and opportunities for national and international tourism.

Kissing Project

Nelson, BC: 2017
Google Street View panosphere portraits and C-41 exhibition prints (36 x 24 inches)

Inspired by an archival photographic image of an older Doukhobor couple kissing found in the collections held at the Touchstones Nelson (Museum of Art and History), I was interested in using social media as a way to stage urban kissing portraits that challenge how we can experience, think, and define a place. My portraits represent a new chapter in the public awareness of the city of Nelson. The portrait images in Google Street View further represent an artistic cultural space where the streets of Nelson and its people are powerful dynamic subjects that can be explored dimensionally and in relation to the built environment.
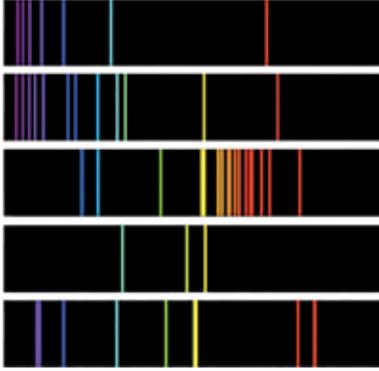
Artist in Residence–Science and Creative Art Faculties

Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, BC: 2018
plexi, paint, collage (36 x 72 inches)

For this inaugural residency, I created two art series for public display at the Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Pictured is *H-He-Ne-Na-Hg* which represents stratified 'elements' of colour, sound, and meaning. At one level, the artwork visually responds to teaching aids in chemistry class, such as emission spectrum spectroscopy, while on a conceptual level the work taps into modern art and the contemporary association with Hard Edge or Minimalist paintings of the 20th century.

The arrangement of elements resembles alliterative words as they might form part of an onomatopoetic poem. The 'H-He-Ne-Na-Hg' combination of letters, if voiced out load, plays on the sounds of a throat being cleared or a sneeze.

What are you doing, Richmond?

Artist in residence: Public Art program, Richmond, BC: 2018–2019
Google Street View embedded panosphere portraits and C-41 exhibition prints (36 x 24 inches)

A set of panosphere portraits captures the everyday activities at Minoru Centre –from youth to seniors. There are scenes of youth synchronized swimmers, track and field athletes in training exercises, seniors playing a game of Mahjong, and a room of wood carvers are all pioneering portraits purposely embedded within Google Street View.

It was important to ensure that often under-represented participants, such as seniors, were profiled as 'centre stage' in the Google Street View artworks—their presence shows a wider gamut of who can be positioned in the public sphere.

Portraiture and Literature, Farm Tableaux, Surrey, BC, Canada

Google Street View embedded panosphere portrait and title page: *Shifting Perspectives*

As Google revises its access and open API policies, the majority of self-portraits made in collaboration with John M Lynch have disappeared. The image for the book cover comes from Zaklan Heritage Farm. My portrait work at Rondriso Farms was an ode to Jeff Wall's *The Thinker* (1986). These two scenes have since been removed from the online Google Street View.

For this book publication, I inserted an updated portrait (2019) at Rondriso Farms for the title page—made possible through the design collaboration with Heritage House. In so doing, there was an opportunity to create a revised trompe l'oeil reinforcing the *shifting perspectives* of the book's content. If the viewer looks carefully on the ground, one can see a book discretely placed within the image. The ability to collapse time and location in this image placement is further supported through an online panosphere portrait.

Artist Biography

SYLVIA GRACE BORDA is an artist and social innovator. She is acknowledged for her work at the forefront of culture-led and socially engaged community practice. Her pioneering media artworks have been recognized over the last decade from launching such projects as the Virtual Museums of Canada media arts portal in 2006 and winning the Lumen Prize for Achievement in Web arts in 2016, and being recognized for her work in embedding dimensional portraits in Google Street View.

Borda has presented her art and research to cultural policy makers at the Scottish Parliament (2007), the New New Town Conference (2009) in London, and Venice Biennale collateral cultural events in Northern Ireland (2014) and Scotland (2015). In speaking on the art series, *Farm Tableaux*, *Surrey, BC*, at the U.N. International Congress for the Union of Nature (2016.), she stressed the importance of the arts in considering generosity across community and culture, and our role in the built and natural environment.

