

SEE IT

Land|Slide Transforms Historic Village into New-Art Hub

Markham Museum September 21 to October 14, 2013

By [Alison Cooley](#)

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[Janine Marchessault](#) has a distinctive engagement with public art curation. As a driving force behind “[The Leona Drive Project](#)” (2009) and “[Museum for the End of the World](#)” (2012) she emphasized discovery, experiment and autonomy to pull viewers through changing environments. Now, her latest project “[Land|Slide: Possible Futures](#)” has commissioned more than 30 artists to transform the [Markham Museum’s outdoor historical village](#) into a productive ground for play and questioning—a space from which to envision the future of the rapidly expanding city.

“Land|Slide”’s most successful projects provoke a re-examination of the space in which they exist, prompting a sense of discovery that extends to even the most mundane objects in the museum’s historical collection, which become newly wonderful and perplexing.

Some works engage the sense of haunting which permeates the museum, evoking ghostly figures to examine colonial presences. [Terrance Houle](#)’s sound and video installation passes through an old carousel and into a nearby barn, chronicling the story of a horse-thief’s reformation, his wife, her lover and a grisly murder. Inspired by the history of [19th-century Markham gangs](#), Houle’s atmospheric murder ballad casts the barn’s existing artifacts (glass cases full of knives, saws, hammers and axes) in a new and disturbing light.

Other works, such as [Maria Hupfield](#)’s *1 of 1*, suggest ties to historical processes of making. Hupfield has carefully crafted replicas of museum objects from industrial felt and placed them seamlessly within the shelves of the museum collection. The work considers the contemporary and historical place of handicraft and labour. Alongside is an interrogation of the truth value of museum collections as accurate representations of the past.

Still other projects are enticing simply for their visual and sensual cleverness. [Lisa Myers](#), [Sean Martindale](#), and [Yvan MacKinnon](#)’s project *All Purpose* reconfigures an old carriage house as a white-cube gallery. There, the artists present visitors with food products (including bannock, sugar cubes and macaroons) made from enriched and refined ingredients. The project, which relies equally on wordplay and performative interaction with visitors, is a witty look at whiteness and colonial histories.

Despite the fact that it is difficult to access some works, like projections best viewed at nighttime and selected augmented-reality experiments, there is, overall, an incredible scavenger-hunt-like experience to “Land|Slide”. Those living in downtown Toronto can access [free buses from MOCCA on October 5 and 12](#). Visitors should plan to spend several hours exploring the grounds, losing track of time and returning to favourite projects.



Lisa Myers, Sean Martindale and Yvan MacKinnon's *All Purpose* turns an old carriage house into a white-cube gallery, with white-flour snacks on tap to boot / photo Will Pemulis



Allyson Mitchell's mixed media and audio installation *Guh Why Low White Ghost Lesbian* includes crocheted spider webs, among other elements / photo Will Pemulis



Julie Nagam's *singing our bones home*, consisting of a wigwam structure as well as sound and projections, is an homage to the buried bodies in the Markham Ossuary / photo Will Pemulis



To view Phil Hoffman's multi-channel video installation, visitors have to look through peepholes in the Markham Museum's old slaughterhouse building / photo Will Pemulis



Skyhill Collective's *The Textured Structure* is made up of four different low-tech and accessible building techniques / photo Will Pemulis



Video is projected onto one of the Markham Museum's historic buildings in Patricio Davila and Dave Colangelo's *The Line* / photo Will Pemulis



Marman and Borins's *Strike While the Iron is Hot* is installed in the Markham Museum's blacksmith shop / photo Will Pemulis



Blue Republic *Morning Daily* consists of wall drawings and object assemblages in the Markham Museum's Gothic Revival Baptist church / photo Will Pemulis



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