



The Interlopers

Mary Anne Barkhouse

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Essays by Corinna Ghaznavi and Tanya Lukin Linklater

Curated by Renée van der Avoird

MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, Ontario



introduction

The Interlopers, a sculptural installation by Kwakiutl artist Mary Anne Barkhouse, examines the relationships between native North American animals and the colonial structures of territory, expansion and empire that encroach on their terrain. Barkhouse, a Minden-based artist, adeptly encapsulates this tension, staging a feast of scraps and waste for a hungry coywolf caught in a longing stare, his hind legs tensing into what could become a supplication or a pounce. In the second part of this project, a coywolf, curled up asleep in our garden courtyard, is seemingly naturalized in this interstitial space. The hybrid animal, emerging from the crossbreeding of two similar but distinct species in a process catalyzed by human intervention, is mobilized by Barkhouse as a metaphor for untangling notions of human-animal dynamics, Indigenous-settler histories, and questions of tolerance, respect and power.

The Interlopers has particular resonance for Barrie and its surrounding environment. Located north of Toronto and south of Muskoka, this rapidly expanding city is prized for its pristine outdoor spaces. Entering the Janice Laking Gallery that houses *The Interlopers* culls within the visitor a conscious awareness that we are neither the first, nor the last, nor the only inhabitants of this ecologically rich place. Humbly, we acknowledge that we, in fact, may be the interlopers in these spaces.

Two guest essayists—Corinna Ghaznavi and Tanya Lukin Linklater—have provided analytic and poetic points of entry into this exhibition, further enriching

our understanding of Barkhouse’s project. In her essay, “Complex Intermingling and the Co-Evolution of Species,” Ghaznavi discusses the status of the hybrid animal in an increasingly urban society, noting that each intervention into the landscape has its consequences. Lukin Linklater’s poetic response captures the deeply affective power of this exhibition and its reference to survival, resilience and a future that may not be. What ties these two essays together is their attentiveness to the unsustainability that Barkhouse evokes. In an address to both herself and any potential visitors to the exhibition, Lukin Linklater writes of the curious figure of the coywolf: “So soak him in, in this place, where his movement—crouching and skulking—has been paused. He is still yet ready, observing the table that has been set with trash and life and trash.”

We are deeply grateful to Mary Anne Barkhouse, the guest writers, guest curator Renée van der Avoird, MacLaren Curator Emily McKibbon and the dedicated team at the Gallery for their work in materializing and contextualizing this exhibition. We are also indebted to Stewart Esten for their multi-year support of our summer exhibition programme. Our gratitude is further extended to the City of Barrie, the Ontario Arts Council, the Government of Ontario and the Canada Council of Arts, as well as our Patrons, Members, Partners and Sponsors, for their ongoing support, which makes all of our exhibitions possible.

Carolyn Bell Farrell
Executive Director
MacLaren Art Centre





Please do not touch

Complex Intermingling and the Co-Evolution of Species

By Corinna Ghaznavi

To be one is always to become with many.

—Donna Haraway

The earliest uses of the word “interloper,” which combined “inter” with “loper” in the 1500s, referred to a trader who trespassed on the rights and charters of others.¹ While the definition has expanded to include anyone who enters or invades without invitation to do so, the earlier description is apt in the context of Mary Anne Barkhouse’s exhibition, *The Interlopers*. The installation examines the complex configuration of human and non-human interconnections with the ecological and cultural environment that has resulted from a long history of human transgressions in the name of economic and cultural expansion.

A long dark table is covered with a rich green runner. Three large crows perch at one end examining a cornucopia of food containers that spill along the length of the table, like precious porcelain figurines. A wild canid stands at the edge of the table opposite the crows, head raised and ears erect. Along a wall, painted a rich blue, hang a series of ornately framed paper prints. In keeping with her sustained interest in the time of first contact between European, particularly French, colonizers and Indigenous people in Canada, Barkhouse’s works combine

the aesthetics of the opulent Louis XIV style with iconic north American animals, and elements of the historical and the contemporary. The melding of all three forces speaks of complex hybridity and dynamic relationships.