Solo exhibitions include: Belfast Exposed Gallery (Northern Ireland), Street Level Photoworks (Glasgow, Scotland), the Royal Institute of Architects Scotland, Oxygen Arts Centre (Nelson, BC) to name a few. Borda is the recipient of a European Union-funded *Frontiers in Retreat* arts fellowship (2013–2017), in which she developed ecological artworks in Finland, Latvia and Scotland. Architectural and city place making awards include: Best Public Works Project for the Province of British Columbia ACEC Award of Excellence (2012), Public Works Association of British Columbia, Project of the Year award (2011), Cultural Capital of Canada Artist status award (2008–2009), Innovation Award (2006) from The Lighthouse Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, and the Millennium Commission Cities of Culture award (2005).

Borda has delivered over one hundred lectures in the past two decades. Key lectures include the Longhouse Dialogues, Women Deliver UN conference Vancouver (2019), photographies conference London, UK (2017), Helsinki Photomedia Week (2016) Swedish Exhibition Agency (2014), and Finnish Museum of Photography (2014). Borda held senior teaching positions at Queen's University Belfast (MA Photography Convenor), University of Salford-Manchester (Imaging Program Leader), and Emily Carr University of Art + Design (Digital Arts Assistant Professor). Borda held the position of artist-in-residence at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (2018) and inaugural artist-in-residence for the Centre for Active Living (2018–2019) City of Richmond Public Art Program. She is a C40 Cities recipient (2019–2020) of the Women4Climate Change program (City of Vancouver), addressing the role of the visual arts in addressing climate change. Borda is also an advocate for sustainable urban architecture and is presenting work on New Towns at the National Galleries of Scotland in Summer 2020.

Artworks in public collections include: University of St Andrews (Scotland), the National Galleries of Scotland, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Ulster Museum (Belfast), and in Canada: Helen and Morris Belkin Gallery (UBC), Surrey Art Gallery (BC), Richmond Public Art Collection (BC), among others.

< Artist with *Camera and Watercolour Sunsets* print scarf at the opening of *Camera Histories*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow (2013)

Exhibition History

SOLO

2019 *What are you doing, Richmond?* Centre for Active Living, Richmond, BC, Canada (permanent display)

Through the Lens, Arbutus Gallery, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Curator, Maria Anna Parolin

2017 *The Kissing Project*, Oxygen Arts Centre, Nelson, British Columbia catalogue, Curator, Miriam Needoba

2016 Lumsden Biscuit, Scottish Sculpture workshop, Lumsden, Scotland, Curator, Nuno Sacremento

2015 *Reflecting on a Holiday in Glenrothes*, presented by the Scottish Civic Trust as part of The My Place Awards at The Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Architecture, and Design, Guest curator, Rachel Thibbotumunuwe, Scottish Civic Trust

2013–2014 *Camera Histories*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, UK, Curator, Malcolm Dickson

Aerial Fields, Surrey Art Gallery, BC, Canada, Curators, Liane Davison, Alison Rajah

This one's for the Farmer, TechLab, Surrey Art Gallery, Curator, Jordan Strom

2012 *Beyond Sight: Interrogations of a Camera*, A&D Gallery, London, UK, Curator, Daniel Brandt

CHURCHES IN-NI, Belfast Exposed Gallery, Curator, Karen Downey, former Venice Biennale curator (2009) Northern Ireland Pavilion (catalogue)

2009–2010 *Cameras and Watercolour sunsets*, CSA Space, Vancouver, Canada, Curator, Christopher Brayshaw

2008 *A Holiday in Glenrothes*, Royal Institute of Architect's Scotland Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, Curator, Neil Baxter

Travelling to Glenrothes, Rothes Hall Galleries, Fife, Scotland, Curator, Andy Neil

2007 *EK Modernism*, CSA Space, Vancouver, Canada, Curator, Adam Harrison

2006 *EK Modernism: New Town Passages*, EKAC Galleries, East Kilbride, Scotland (book publication in conjunction with LightHouse Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland, Curator, J. Keith Donnelly

2005 *New works*, East Kilbride Arts Centre, Scotland, Curator, J.Keith Donnelly

2004 *Minimalist Portraits*, Net Art Launch, SAW Art Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario (catalogue), Curator, Jason St Laurent

Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC (catalogue), Curator, Liane Davison

2002 *Capital Cities*, Centre A, Vancouver, BC (solo, catalogue), Curator, Alice Jim Mingh

1999 *In Transit*, Pocket Gallery, Vancouver, BC (catalogue), Curators, Jeremy Turner, Pat Chan

1996 *Of Myth and Muse*, Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond, BC (catalogue), Curator, Paige Hope Smith

