

Fielding Road

*Maya Beaudry + Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes,
Peter Culley, CROTCH, Megan Hepburn,
Will Holder, Sky Hopinka,
Willie Thrasher + Linda Saddleback*



JULY 15 *to*
OCTOBER 2

Fielding Road

*Maya Beaudry + Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes,
Peter Culley, CROTCH, Megan Hepburn, Will Holder,
Sky Hopinka, Willie Thrasher + Linda Saddleback*

Curated by Jesse Birch and Elisa Ferrari

Timeline of Events

Friday, July 15, 7 PM

Fielding Road: exhibition opening

Nanaimo Art Gallery, 150 Commercial St, Nanaimo

Saturday, July 16, 8 PM

Fielding Road: a night of performances

Featuring Maya Beaudry + Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes,
Peter Culley, CROTCH, Megan Hepburn, Will Holder, Sky Hopinka,
and Willie Thrasher + Linda Saddleback
Felice Cavallotti Lodge, 2060 East Wellington Rd, Nanaimo

Saturday, August 27, 11 AM and 3 PM

Fielding Road: two walks

Limited capacity, please RSVP online at nanaimoartgallery.ca
Meet at Nanaimo Art Gallery, 150 Commercial St, Nanaimo

Thursday, September 1, 5 PM

Fielding Road: Willie Thrasher and Linda Saddleback
at the Nanaimo Night Market
Nanaimo Art Gallery, 150 Commercial St, Nanaimo

Thursday, September 22, 6 PM

Fielding Road: a reading
Polygon Gallery, 101 Carrie Cates Ct, North Vancouver

Fielding Road

—JESSE BIRCH AND ELISA FERRARI

Fielding Road is an exhibition and event series that responds to the work of Nanaimo poet, art critic, and artist PETER CULLEY, whose daily practice of walking, writing, and photographing brought him to closely observe spaces between rural and urban experience in and around Nanaimo.

This project takes its name from a stretch of roadway in Nanaimo that was cut off from its original use when a new highway was built in the 1990s; it is a site to which Culley often returned to with his dog SHASTA and occasionally with friends. In his essay *Walking in Nanaimo* he wrote: “By the time I rediscovered it, it had become a picturesque ruin—the roadway thick with moss and accumulated leaves and needles, the yellow dividers cracked and obscured under the canopy of conifers, alder, maple and arbutus. Another colony of ravens noisily dominates the stretch along landfill, scattering shards of packaging and bone, draping long strips of plastic from the trees.”

Throughout his practice, Culley treated Nanaimo with great care as a place of significant cultures and histories. Over a twenty-year period he composed a trilogy of poetry books titled *Hammertown*, named after a fictional fishing village on Vancouver Island, as described by French writer George Perec in his novel, *Life: A User's Manual*. While Hammertown has remained a fictional place in Culley's poetry, many of its details were drawn from his experience of Nanaimo. In *Hammertown*, Nanaimo is a site where real and imaginary worlds exist simultaneously,

and Fielding Road is both a partly abandoned street and a conduit for discarded and overgrown objects to generate new symbolic readings.

While the material conditions of Fielding Road remain in flux, the area and its surroundings are slated for imminent development. In Culley's words, "For now the ravens are still in charge. It is a place where civilization's grip on the landscape feels weak, its tenure on this island and continent, brief and undistinguished. It is as close to a monument as anything we will leave behind."

The process of making images has for me become so embedded in the dailiness of walking that I have been able to create within it a version of the directed semi-consciousness with which I write poetry.

—*Peter Culley's Hammertown*, an interview with Paul E. Nelson, 2014.

During the development of the *Hammertown* trilogy, and until his passing in 2015, Culley kept a blog called *Mosses from an Old Manse*, named after a book of allegorical short stories published by Nathaniel Hawthorne. *Mosses* was a generative site for Culley to gather and share ideas, inspirations, and source materials from near and far,

that informed both his writing, and his experience in Nanaimo. Later, his work with photography began to eclipse the written notes or web links. Culley's pictures were predominantly observations from his everyday walks in South Nanaimo with his dog Shasta. An old hammer sunk into older earth, a new highway sliced across an ancient hillside; in Culley's images, histories collide. When set in the context of his blog, the landscape of Nanaimo became imbued with the global literary and cultural references that already informed his reading of this place. Seven years after Culley's passing, the site is no longer actively maintained and is susceptible to link rot, but we can still trace the author's daily walks by following his images, taken on the frayed edge-lands between the country and the city.