The Cyanotype and Anthotype prints, both techniques created in the 1800s, show a combination of wolves, coydogs and wolf dogs. The last wolf was killed in Yellowstone in 1926; by the 1950s no wolves remained anywhere in the western United States. Similarly, wolves were eradicated in the Canadian southern Rockies in the 1950s resulting in two important developments: a radical impact on the landscape and the proliferation of the coywolf. Without wolves, both Yellowstone and Banff National Park experienced a ballooning of the elk population who, with no natural predators, became more stationary, overgrazing on willow and aspen groves such that the grasslands deteriorated, streams eroded, water tables in valleys dried up, and beavers vanished alongside much other wildlife reliant on deciduous habitats.² In eastern Canada the only remaining eastern wolves resided in Algonquin Park where the eastern coyote (larger than the western coyote and smaller than wolves), usually an enemy of the wolf, found them and began to mate resulting in the coywolf. These hybrid wolves have experienced a rapid evolution and proven themselves to be highly intelligent and adaptable. The coywolf has longer legs and larger paws than its coyote relative, ensuring better speed, and larger jaws and shorter snouts, enabling them to take down larger prey.³ Most notably, coywolves (along with coyotes) thrive in densely populated urban and suburban areas like Toronto, Chicago, and even New York City. Studies in Chicago show that coyotes expand their population to the

maximum that the landscape can sustain (estimates currently number them at 2000), live up to four times longer than their rural cousins, continue to increase in size, and that their population is on the rise.⁴

Coyotes and coywolves excel in living alongside humans while remaining just outside of their sight; crows, however, are highly visible, and audible, in urban areas. Similar to the coyote, crows, too, thrive in urban and suburban areas; in fact, biologist John Marzluff maintains that crow populations rise in tandem with human and urban density. He discovered that the crow mortality rate is low in the suburbs and high in rural habitats, and, in what Marzluff refers to as the “co-evolution of crows and humans,” crow ecology, culture, and genetic composition evolve according to the human habitats they experience.⁵ Crows and coywolves mate for life. Both live and evolve seamlessly alongside humans, they play and they feint. They problem solve and have demonstrated Theory of Mind, recognizing that others have a different mental life and assessing and acting accordingly.⁶

Considered pests, crows, wolves, coyotes and coywolves have been relentlessly killed by humans for as long as there has been contact between them, and yet they continue to thrive. It is this fact, and the co-evolution of these species with humans, that Barkhouse is particularly interested in. Using animals as metaphors, she examines both the cycles of nature and the cycles of diplomacy and politics, and how they are intertwined. The eradication of wolves and the persecution and suppression of Indigenous people and values—respect for the land, maintaining balance, taking only what one needs—has landed us

in a precarious world. The legacy of over-hunting, over-logging, and general exploitation of people, animals and land that came with early settlers continues today in the form of resource development and free markets. As Kevin Van Tighem points out, the physical and social landscape are no longer two separate things: first over-hunting and culling wolves, and now the oil and gas industry and massive logging operations have left us with shattered landscapes, eroding cutlines and stripped forests.⁷ The physical, the cultural, and the “wild” have merged as both humans and animals have transformed environments and continue to adapt to new realities. Adaptation for humans still includes killing what we consider animal predators or pests but it also means fencing, building animal tunnels and bridges, and trying to create conservation areas wherein we try to establish and maintain healthy ecologies.

However, every intervention has a consequence, and this, too, is embedded in Barkhouse’s work. The gap that wolves left was filled by a more resilient and adaptive species, the coywolf, and the Northwestern Crow and the American Crow have interbred to create a larger and more mobile bird, so the trick is perhaps less intervention and more patience. As Van Tighem suggests, it is counterproductive to create ideal habitats for deer and moose that wolves eat and then to have to control the wolf numbers. He calls instead for restraint, humility, and thrift.⁸ And this is the biggest challenge we face: can humans, after the 20th century propelled us ever faster into the future through technology, communication and mobility, learn to slow down, or even do nothing and let things evolve in a quieter way? We do not and never have lived in isolation.

Eradication has either not worked or forced nature to alter its course; as urban life for humans becomes ever more connected and hectic, the animals around us adapt to reflect this: urban blackbirds start their work days earlier, move at a faster pace, work longer hours, and sleep less. Dianne Ackerman reports that, to cope with urban life, some animals have begun to redesign their bodies at a pace fast enough for biologists to track.⁹

The call to slow down is reflected in the very photographic processes that Barkhouse utilizes: digital and pinhole images are combined in her deep blue Cyanotypes and Anthotypes, printed with dyes she creates from leafy vegetables, crushed flower petals, and wine. The process requires time, creating dyes, using sunlight to dry and expose the images. The images show animals but, juxtaposed with these, plants and architecture. The plants are those brought from France by the artist as well as some found in her own environment in Haliburton. These include common, even “invasive” and pesky plants like dandelions, buttercups, plantains and grasses; plants so common they often define the landscape and so are less valued, even weeded out, yet also plants that are beneficial to a myriad of wildlife, human and non-human alike. The architecture in the prints are images taken in France of medieval fortresses, buildings erected to ward off the other, to guard against invaders. They are earlier marks on the landscape as cultural and physical environments were formed in reciprocity, built structures in the country that some centuries later would send its people to take control of a new continent.