1993 *To Cast a Shadow of Light*, Queen's Park Gallery, New Westminster, BC

GROUP

2020–2021 *Summer Exhibition*, National Galleries of Scotland, Curator, Louise Pearson

2018 *The Enduring Town Art of Glenrothes*, Rothes Halls and University of St Andrews, Scotland, (catalogue), Curator, Andrew Demetrius

10 from the North | 10 bho Tuath: Patricia Macdonald, Sophie Gerrard, Karen Vaughan, Margaret Mitchell, Sylvia Grace Borda, Miriam Chefrad, Kotryna Ula Kiliulyte. Sigga Ella, Andrea Gjestvang, Iiu Susiraja, An Lanntair Exhibition Centre, Outer Hebrides, Scotland. Presented as part of the FLOW Festival of Photography, Curators, Katherine Parhar, Alex Boyd

2017 *Sites of Assembly*, Helen and Morris Belkin Gallery, University of British Columbia, Canada. (catalogue), Curators, Gabrielle Moser, Lorna Brown

Home/Shelter/Belonging: Sylvia Grace Borda, Jim Breukelman, Germaine Koh, Hani Al Moulia, Annie Pootoogook, Itee Pootoogook, Gu Xiong, West Vancouver Museum, BC, Canada, Curators, Robin Laurence, Darrin Morrison

Edge Effects II, Frontiers in Retreat (Lumsden Biscuit presentation), Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, Guest Curator, Yvonne Billmore

Edge Effects I, Frontiers in Retreat (Snow camera presentation), Summer exhibition, Mustarinda, Finland, Curator, Johanna Fredriksson

Apple Mural, Serde Arts Centre, Aizpute, Latvia, Curator, Signe Pucena (permanent display)

When the Light Shifts, National Touring exhibition of women photographers, Scotland, Curators, Katherine Parhar, Mary-Ann Kennedy, Jennifer Long, and Clare Samuel (Venues: Glasgow Women's Library; Gender and the Lens Programme exhibition, Ada Slaight Gallery, Ontario College of Art and Design)

2016–2017 Lumen Prize, Digital Arts Tour: (2016) Hackney House, London, UK; Cardiff Technology Centre, UK; Berlin Electronic Visualisation Conference, Germany; Caerphilly Castle, Wales; (2017) Canary Wharf Winter Festival, London, UK; FQ Projects, Shanghai, China; Leeds Digital Art Festival, UK; New York City's Creative Tech week; Electronic Visualisation & The Arts Conference, Florence), Curators, Carla Rapoport, Jack Addis

Man-Made Art, A+D Gallery, London, UK

Scotland Through the Lens: 175 years of documentary photography, University of St Andrews, Scotland, Curator, Rachel Nordstrom

2015 *A sense of place*, Oulu Art Museum, Finland, Curator, Helka Ketonen

A new present: Summer contemporary art exhibition, Mänttä Art Museum, Finland Curators, Kalle Hamm, Dzamil Kamanger

Views from the Southbank III: Information, Objects, Mappings, Surrey Art Gallery, Canada, Curator, Jordan Strom

2014 Public Art: Sites of Engagement, City Hall, Richmond, BC, Canada, Curator, Elisa Yon

2013 *Northern Ireland: 30 Years of Photography*, The MAC, Belfast, Northern Ireland, Curator, Karen Downey; Catalogue: Colin Graham

Blueprint, Street Level Photography Gallery, Glasgow, UK, Curator, Malcolm Dickson

2012 *Beyond Vague Terrain: The City and The Serial Image,* Surrey Art Gallery, Canada, Curator, Jordan Strom

Zoo Art Sculptural Biennale, (catalogue), Cuneo, Italy

2011 *Seeing and Being in the Landscape*, Blue Wall Gallery, Ireland, Curator, Joe Keenan

2009–2010 *Scoping Worlds*, Leitrim Scultpure Centre, Ireland, Curator, Sean O'Reily

Glocal, Cultural Capital of Canada Artist Project, Tech Lab, Surrey Art Gallery (catalogue), Curator, Liane Davison

2007–2008 *re-COLLECT-ing*, Naughton Gallery, Belfast, Northern Ireland

UBUNTU.KUQALA, Finger Lakes Film Festival, Ithaca, New York, Curator, Dale Hudson

'(Not) a Photograph' Exhibition Obalne Galerije, Piran, Slovenia

Subversive Cartography, TPW, Toronto, Ontario (catalogue), Curators, Michael Alstad, Daniel Young

