

WHERE THE TREES STOOD IN WATER (2013)
BAMBITCHELL

The following is a series of 5-Cyanotype prints on vellum, with additional accompanying narrative. The work investigates the transformation in Toronto's Entertainment District through processes of colonialization, industrialization and gentrification. Using cartographic and textual archival fragments, *Where the Trees Stood in Water* asks questions about settlement and displacement as the entangled remaking of bodies and spaces.



1787

Cyanotype Print, Vellum, 21" x 57"

Image Credit: Frances Beatty

Amidst the landscape that once was, stood the trees, peppered across the coastline, awaiting their fate. 1787, the Cartographer marks down, using his charcoal pencil to trace the lines that would eventually become the hub of industrialization near the east coast of the Americas, on what would become the vast intruded land. The purchase was made, the exchange occurred, the men laughed in unison as they walked away not knowing the impact of their exchange. A quarter-million-acres later, and the derelict naming of a town, lies the bloodline of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.



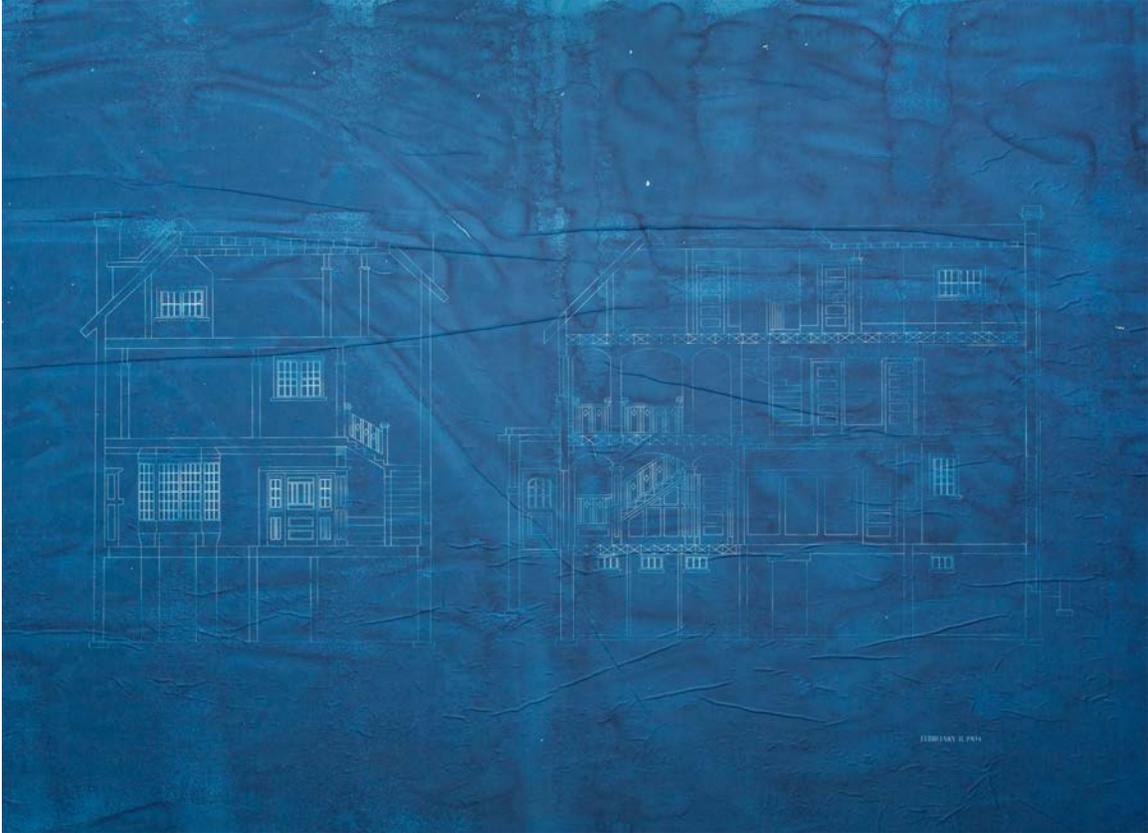
1857

Cyanotype Print, Vellum, 33" x 45"

Image Credit: Frances Beatty

Furiously tracing from the islands he calls home, the Cartographer imprints charcoal to rice paper and looks out at Fort York. 1857, the streets filled with the steam of development. Under the weight of industrialization, the multi-coloured bodies push, heave, load, unload, break, crack, lift and drop, animating York's harbour. From his safe distance, the Cartographer hears the songs they sing to keep afloat through hands splitting, skin breaking, and sweat drenching the grounds of the land they helped build. The interlude breaks the sounds of the steamship engines:

I hollow ships of freight and origin; rising tenor of spitting sea,
do not take from me
A dream of rest and family. We move cargo and coin under sweating suns,
This sprawling circuit of men, whose bodies writhe under industrious invention.
Our limbs unfastened from home, remade while humming pleas
for recognition of our labour, of anguished muscle and skin stretched, metallic.