For *Fielding Road*, MAYA BEAUDRY and MARISA KRIANGWIWAT HOLMES took the images Culley posted online, and the *Mosses* blog itself, as sources of inspiration and points of departure. Through their work, Culley's images are extracted from the flow of digital media and transformed into sculptural objects, where they are brought to the fore and set in new relationships.

Context is crucial to how photographs are understood. Through her practice, Kriangwiwat Holmes is interested in how online images and social media have not only changed the ways that photographs are made and shared, but also shifted the fabric of social relations. She works primarily with existing and found digital images, printing, layering,

and reframing them to initiate different material conversations. A number of her recent works have featured one of the most ubiquitous and well loved subjects of photography—dogs. In some way dogs are the perfect subject for social media. Private enough to form deep relations with their human counterparts, but public enough that most people frequently, and freely, share images of them online. Dogs were a subject of deep engagement for Culley. In 2008, prior to having a dog, or a photographic practice, he wrote a feature essay for the publication *To the Dogs*, published by Presentation House (now Polygon) Gallery.

Darwin dethroned the dog from its role as the animal most resembling humans, but photography has preserved the intimacy and resemblance—every photograph of a dog is a self-portrait.

—Peter Culley, *To the Dogs* (2008)

Culley described his approach to both photography and poetry as “directed semi-consciousness,” but when his dog Shasta came into his life there was another consciousness sharing the directing. It was often Shasta who led the way on their walks, and while she was a fixture in many of Culley’s photographs, her sniffs in ditches, trots down Fielding Road, and scrambles up coal slack heaps not only populated, but also informed his images.

When Kriangwiwat Holmes was digging through *Mosses*, she was captivated by Shasta’s presence and brought her to the fore as the primary subject matter in her work for *Fielding Road*. Through her use of laser jet print collages, wheat pasted on plywood, she reconfigures images of Shasta with the broadcast urgency of help wanted signs, billboards, and gig posters. This kind of vernacular signage was one of the most common subjects in Culley’s photographs. A lost dog poster even appears in his last post in *Mosses*. Kriangwiwat Holmes channels these aesthetics of the everyday, but through a physical translation of Culley’s photographs into the context of the gallery.

Among Culley’s photographs of suburban signage, dogs and debris, are gigantic triangular and circular structures of concrete and iron left behind by the mining industry that once extracted and distributed coal, dominating and decimating this landscape. Now rendered useless by economies and time, these leftover landmarks have become symbolic: images as much as objects. Responding to Culley’s work in *Mosses*, Maya Beaudry looks to the very structure of the blog itself as also a kind of outmoded support, but for the presentation and distribution of images. In Beaudry’s work for *Fielding Road*, a sculptural scaffold inspired by the angular forms of Nanaimo’s post-industrial architecture is shrouded in images sourced from Culley’s blog and printed on fabric. Culley’s images, when reconfigured through Beaudry’s installation, set structures from the past in a material conversation with everyday cast-offs and the modern effects of urban development. Through her process, Beaudry

gives Culley's images volume and stitches together different seasons, weathers, and paths. She stretches and folds photographic surfaces around the edges of the scaffold, forging alternate scales, patterns and perspectives. Beaudry speaks of fabric as "a membrane between body and architecture." For *Fielding Road*, she sets the severe and disciplinary qualities of industrial architecture in relation to the comfort and softness associated with a material we trust to enshroud our bodies and furnish our homes. In Hammertown, the fictional place where the climax forest of Vancouver Island meets cosmopolitan France, Culley combines and weaves similar juxtapositions, interrogating materials and traces of activities in their sonic, tactile and olfactory manifestations.

a natural couch though no one sits—
back there ants would be a problem.
& the skunk cabbage fell in love with the daffodil.