Proun series, HZ Net Gallery, Curator, Sachiko Hayashi

Two Chicken Noodle, Barcode Series, *Digital Fringe*, Melbourne, Australia

2006 *Node.London'06*, Media Arts Festival and exhibition, London, UK (catalogue)

Inaugural Canadian artist invited to artist to launch *Virtual Museums of Canada* federal web art portal, Curator, Michael Alstad

2005 *Pixelware*, Travelling exhibition: Dazibao Gallery, Montreal and Photographer's Gallery, Toronto (catalogue), Curators, France Choinière, Marisa Portolese, Sara Angelucci, Elaine Whittaker

2004 *Ruins and Civilization: Stan Douglas, Antonia Hirsch, Sylvia Grace Borda*, International art exhibition, Eslite Vision Art Space, Taipei, Taiwan (catalogue), Curator, Amy Cheng

2003 *Pula off–50. Pula Film Festival,* Curator, Branka Bencic for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb and 50. (catalogue)

Digitalis II : The spiritual in digital art, The Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam, BC, Curator, James K-M (catalogue)

2002 *Digital Scans*, University of California Riverside, California Museum of Photography (catalogue)

Present (MFA Graduate Exhibition), Belkin Gallery, University of British Columbia (catalogue), Curator, Scott Watson

Three, Design Gallery, University of British Columbia, Curator, Scott Watson

Avatar Traveler Talent Show, Grunt Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada, Curator, Jeremy Turner

Digital Files, Richmond Art Gallery, Curator, Corrine Cory

2001 *DIGITALIS: An inaugural exhibition of Digital Art*, Moonbase Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Curators, James KM, Ann Rosenberg

1998 *Invitational Showing—Illumination*, Benham Photo Studio Galleries, Seattle, Washington (catalogue)

1997 *Conceived on Christmas Invitational Show,* The Print Room, Photographer's Gallery, London, UK, Curator, Charlotte Cotton

Configuration, Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver, BC (catalogue), Curator, Christopher Brayshaw

1996 *The Japanese Suite*, The Print Room, The Photographer's Gallery, London, UK, Curator, Charlotte Cotton

1995 *Off the Wall,* Exposure Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Curator, Ian McGuffie

1994 *Classic Shot*, FotoBase Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Curator, Ann Rosenberg

1990 *Shared Visions, Shared Concerns*, Hongkong Bank of Canada, Vancouver, BC (catalogue)

1988 *Photoperspectives '88*, Presentation House Gallery, North Vancouver, BC, Curator, Robert Keziere

COLLECTIONS

CANADA

Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Richmond Art Gallery

Richmond Public Art Collection

Surrey Art Gallery

Touchstones Nelson Museum of Art and History

West Vancouver Art Museum

UNITED KINGDOM

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Arts Trust Fife, Scotland

Belfast Exposed Gallery, Northern Ireland

East Kilbride Arts Centre, Scotland

National Galleries of Scotland

University of St Andrews, Scotland

Ulster Museum, Northern Ireland

ASIA

Canadian Trade Office (Taipei), Taiwan

Select Reviews

2017 Collins, Leah. "On Google Street View, this small town in B.C. is a work of art: Peace, Love and Google Maps: these 360-degree portraits of a community aim to be an example for the world," *CBC National Arts Review*.

Art Network Zhuangao. "无涉限−英国流明数: No Limitations − British based Lumen Digital Art Award Exhibition shows how strength lies in combination of art and technology," (Chinese language article) in *China Art News*.

Turner, Michael. "Sites of Assembly," in *Preview Magazine The Gallery Guide*.

Mākslinieku rezidenču centram "Serde,"-15 gadi., *Latvian National TV Broadcast—LTV Ziņu Dienests* (3.20 min feature news article on Apple Murals project).

2016 Parhar, Katherine. "Farm Tableaux," in *Features, Photomonitor UK*.

Travis, Rebecca. "The only thing that's changed is everything. An essay by Rebecca Travis on Sylvia Grace Borda: Camera Histories," Feature article in the 2016 Summer edition of *Scottish Society for the History of Photography*.

2015 Neimi, Suvi. "Pohjoinen ruuantuotanto kuuminta nykytaidetta" (Finnish language review: "Viewers can now visit farms, slaughterhouses and reindeer round-ups virtually as a series of artworks," in *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*.

"Sylvia Grace Borda: Farm Tableaux Finland," in *Helsinki International Arts Programme: Musings, activities, and movements,* pp 24–26.