Porcelain was introduced to Europeans through trade with the Chinese, who developed the technique during the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 BC). Imported to Europe, porcelain was highly prized and considered an expensive and desired luxury. It was not until 1712 that the elaborate Chinese porcelain manufacturing secrets were revealed to Europeans by the French Jesuit Father Francois Xavier d'Entrecolles. The porcelain sculptures Barkhouse has made and arranged on green silk are beautiful white objects that, upon closer examination, reveal themselves to be the ubiquitous disposables that we produce daily: Tim Horton's coffee cups, take-away trays, canned fish tins and plastic bottles. Whereas Louis XIV, renown patron of the arts, commissioned and collected artworks that would reflect his power and splendour, the objects Barkhouse has made reflect the culture of the 21st Century: mass produced non-renewable disposable waste. While we have long been aware of The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, an island made up of 79,000 tonnes of waste that covers 1.6 million square kilometres—an area three times the size of France—scientists have newly discovered plastic waste on the very bottom of the earth's deepest ocean trench, more than 10 km beneath the surface. Ninety percent of the waste revealed itself to be single use items.¹⁰ The news is filled with images of waste mountains, plastic islands, and even beaches where melting plastic fused with rock fragments, sand and shell debris have created a new material referred to as "plastiglomerates."¹¹ While we are extracting oil and logging trees on the surface we are filling land and sea with single-use plastics that may never break down but rather attach themselves to other mineral stuffs to become a new geological form.

By displaying these objects alongside hybrid wolves and crows, and introducing flora and architectural fragments into the mix, Barkhouse addresses issues of contact, adaptation and exploitation. She demonstrates the dynamic relationship between ecologies and environments, the natural and the cultural landscape. Plastics, like people, flora and fauna, have moved globally, becoming invasive or extinct, adapting and evolving. Barkhouse places all the elements on a lateral plain, without dismissing the clear issue of power, in order to think about transplantation, adaptation, and the interlacing relationship of the human, non-human, ecology, and matter. She does not offer us answers but calls for attention and restraint. And while animals are metaphors in her work, Barkhouse also brings us face to face with real animals, evoking a revolution by referencing the French call for *liberté, fraternité, égalité*, for all players. Face-to-face, and wide awake is the only way towards restraint, humility and thrift; and, as Donna Haraway maintains, ultimately respect in order to survive:

Once again we are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down. Response and respect are possible only in those knots, with actual animals and people looking back at each other, sticky with all their muddled histories... It is a question of cosmopolitics, of learning to be "polite" in responsible relation to always asymmetrical living and dying, and nurturing and killing.¹²

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interloper>

² Kevin Van Tighem, *The Homeward Wolf* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2013), 34f.

³ David Suzuki, *Meet the Coywolf: The Nature of Things*. CBC Television. August 31, 2014.

⁴ Suzuki

⁵ John M. Marzluff and Tony Angell. *In The Company of Crows and Ravens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 283.

⁶ David Suzuki, *A Murder of Crows: The Nature of Things*. CBC Television, June 12, 2011.

⁷ Van Tighem, 50f.

⁸ Van Tighem, 59

⁹ Dianne Ackerman, *The Human Age: The World Shaped by Us* (New York and London: W.W.W. Norton & Co., 2014), 114f.

¹⁰ Brandie Weikle, "Plastics, other garbage found in ocean trench nearly 11 kilometres below surface." May 21, 2018. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/plastic-deep-sea-debris-ocean-trench-1.4667038>

¹¹ Angus Chen, "Rocks Made of Plastic Found on Hawaiian Beach." June 4, 2014. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2014/06/rocks-made-plastic-found-hawaiian-beach>

¹² Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 42





The Interlopers, an exhibition by Mary Anne Barkhouse

by Tanya Lukin Linklater

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***Event Score for Writing on Indigenous Contemporary Art
(Mary Anne Barkhouse) 1***

1 minute and 49 seconds: the length of the video documentation¹ taken on an iPhone of Mary Anne Barkhouse's works, *Midden (Au Grand Couvert)*, porcelain, black clay, silk, pine, bronze, 2018-ongoing, and *Untitled I-VIII from The Quick and the Dead*, Anthotypes and Cyanotypes, 2018-ongoing.²

Develop a daily practice of reading this documentation of objects, space, light and the way in which the work calls you to move. Around the table. Longing to touch the porcelain infant turtles and broken crow-raven.