—Peter Culley, "A Midsummer Cushion," *Parkway* (2013)

MEGAN HEPBURN is an artist who works with painting, perfumes, and olfactory sculptures. In her work for *Fielding Road*, she treats Culley's poems as formulas for scents. Hepburn shifts focus away from vision, paying close attention to histories of places and materials as read through the ephemerality of smells. Those traveling to Nanaimo on a ferry are alerted to one of the economic drivers of the area when the salty ocean breeze mingles with the acrid sulphuric smell produced

by the Harmac pulp mill in South Nanaimo. Another distinct odour comes from the landfill that runs along the last stretch of Fielding Road until it meets Cedar Road. Depending on the time of the day, the temperature, and the winds, these pungent markers move in and out of neighborhoods galvanizing residents and visitors, threatening property values and swiftly redefining notions of public and private.

The history of perfumery Hepburn references in her work for *Fielding Road* intersects with both the coal mining and the fishing industries. Coal tars and their derivatives, specifically the chemical compound phenol, were used for medicinal purposes in soaps, and salves, and as fixatives to prolong the longevity of aromas in perfumes until they were replaced by cleaner and cheaper sources of phenol. Ambergris, though rarely harvested on the west coast, is a byproduct of sperm whales' digestive processes and has been employed in commercial products like perfumes and pharmaceuticals and in soap and lamp oils for centuries.

or where the rising fuel costs
temporarily trump
the fear of creosote & coalsmoke

to re-enable the choking fogs
that had disappeared
with the industrial base—

—Peter Culley, "The Fourth War," *The Age of Briggs & Stratton* (2008)

The four scents Hepburn produced for *Fielding Road* were developed from the reading of a selection of Culley's poems and from her visits to Nanaimo and Fielding Road. To create each formula, she surrenders to the poem's internal structures, and to the demands of her materials. Verses and words are collaged, made into lists and reorganized according to the combined needs of her ingredients: bits of pine forest, dry maple leaf, ivy, gorse, dust, cattails, peat, oregon grape, cheerwine, phenols... In *Fielding Road*, Hepburn grafts the syntax of perfumery with Culley's writing, resulting in scented objects, leather gloves and muslin scarves, that function as olfactory translations while carrying their own histories and relationships to cultures and bodies.

The reasons why I mumble
are numerous
& far from simple

—Peter Culley, "Sampler," *Parkway* (2013)

The work is the death mask of its conception.

—Walter Benjamin, "The Writer's Technique in Thirteen Theses,"
One Way Street (1928)

Brussels-based typographer and artist, WILL HOLDER, is the only participant in the exhibition component of *Fielding Road* who met Culley during his lifetime. In 2014, Holder was in Nanaimo to design the publication for the Nanaimo Art Gallery exhibition *Black Diamond Dust*, that featured Culley's writing and photography. Holder and Birch met Culley at his house in South Wellington, and then walked down the tracks of the E&N Railway, meandered behind the Nanaimo Parkway and ended with a short visit to Fielding Road. While Holder is known for typesetting, designing and editing publications, his practice also involves publishing with his body, internalizing and sharing text through the performative medium of speech.

For *Fielding Road*, Holder is thinking about the germinating ideas that come to life through shared experiences and conversations, primary utterances that have a specific kind of energy that is often lost when they are polished in a final text.

On the opening weekend of *Fielding Road*, Holder presents a public and private talk that begins at the Gallery opening and ends at the performance night at Cavallotti Lodge, side A and side B of a response to Culley's work. Speaking of loss, broken links, and dead ends, Holder references American poet Alice Notley, Culley's primary sources of expression like *Mosses*, and published poems like *Winterreise* (1995) while working through the precarious idea of the pastoral, embodying language, and leaving behind written traces of Culley's work.

During *Fielding Road*, another element of Culley's work will be distributed through the Gallery. When Culley's 1995 book of poetry, *The Climax Forest*, was published it marked an important moment in the writer's practice. This was the most significant body of work he had published to date, and featured celebrated poems like *Winterreise* and *The Provisions*. However, due to distribution issues, the majority of the books languished in a warehouse somewhere, never to be seen again. For *Fielding Road* we have collaborated with Publication Studio Vancouver to publish a bootleg edition of *The Climax Forest* so that this selection of texts can once again resonate in Nanaimo and beyond.