Hudson, D and P. Zimmermann Project citations for "EKNewTown.com," in the book *Thinking Through Digital Media: Transnational Environments and Locative Places.* Palgrave Macmillan Press.

2014 Bula, Frances. "Art Beyond Stereotypes: Are suburbs the next great creative frontier?" in *Literary Review of Canada*.

Lampi, Santeri "Taiteilija: Kuva maaseudusta on jumiutunut 1800-luvulle" (Finnish Language review: "Pictures of the countryside seem stuck in the 19th Century") in *Suomenmaa*.

2013 Arva-Toth, Zoltan. "Photographers Create First Artworks in Google Street View," in *Digital News: Photography*.

"Art in Scotland TV channel feature: Sylvia Grace Borda Camera Histories—Artist interview," produced by *Summerhall TV Scotland* http://www.artinscotland.tv/2013/sylvia-grace-borda-camera-histories/.

"Artist folio: Impressions," in *2013 Studies in Photography Scotland,* The Scottish Society for the History of Photography.

Dickson, Malcolm. "Dreaming of cyanotypes—the Yin and the Yang of image making," in the book *Blueprint* Publisher Glasgow Print Studio and Street Level Photoworks.

Graham, Colin. Project review for "Churches: Coming to the Table," in the book *Northern Ireland: 30 Years of Photography.* Belfast Exposed Photography Gallery and the MAC.

Kimmett, Colleen. "Google Farm View: Artist Sylvia Grace Borda gives agrarian Surrey a techie treatment," in *The Weekend Tyee*.

Laurence, Robin. "Fall arts preview: Sylvia Grace Borda finds art in farms and sequins," *Georgia Straight*, Vancouver.

2012 Magarrey, Paige. "Photographs of postwar religious buildings in Northern Ireland constitute a thought-provoking exhibition at the Belfast Exposed Gallery," *Canadian Architect*.

Hunter, Dorothy. "Sylvia Grace Borda: Churches," *Photomonitor UK*.

Harding, David. "Glenrothes is a shining example of the best attributes of new towns," in *The Herald Scotland*.

Fullam, Fiona. "CHURCHES," Exhibition Review in *Visual Arts Ireland Newsletter*.

Richardson, Vicky. "My Kind of Town: Guest column by Director of the British Council Design, Architecture & Fashion Programme," in *Architecture Today*.

Johnson, Mia. "Beyond Vague Terrain: The City and the Serial Image," in *Preview Art Magazine*.

Laurence, Robin. *'Churches,'* Exhibition catalogue. Belfast Exposed Gallery, Northern Ireland.

Interview with critic Anne-Marie McAleese, *BBC Northern Ireland: Arts Extra Programme*—Broadcast.

2011 Hogan, Sinead. "A peek through a camera obscura for inspiration' Arts Feature," *Anglo-Celt*, Cavan.

2009 Burham, Clint "Postmodern Aesthetics as Obscene Super-ego: Anxieties of Photography (works of Sylvia Grace Borda)," in *Function/fiction: utilitarian images reconfigured—Sylvia Grace Borda, Tacita Dean, Rod Dickinson, Michael Klier, Manu Luksch, Chris Marker, Pavel Pavlov, Walid Raad et Akram Zaatari, Ed Ruscha, Kevin Schmidt, David Tomas, Jeff Wall.* Publisher Dazibao Gallery (Montreal).

2008 Bruce, Keith. "There could be a market for timeshares in Cumbernauld," Main feature, Arts, *UK Herald.*

2007 Alstad, Michael "Subversive Cartography: challenging the accuracy of the official map," Catalogue essay for Virtual Net Art, Gallery TPW Publications.

Montgomery, Angus. "Book Review: EK Modernism," in *Architects Journal*, London.

Kasprzak, Michelle. "Dubious Views online exhibition," *Spacing Toronto: Understanding the Urban Landscape Magazine.*

"Dubious Views: Questioning Institutional representations in tourism and cartography," in *Turbulence.org*.

2006 Docherty, Eddie "Roundabouts, concrete, construction: is this a world heritage site?" *The Herald*, UK.

Dorrell, Ed. "Call for East Kilbride to become World Heritage Site," *Architect's Journal*, London.

Laurence, Robin. "Borda's Images restore modernism's vision" *Georgia Straight*.

Whitehead, Terri. "Borda Crossings," *Canadian Architect*, Vol 51, No. 2, pp. 52–54.