Wait to write.

Instruct yourself to write daily for 1 minute and 49 seconds, the length of the video documentation taken on an iPhone of Mary Anne Barkhouse's works.

Yearn to speak to Mary Anne Barkhouse.

Wonder about her work.

Wait to write.

***Event Score for Writing on Indigenous Contemporary Art
(Mary Anne Barkhouse) 2***

Read “The Best Medicine for My Climate Grief” by Peter Kalmus³ and wonder if the melancholy of climate grief cancels or negates writing about Indigenous contemporary art. Or making art for that matter.

***Event Score for Writing on Indigenous Contemporary Art
(Mary Anne Barkhouse) 3***

Spend time with the work. Be generous.

Generous-ness as potentiality, as a becoming.

Visiting⁴

Mary Anne Barkhouse, first I yearn to visit with you. And then we are in relation. I listen. You tell me about the land you live with—in cottage country not far from Barrie—your travels from Turtle Island to France in the places not built up that are still wild, your grandfather’s experience in Kwakiutl water with a wolf. I know the story in its short form as I have listened to documentation of you telling the story elsewhere. I wonder about the parts you leave out. About the long summers at home on the water fishing. About the way we know a place over time. The way our ancestors have known our places over deep time. But we all keep some parts of stories for ourselves. I tell you about the water that surrounds my village in Alaska and my father. We talk at length about fishing, oil spills and then the sun. The sun is what I remember the most. And the time that it takes to know a place. The time that it takes to know. In our bodies. In relation.

For Mary Anne Barkhouse and Sonya Kelliher-Combs

listening and then telling

listening then being with one another our relatives

deep time fish camp time city time glacial time

the timeittakes to be in relation

Event score for this work of Mary Anne Barkhouse

Remember your visit to the gallery. The way that you tilted towards and away. The way that the light felt. The way that the light knit the table and that wall of colour (you cannot forget) together. The way that the light made a together-ness with breath.

Remember your motion around the table, the legs that carried you near the legs of the table and your longing to touch the small bits, the garbage that had been re-worked, re-made and placed.

Remember the coy-wolf. In real life he would pace and circle, catching glimpses of your whereabouts as you walked through the city streets of Toronto or Chicago or in the bush of Algonquin Park and you would never see him. You would never experience him except when hair on the back of your neck rises, alert to his motion.⁵

So soak him in, in this place, where his movement — crouching and skulking — has been paused. He is still yet ready, observing the table that has been set with trash and life and trash.

Feel his movement and yours. Feel his stillness and yours. His hybridity and constant motion, perhaps they make him a survivor.

Remember the feeling of motion in the installation, the death of a raven, the exploded bits of garbage, the raven-crows who are in mid-squawk, mid-call, mid-language.

Event score for a future we may never know

Remember the view of that which is unsustainable, that which cannot continue, lest we be met with deep grief.

On tables

What table are we setting for ourselves.⁶

For midden found by Mary Anne Barkhouse near her home on the side of the road and cast in porcelain by her hands

midden, noun.

1.
 - a. A dunghill, a dung heap, a refuse heap. Also: a domestic ash-pit.
 - b. A receptacle for refuse, a dustbin; (also) an enclosure in a backyard or basement for holding dustbins or domestic refuse.

2. (excerpts) In 1827, "If there was an object on earth which Monkshaugh loathed..it was a slatternly dirty woman... 'What's to be done with that rampallion midden,'Lizbeth?' said he."

In 1859, "That everlasting midden which men call the world."

3.
 - a. *Archaeology*. A prehistoric refuse heap which marks an ancient settlement, consisting chiefly of shells and bones and often also discarded artefacts;
 - b. *Zoology and Paleontology*. A heap of excreta, food remains, or other organic debris left by an animal; *esp.* such a deposit composed largely of, or cemented by, the urine of small mammals such as pack rats...⁷

One day if anyone survives the climate apocalypse that is upon us, anthropologists may look through our garbage made into midden for study. They will examine these bits to understand us and perhaps also why we likely disappeared.