& in sleep
the furious forest
reconstitutes itself

—Peter Culley, "A Letter to Hammertown," *Parkway* (2013)

For Culley, sharing music with friends in the form of tape compilations, mixed CDs and Dropbox deliveries was a source of pleasure and a way of connecting to communities and places not easily accessible from Nanaimo. John Cale, Muslimgauze, Theo Parish, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and Fats Waller—Culley's favourite musicians constellate his poetry, but his close listening begins in his neighborhood by tuning into the filament of the weedwhacker, the bass tones from the bikers' parties resonating across the sandstone ridge at night, or the ravens'

elaborate polyphonies that carry through the trees as he walks down Fielding Road. The sonorities of Nanaimo and the musical sensibility he developed through years of sustained listening across genres emerge firmly throughout his writing, at times echoing his walks or entering his photographs.

Later I made a loop
of the pebble crunch & engine
so that they'd course
through her headphones
& make a kind of disco
that I could then loop again
& install in a top branch
under the streetlight
a kind of permanent radio.

—Peter Culley, "A Letter to Hammertown," *Parkway* (2013)

For many years WILLIE THRASHER's powerful voice could be heard echoing down Commercial Street or across the Harbour, where he busked any time the weather would cooperate. Culley never wrote about encountering Thrasher on the streets of Nanaimo, but it is likely that they crossed paths. Poetry, music, and storytelling have long been intertwined. In Walter Benjamin's famous essay *The Storyteller*, he speaks of two archetypes, one being the storyteller who brings stories

from afar and the other one being deeply rooted in the narratives of the place where they live. Combining the two, Thrasher sings of his experiences as an Inuk from Aklavik, Northwest Territories on the streets of Nanaimo. Like Buffy Sainte-Marie and Willie Dunn, in the 1970s Thrasher gained recognition for his work exploring Indigenous roots through music, and he recorded two significant albums with the CBC, *Spirit Child*, a full-length studio album of original songs, and *Sweet Grass*, a live recording in Val-d'Or, Quebec, with fellow Indigenous musicians Willy Mitchell, Morley Loon, and Roger House. Thrasher kept playing, but didn't gain the same recognition as some of his peers. Like Culley, he was highly respected by his network across the country, but few in Nanaimo recognised the significance of his work. In 2014 this began to change, and he became more widely recognised thanks to the release of the compilation *Native North America* which featured three of his songs, and the subsequent re-release of *Spirit Child* in 2015. Since then, he has been touring nationally and internationally, but he still regularly busks in Nanaimo. It was on the Nanaimo waterfront that he met LINDA SADDLEBACK eleven years ago, and the two have been singing together ever since.

The hollow double tonk—
timbre somewhere between
a Fender Rhodes and a child's
knuckle on a picture window—
of the raven overhead

evokes the tart agnosticism
of Dolphy on the '64 Village Vanguard
dates, each solo built up
from a couple of notes
like cell division only faster

—Peter Culley, "Ugly Edits," *Parkway* (2013)

Over the years, Nanaimo has drawn musicians and audiophiles from the mainland and has been an active and supportive place for the music community. Record stores continue to have a wide and committed audience, and rare LPs are commonly found on the shelves of local thrift stores. Prior to the internet, Culley frequented these places searching for vinyl records and used books. At the intersection of Commercial Street, Albert Street, Wallace Street, and Victoria Crescent sits a cultural hub of Nanaimo, the Vault Cafe. The second floor of the same building hosts several artist-run stores which seem to operate as exercises in alternative economies rather than profitable enterprises; among these is Wyrd Wealth. Honoring its name and its DIY punk ethos, Wyrd Wealth sells records and hot sauces, ceramics and band t-shirts, cold tinctures and books, rocks and honey, and it's run by Jeremy Van Wyck and Isabel Ford, also known by their performance name, CROTCH. Their commitment to the local music community as organizers of events, improvisers, and DJs, also plays a major role in their artistic output which is often one of collaboration and hospitality.