2005 Carpenter, JR. "Pixelware, a sublime forgery exhibition" *Dazibao Gallery*, Montreal.

2004 Wolf, Ophra. "Which way home? Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC," Net Art news, *Rhizome.org,* New York.

Komori, Miyuki. "On the map: Artist Interview with Sylvia Grace Borda," *Oops Magazine*, Tokyo.

Laurence, Robin. "Photos, Film Capture Surrey's Non-Identity," *Georgia Straight*, Vancouver.

Kendzulak, Susan "Curating 101: Bad decisions at MoCA, a triumph at Eslite, and provocation in Kinmen," *Pots Extra*, Taipei, Vol. 326, p. 20.

Artist profile. *Pots Magazine*, Taipei.

King, Aventurina. "Ruins and Civilization Provokes," *The China Post*, Taipei.

Hsieh jin-rung "Ruins and Civilization exhibition," (Chinese language review) *The Journalist* Vol. 910.

Ride, Peter. "Conjunction of Visual Culture," *Gallery Saw Net publications* and *CARTE,* UK.

Defoy, Michel. "JetSet: Transitory artist," *ENROUTE Air Canada's airline magazine*.

Moses, Laura. "Action online and in the gallery," *OttawaXpress,* Ottawa, Ontario.

2002 Laurence, Robin. "Lots to Challenge Eyes and Minds, Spring Arts Preview Critic's picks," *Georgia Straight*.

Atkan, Nancy. "Digital Art in Cuba: Increasing enthusiasm for Digital Art," *New York Arts Review*, Vol. 2, No. 7.

Middleton-Lajoie, Elina. "Transit: From Post Modernity to Supermodernity – A review of recent photographic works, by Sylvia Grace Borda," *Ricepaper Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 4.

2001 Leith, David. "At the Nexus of Digital Art and Technology," *Georgia Straight*.

1997 Lee, James-Jason. "Configuration: New Art From Vancouver," *C international contemporary art magazine*, No. 54.

Gold, Kerry. "Scene and Heard: Apples and Oranges Exhibition," *The Vancouver Sun*.

1996 Link, Barry. "Dead Romans inspire Art*," The Richmond News.*

1993 Boulanger, A. "Photos Speak Volumes About Human Spirit: Shapes and Tones Highlight Architecture in European Churches," *Royal City Record/New Westminster Now.*

Public Speaking

2020 *Visual arts and actioning legislation for change*, Adaptations Conference, Fraser Basin Council, Vancouver

Modernism and Photography, National Galleries (Edinburgh)

2019 *Climate change and the arts*, UBC Botanical Speaker's series

Chair and speaker, *Catalyzing Change: Women as Agents of Change to Protect the Environment*, Longhouse dialogues, Women Deliver UN conference, Vancouver and BCCIC

Arts, Science and Nature, Science World Speaker Vancouver

2018 *Re-imagining Place-making, Ecology and Campus Life,* Sylvia Borda, Lee Beavington, and J. Keith Donnelly, Teaching + Learning Symposium, Kwantlen University, Surrey, BC

2017 *Art in Rural Climes*, Upstream Benefit—Rural Art Symposium, Oxygen Art Centre, Nelson, BC

What has happened to the camera? photographies Conference, London, UK; Peer reviewed paper assessed by Liz Wells and David Bate

The Kiss in Art from Intimate to Political, Oxygen Art Centre, Nelson, BC

2016 Digital Art and the Public Sphere, Panelist, Lumen Seminar, Hackney Studios, London

Incorporating the media arts as part of public debate and wider conservation strategies: Examining Farm Tableaux, UN International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Congress forum: Planet at the Crossroads, Honolulu, Hawaii

Ecologies, Art and Community, Frontiers in Retreat, Mustarinda Arts Centre, Finland

Art and food? The Lumsden Biscuit, Frontiers in Retreat Incubator, Scottish Sculpture Workshop

Home Grown: fostering dialogue about contemporary art and its relationship to supporting sustainable food systems and economies.(Keynote) Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Richmond, BC

Art criticism: Liking versus Critiquing: Clint Burnham, Sylvia Grace Borda in dialogue, Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver, BC

Creating the dimensional photograph, Helsinki Photomedia Week 2016, Helsinki, Finland

2015 *Magnificent food—art and culture beyond the plate,* University of Helsinki

Cultural Heritage: How to add value and legacy to local economies, SERDE, Arts Centre, Azipute, Latvia