1904

Cyanotype Print, Vellum, 33" x 45"

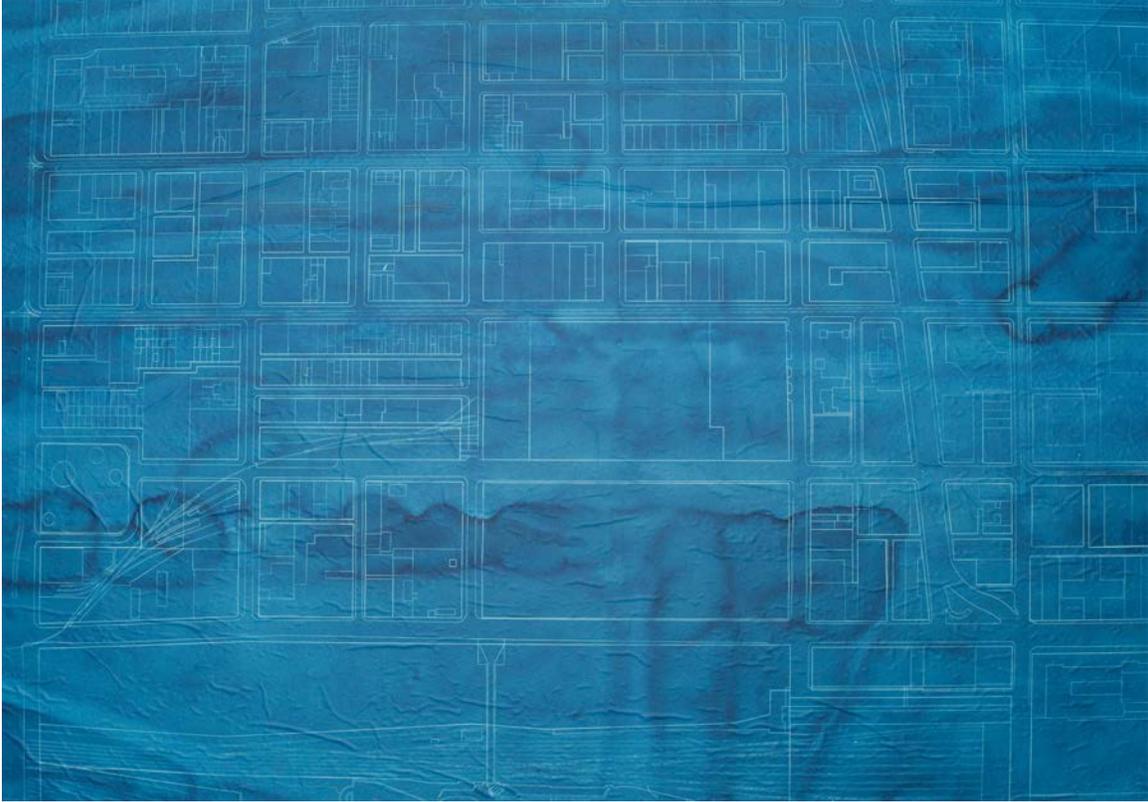
Image Credit: Frances Beatty

She walks through her house on the corner of King Street West and Simcoe Street. Trudging up and down the thick wooden floorboards, her dress - frills, bows and corset, dragging their way back and forth from England to the New World. The Cartographer sits across in the grassy knoll, charcoal in hand, tracing the lines of change over the last five decades. The songs of the kaleidoscopic bodies are washed away by the horse hooves and dragging carts. Wheels on cobblestone, boots on pavement. He watches her sit at her desk, place fountain pen to fresh paper while she stares at the open curtains in front of her and writes furiously.

Johnny* is having some of his colleagues over for dinner tonight – obviously in a continued effort to impress them and exhaust me! I must remember to tell that ragged Irish girl how to make a good banoffee pie:

1. Make a cheesecake base
2. Boil 2 cups of condensed milk for 3 hours and spread over base
3. Slice some bananas on top
4. Add some whipped cream
5. Add another layer of banana

*John Coxwell Gerrard Doe III (Toronto Centre member of 8th parliament, 1899-1907)



1981

Cyanotype Print, Vellum, 33" x 45"

Image Credit: Frances Beatty

Humid and unusually hot for an October evening, the Cartographer stares up at the twilight sky watching the suits and skirts make their way home before the landscape drastically changes to house Toronto's nightlife. 1983 Toronto, between Richmond St West, and Peter Street, electronic music is heard as heavy handled doors open and close. The Cartographer sees the man in the slick back hairdo, chatting with a group of well-dressed twenty-somethings. Hands exchange narcotics. Hands exchange money. Hands exchange hands. The Cartographer bears witness to this exchange week after week, as he himself purchases opiates that will occupy his feet as he searches for a companion.

The metal door bursts open. Rushing, screaming, chaos, loud noises. Gunshots? Fireworks? The Cartographer runs, the sounds of sirens swell in the near distance.

Johnny Doe, shot twice at close range on Richmond Street West, Toronto, October 3, 1983.



2005

Cyanotype Print, Vellum, 33" x 45"

Image Credit: Frances Beatty

On the corner of King Street West and Blue Jay Way in Toronto, the Cartographer stands outside the SoHo Metropolitan, finishing the last of his cigarette, waiting for his dinner companion to make his way downstairs. Stubbing the brown filter into the pavement, he walks into the lobby and sits on a black leather sofa examining the freshly mounted wooden wall panels. Two men walk into the lobby, looking similar in posture and attire. They quibble all the way from the front door to the elevator. The Cartographer notices their affectionate manner, despite their frustration with one another.

Civil Union has just passed in Canada. The quibbling couple donates their marriage certificate, and photographs to the Canadian Gay Archives, in exchange for a tax receipt and a thank you letter:

Dear Mr. and Mr. Doe,

We at the Canadian Gay Archives sincerely thank you for your donation of photographs and marriage certificate. This will serve as apt material for documentation of our lives and our histories.

Please see attached to this letter a tax receipt for your donation.

With Gay Greetings,

Staff, Board & Volunteers
Canadian Gay Archives