Their sound performance for the event at Cavallotti Lodge is informed by their experience of living in Nanaimo, walking on Fielding Road, and regularly accessing edge-land spaces for leisure or to organize concerts and sound interventions. For *Fielding Road*, they combine field recordings from some of these sites with vocals, spoken words and samples from a selection of Culley’s mixed CDs.

All of the artists in *Fielding Road* will present or perform on July 16 at Cavallotti Lodge, a venue mentioned by Culley in his essay “Walking in Nanaimo” and a marker of “the edge of town” further removed with the construction of the Parkway. An archive of the events at Cavallotti Lodge will also be presented in the Gallery.

The Island Highway
Is the tinnitus
of the landscape

—Peter Culley, “The Inland Empire,” *Parkway* (2013)

Through the erosion of earth and memory, landscapes and languages are always in the process of transition and translation. SKY HOPINKA’s films deconstruct experiences of place and overlay images of undulating terrain with field recordings, written fragments, and music. Hopinka’s filmwork refuses to take on the task of instructing, offering instead propositions that are subject to the viewers’ own understandings of

place, time, language, and culture. In *Mnemonics of Shape and Reason*, the camera traverses a place without anchoring it to a singular temporality, instead opening up its fluidity and offering perceptual and political possibilities that defy colonial needs to extract and frame a landscape as fixed.

Cut off from other infrastructure by the needs of an expressway and the drive towards progress, Fielding Road has become overgrown with a veil of moss, ferns and debris encroaching onto its yellow dividing line. Here the slow workings of natural reclamation are visible, overwriting the agendas of modern convenience and pointing to an inevitable future. A memory of things to come. Hopinka’s films point towards different sets or relations and to different landscapes, but their processes are aligned.

Caring for lands and languages, memories and histories, no matter how many times they are extracted and overwritten, is ongoing and crucial. Fielding Road is anywhere.

Artist Bios

MAYA BEAUDRY + MARISA KRIANGWIWAT HOLMES

Maya Beaudry received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Pergola* at Contemporary Calgary and *Puff* at Wil Aballe Art Projects.

Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes is a Hong Kong-born artist based in so-called “Vancouver.” Holmes is interested in how people view and exchange images online. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Infinity Ball*, Unit 17, Vancouver (2022); *My Owns*, Project Native Informant, London (2021); *Everything Leaks*, Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver (2020); *Open Heart Run Off*, Sibling, Toronto (2019); *Keep Your Eyes On Your Prizes*, Calaboose, Montreal and *ddmmyyyy*, Artspeak, Vancouver (both 2018). Select group exhibitions have been held at the Royal Academy Antwerp, Access Gallery & Centre A, Vancouver (all 2017). In 2020, Holmes was the recipient for the New Generation Photography Award from the National Gallery of Canada and was the winner of the Second Annual Lind Prize in 2017, as well as the ECUAD Graduating Photography award. Holmes graduated from ECUAD with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography & a Curatorial minor in 2017.

CROTCH is a collaboration between Jeremy Van Wyck and Isabel Ford. Since 2013, they have released three albums on Isolated Now Waves and performed at *Sled Island* (2018/2019), *Sinkerfest* (2019), *Wrong Wave*

no.6 (2018), *Big Joy Festival* (2017) and *Vancouver Noise Fest* (2016). CROTCH combines field recordings, songwriting and improvisation on an assortment of instruments. Their performances incorporate handmade costumes, lights, guest musicians and dancers to address topics such as occultism in the modern era, abuses of power, feminism, mental illness, counter culture, psychedelia and altered states. Since 2016 they live and work on Snuneymuxw territory.

PETER CULLEY was a poet, artist and art writer who lived in the South Wellington area of Nanaimo. His books of poetry include *The Climax Forest* (1995), *Hammertown* (2003), *The Ages of Briggs & Stratton* (2008) and *Parkway* (2013). He has written critical texts on the artwork of Stan Douglas, Kevin Schmidt, Claudia Hart, Geoffrey Farmer, Kelly Wood, Lorraine Gilbert. His photographic work can be seen on his blog *Mosses from an Old Manse*, and many of them were presented in his 2014 solo exhibition *Area A* at the Charles H. Scott Gallery.