Why EK Modernism matters? Presented as part of Absorbing Modernity Panel, Architecture and Design Scotland for Venice Biennale celebrations of Architecture Scotland Pavilion Lighthouse, Glasgow, Scotland

Learning about Food through Art History, Oulu Art Museum

2014 *Absorbing Modernity,* Panelist, British Council for Venice Biennale for Architecture, Northern Ireland

The roots of nature and art: Exploring the National Galleries of Canada Flora & Fauna exhibition, Surrey Art Gallery

An artist's interpretation from Vancouver to Finland, Centre for Sustainable Studies, Green Speaker Series Autumn Launch, University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, BC

Sylvia Borda, Bigert & Bergström, and T.J.Demos in conversation about Eco-Arts, Green Lab Art Alliance, Swedish Exhibition Agency

Helsinki International Arts Program Peer to Peer: Sylvia Grace Borda and Laura McLean, Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, Finland

2013 *Artist roundtable and discussion with Christiane Monarchi, Photomonitor UK*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, Scotland

Artist roundtable: *Northern Ireland: 30 Years of Photography*, The Mac, Belfast

Agency of Light, Street Level Photoworks Gallery, Glasgow, UK

Camera Art, University of Iasi, Romania

2012 *Artist Talk*, Daniel Blau Gallery, London

2011 Chair, Photography and the Artist's Book Symposium, Manchester Metropolitan University

2010 Keynote, Visual Arts Ireland, Belfast and Dublin conference

Contributor Biographies

DOROTHY BARENSCOTT is an art historian whose interdisciplinary research relates to the interplay between urban space and emerging technology and media forms in the articulation of a range of modern and postmodern identities. She completed her Ph.D. in Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at the University of British Columbia and is a professor of modern and contemporary art history and theory in Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Fine Arts Department. Her essays have appeared in journals such as *Postmodern Culture Journal*, *Invisible Culture*, *History and Memory*, and *Mediascape*, with examinations of painted panoramas, experimental and mainstream cinema, architecture, and conceptual photography. She is also co-editor of a recently completed book project, *Canadian Culinary Imaginations* (McGill Queen's University Press, 2020), an interdisciplinary collection that explores how Canadian writers, artists, academics, cooks, performers, and gallery curators are inspired and challenged by the topic of food. Outside of her research, Barenscott regularly contributes art writing to exhibition catalogues, acts as a specialist consultant for Openwork Art Advisory, and leads interdisciplinary student groups on field schools to global art cities.

LIANE DAVISON served as the Curator of the Surrey Art Gallery from 1990–2008, and as its Director until 2018. During her tenure, she established multiple programs to support the production and presentation of digital art, including the TechLab in 1999, the UrbanScreen venue in 2010, and the Gallery's digital audio exhibition program in 2008. She has curated over 100 exhibitions on contemporary art practice, from digital media through to lawn ornaments. Her writing has been published in over 30 catalogues, and her work supporting digital art has been recognized internationally.

RACHEL NORDSTROM is the Photographic Collections Manager of Special Collections at the University of St Andrews Library, Scotland. Originally from Canada, she has been working in the cultural sector for nearly 15 years in varying capacities. As part of her role at St Andrews Nordstrom preserves and provides access to the photographic archive held by the University, one of the oldest and largest photographic collections in Britain. Working alongside academics at the University to utilize the archive for research and teaching across several departments, she continues to acquire both historic and contemporary photography which is relevant to the specific themes addressed in the curriculum. Nordstrom organizes the *St Andrews Photography Festival* which showcases Scottish photography and hosts events across town every October.

RYAN STEC is an artist, producer, and designer working in research and production. Beginning his relationship with the moving image through documentary film-making, his practice slowly expanded off the edges of the screen. His productions are increasingly combining light, colour, structure, and material with deeper consideration of site and city. Stec is a PhD candidate at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, Carleton University (Ottawa, Ontario). His research is focused on temporary and informal interventions in the city, and the exploration of new approaches to mapping temporal phenomena. He has been closely involved in the artist-run culture of Ottawa, Canada since 1998. From 2005 Stec has held the position of the Artistic Director of Artengine, a non-profit centre for art and technology based in Ottawa. In his role at Artengine, Stec has developed an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to project production that includes festivals, symposia, workshops, interactive publicart, commissions for non-traditional venues, and innovative models for service delivery and knowledge sharing.