As Leanne Simpson has said elsewhere⁸ we have experienced the apocalypse already and by we she means the Anishnaabek. She writes from, to and for the Anishnaabek.

In Alaska, my home, the forces of illness, enslavement and deep grief were shocks that repeated across generations, nestled within the seismic convulsions of Russian and American colonization. This disturbance, this distortion has been called the Great Death.

Mary Anne Barkhouse and I visited about bison, beavers and wolves on Turtle Island. How they were killed for bone, for fur and for nuisance. And the devastation that ensued.

Some of us have endured. Some of us have survived.

Perhaps in a future we may never know like coy-wolves or crow-ravens, bison or beaver some of us will survive. But perhaps the colonizers, who have not yet survived an apocalypse, whose history or memory have not endured, perhaps someone needs to tell them that the Great Death is upon us.

Our mother is not a midden.

¹ Tanya Lukin Linklater, "Video documentation of the The Interlopers, an exhibition by Mary Anne Barkhouse," filmed July 2018 at the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON, video, 1:49.

² Mary Anne Barkhouse, *Midden (Au Grand Couvert)*, porcelain, black clay, silk, pine, bronze, 2018–ongoing. Mary Anne Barkhouse, *Untitled I-VIII* from *The Quick and the Dead*, Anthotypes and Cyanotypes, 2018–ongoing.

³ Peter Kalmus, "The Best Medicine for My Climate Grief," *YES! Magazine*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/mental-health/the-best-medicine-for-my-climate-grief-20180809>.

⁴ "A conversation about the exhibition with Mary Anne Barkhouse via telephone with Tanya Lukin Linklater," August 13, 2018.

⁵ "Meet the Coywolf," David Suzuki's *The Nature of Things*, CBC, aired August 2014, video, 44:39, <http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes/meet-the-coywolf>.

⁶ A similar question was posed by Mary Anne Barkhouse during our telephone conversation, August 13, 2018.

⁷ "Midden," Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.queensu.ca/view/Entry/118135?redirectedFrom=midden#eid>.

⁸ Leanne Simpson, "Nishnaabeg Resurgence: Stories from Within" and "Theorizing Resurgence from within Nishnaabeg Thought," *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Manitoba: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 11–48.



biographies

Mary Anne Barkhouse was born in Vancouver and belongs to the Nimpkish band, Kwakiutl First Nation. She has shown her work across Canada and in New York, and her work is currently the subject of *Le rêve aux loups*, a nationally touring retrospective organized by the Koffler Gallery, Toronto. Her public art installations can be found in parks and university campuses across Ontario and her work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa; the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg; the Remai Modern, Saskatoon; the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina; the Art Gallery of Guelph; and others.

Corinna Ghaznavi is an independent curator and freelance writer. Since 1997 she has curated exhibitions across Canada and in the Netherlands. Her writing has been published in Canadian and European art magazines as well as in numerous exhibition catalogues. In 2011 she completed her PhD, which focused on the question of the animal in contemporary art. Ghaznavi was the Artistic Director of the Fabulous Festival of Fringe Film between 2012 and 2015 and Public Art coordinator for the City of Markham between 2013 and 2017. She has taught art history, theory, and curatorial practices at Georgian College, University of Western Ontario, Sheridan College and OCADU.

Tanya Lukin Linklater's performances in museums, videos, texts and installations have been exhibited in Canada, the United States and abroad. In 2017, as a member of Wood Land School, she participated in *Under the Mango Tree - Sites of Learning*, a gathering for documenta14 in Athens and Kassel. In 2018, she was the inaugural recipient of the Wanda Koop Research Fund administered by Canadian Art. Tanya originates from the Native Villages of Afognak and Port Lions in southwestern Alaska and is based in northern Ontario.

Renée van der Avoird is the Assistant Curator of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. From 2013 to 2018, she was Associate Curator/Registrar at the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie. Other previously held positions include Curatorial Mentor at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto and Assistant Director of Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. She holds a BA in French Studies and Fine Arts from Wilfrid Laurier University and a MA in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto.

works in exhibition

Janice Laking Gallery:

Untitled I-VIII from *The Quick and the Dead*, 2018-ongoing
Anthotypes and Cyanotypes

Midden (Au Grand Couvert), 2018-ongoing
Porcelain, black clay, silk, pine, bronze

Massie Family Sculpture Courtyard:

Untitled, 2018
Bronze

acknowledgements

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