MEGAN HEPBURN is an artist living in the unceded territories of the Skwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) Nations. Her practice is based in painting and perfumery. Recent exhibitions include *wave hands, like clouds, not eyes*, a collaboration with Serena Lee and Gina Badger at Or Gallery, *The Pandemic is a Portal* at SFU Galleries, *Material Elements* at Elissa Cristall Gallery and *Passing Through Smoke* at CSA Space in Vancouver. Hepburn started the botanical perfume line Cracher Dans La Soupe Parfum

in 2018 as an extension of her artistic practice to engage people in a format outside of the exhibition. Her current work combines the worlds of scent, textiles, painting and other media to explore questions around perception, time, labour, craft and the erasure and loss of memory.

Typographer WILL HOLDER runs uh books whose singular “uh” suggests one adaptive whole of a plural “books.” The disparity between written logotype (a) and its spoken “uh” (say out loud: “a sandwich, a wallet, and a giraffe”) is suggestive of books Will makes with artists, musicians and certain institutions—using conversation as model *and* means. The work pre- and describes relations between people, their multiple voices, memory, song, recounting and accounting, by way of speech, performance and transcription, getting words on, and primarily *off* the printed page, by way of bodies as living, speaking documents.

Holder edits and publishes *F.R.DAVID*, since 2007, a journal concerned with the organisation of reading & writing in the arts (co-published with KW, Berlin).

SKY HOPINKA (Ho-Chunk Nation/Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians) was born and raised in Ferndale, Washington and spent a number of years in Palm Springs and Riverside, California, Portland, Oregon, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In Portland he studied and taught chinuk wawa, a language indigenous to the Lower Columbia River Basin.

His video, photo, and text work centers around personal positions of Indigenous homeland and landscape, designs of language as containers of culture expressed through personal, documentary, and nonfiction forms of media. His work has played at various festivals including Sundance, Toronto International Film Festival, Ann Arbor, Courtisane Festival, Punto de Vista, and the New York Film Festival. His work was a part of the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the 2018 FRONT Triennial and Prospect.5. He was a guest curator at the 2019 Whitney Biennial and participated in *Cosmopolis #2* at the Centre Pompidou. He has had a solo exhibition at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College in 2020 and at LUMA Arles in Arles, France in 2022. He was awarded the Tom Berman Award for Most Promising Filmmaker at the 54th Ann Arbor Film Festival, and the New Cinema Award at the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival. He was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in 2018-2019, a Sundance Art of Nonfiction Fellow for 2019, an Art Matters Fellow in 2019, a recipient of a 2020 Alpert Award for Film/Video, a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow, and was a 2021 Forge Project Fellow.

WILLE THRASHER + LINDA SADDLEBACK

Willie Thrasher was born in Aklavik, a hamlet located in the Inuvik region of the Northwest Territories, Canada, in 1948. At five years of age, Thrasher was taken from his family and sent to a residential school where he was forbidden to practice his Inuvialuit culture, a shameful initiative by the Canadian government to assimilate Indigenous

people into mainstream society. Music was a way for Thrasher to escape the pain and longing. In the mid-1960s, Thrasher drummed for *The Cordells*, one of the first Inuit rock bands. One evening, a stranger recommended that the group tap into their Aboriginal roots instead of the charts for inspiration. This prompted Thrasher to take up the guitar and write songs about his life, people, and the environment. Thrasher became a musical vagabond, travelling across Canada and the United States throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s, meeting many other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit musicians. His solo album *Spirit Child* was released by the CBC in 1981 and provided a further opportunity for Thrasher to reconnect with his Native heritage and share this love and understanding with people from other cultures. “Silent Inuit” became a northern hit for Thrasher, but with limited commercial support and little promotion outside of northern communities, the album eventually fell to the wayside. Today, Thrasher lives in the town of Nanaimo, BC, where he performs as a city sanctioned busker with his partner Linda Saddleback.

The curators would like to thank:

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What stories do we tell?

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