JORDAN STROM is Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Surrey Art Gallery. Strom has curated over 45 exhibitions in Surrey since 2009. Strom has further curated landmark exhibitions for the Vancouver Art Gallery, Kamloops Art Gallery, Presentation House Gallery (North Vancouver), Republic Gallery (Vancouver) among others. Surrey Art Gallery exhibitions include *Land Songs, Water Songs: Chants de terre, chants d'eau* (2018), *Flow: From the Movement of People to the Circulation of Information* (2018), and *Ground Signals* (2017) co-curated with Roxanne Charles, and *Nep Sidhu: Shadows in the Major Seventh* (2016). From 2004 to 2008, Strom was co-editor of *Fillip* magazine, an international journal of art writing.

RON TAMIS The Tamis family have been farming in Surrey since 1958. Tamis started to manage the family farm in 2002 supported by his wife, Pam, and sons. The farm operates under the name 'Rondriso Farms and General Store' located in Surrey, BC. Tamis is proud to run a small and sustainable family farm. He believes that growing a range of crops contributes to the sustainability and integrity of the land and provides a richer variety of fresh produce for the local community. Tamis sells his produce at the General Store on Rondriso and at local Farmers Markets. The family also support *Localicious Produce Box* which is a community supported agriculture (CSA) service available in the summer, fall and winter. In addition to crop production, the family rear chickens and Simmental cattle. The Tamis family open-up their farm and Pumpkin Patch to the public every October which provides an awareness-raising opportunity for all visitors about farming in Surrey, BC, and the Fraser Basin.

REBECCA TRAVIS is a writer, editor, and curator. Originally from the UK, Travis has resided in Toronto since 2014. Travis has a degree in Fine Art from the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and she has worked in public and commercial galleries since 2010. Travis is passionate about generating conversations around contemporary art across a broad range of visual art media. Curatorial projects include the group exhibitions *New Monuments Forget the Future, TenderPixels.CorruptedFiles*, *Soon Comes Night,* and *Refiguring Worlds* at Birch Contemporary in Toronto, and *Print Matters exhibition* at FCP Gallery, Toronto. Travis has further contributed to arts journals and industry magazines, including *Apollo Magazine*, *The White Review*, *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Momus*, *BlackFlash* and *Aesthetica Magazine*, among others. Travis is the Profiles Editor at *Prefix Photo magazine*, and formerly the Managing Editor of the London-based online contemporary art magazine '*this is tomorrow'* (2014 -2016). Currently, Travis is Manager at Open Studio Contemporary Printmaking Centre.

LIZ WELLS is a writer, curator and lecturer on photographic practices. Wells is a Professor in Photographic Culture in the School of Art, Design and Architecture in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Humanities, University of Plymouth. Her edited collections *The Photography Reader, History and Theory* (2019), *The Photography Culture Reader* (2019) and *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2015, 5th ed.) are foundational works in photographic studies. In 2017, Wells was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, for major contributions to the field. Her interests in expressions of identity, landscape, and environment have resulted in numerous publications and exhibitions, including the ground-breaking *Shifting Horizons: Women's Landscape Photography Now* (co-editor, 2000), *Land Matters, Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (2011), *Landscapes of Exploration, British Art from Antarctica* (2012), and *Photography and Cyprus* (co-editor, 2014). Wells is also co-editor for the journal *photographies* and sits on the Board of Directors, Society for Photographic Education, USA.

Artist's Acknowledgements

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Farm Tableaux Series:
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Collections Information

The **Surrey Art Gallery** holds several of Borda's art series in its permanent collection including:

> ***Every Bus Stop in Surrey, BC***, 2004
> Digital images files: SAG2005.02.001-2005.02.968
> Digital film: SAG2005.02.969
> Website: SAG2005.02.970

> ***(Sub)Urban Exchange***, 2007
> Large scale photo artworks Borda made specifically
>   as an unique edition to contrast and
> celebrate the built environments of Surrey, BC,
>   Canada, and East Kilbride, Scotland.
> SAG2008.01.01-.06

> ***Farm Tableaux***, 2013
> C-41 exhibition prints: SAG2019.09.01

Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia holds a significant number of artist's prints from *EK Modernism* (*see* https://belkin. pastperfectonline.com/).

University of St Andrews holds a complete digital archive of images from Borda's *EK Modernism*, and the **National Galleries of Scotland** has a selection of prints from this series as part of its permanent collection.

West Vancouver Art Museum holds a selection of prints from Borda's ***EK Modernism: Canada*** series.

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"A perfect blend of appreciation of place, form, technique, and the passage of time."

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Director, Basically Good Media Lab, Emily Carr University of Art + Design