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REFLECTIONS ON ANOTHER *ROUNDING*: “THE MEDIUM IS JOY”

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Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick, *Love Songs to End Colonization*, 2022 – ongoing, printed images of scanned denim jackets with text beadwork by Saga Kwandibenz and floral beadwork by Peter Morin. Installation photograph by Carey Shaw.

Last October, the University of Saskatchewan Art Galleries and Collection opened *Rounding*: a space of teaching, unlearning, engagement and processual exhibition. Premised on the need to open the institution’s exhibition spaces and permanent holdings to multiple forms and sources of authorship, the project was comprised of collectively curated works from the collection, an open access media setup, a small library, and a host of moveable furniture to accommodate events, classes and research needs. Our intention was to create a porous framework for variable forms of engagement, and the community took up our prompt in a substantial way.

In the last newsletter, I charted out these inaugural engagements. For the sake of efficiency, I will say this: the breadth and abundance of these happenings made apparent both the desire and need for this type of project — this indeterminate form of gallery space — on campus and in the community at-large. In January, we relocated *Rounding* to the Kenderdine Art Gallery, reconfiguring its core components in a new space. Before the doors could open, the space was already teeming with the spirit of distributed and open forms of making.

This spirit was sparked by artists Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick, who joined us for a production residency during a cold week in January under the title of their long-term project *Love Songs to End Colonization*. Initiated in 2022, *Love Songs* was born out of a mutual love of karaoke between Morin and Kilpatrick. Drawing on a rotation of pop songs that Morin had used in prior performance works, the duo produced a double album with the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina. On one record, the duo sings karaoke-style over backing tracks performed by Kilpatrick; on the other, only the instrumentals are pressed, inviting listeners to give their own karaoke performances.

At the album's release, the pair performed to a crowd before inviting audience members to come up and sing their own love song to end colonization. At its core, *Love Songs* confronts settler colonialism through joy, futurity and communal voice.

While the album has long since sold out, the karaoke parties continue: "an album release without an album" as Kilpatrick put before a packed audience at the Kenderdine Art Gallery who had gathered for such an event. After a week-long residency, where the pair utilized the green screen at the UCreate Studio on campus to produce a new karaoke video for "What's Love Got To Do With It" in the style of Tina Turner, the party was on.

Morin and Kilpatrick started the evening off with a performance of "Under Pressure," projecting their voices through the gallery with a pair of rented megaphones – a decision prompted by a dream Kilpatrick had that week.

Audience participants were quick to submit their own karaoke slips, and a wave of performances followed. A rendition of "Branded Man" gave way to "Landslide," soon followed by "Time After Time" and "Zombie."

The karaoke canon was in full effect. Audience members clapped in-time and sang along; friends joined friends on stage mid-song in heartwarming support. While working with Peter and Jimmie throughout the week, I often heard the refrain "the medium is joy," and this was undoubtedly true. For those few hours, it was as though they had – we had – created a future space beyond the ongoing violences of settler colonialism. These moments where imaginative joy take material hold, even if only for an evening, stand as some of the most prescient critical forms at our disposal.

The spirit of *Love Songs* still echoes in *Rounding*, as the project continues to engage a multiplicity of voices who question the role of gallery spaces and the forms within arts ecologies that come to have public-facing value. And now, in the project's quieter moments, while setting up for an event or closing down for the night, I test the microphones a fraction too close to the speakers. It's a technical check as homage; I want a bit of feedback to ring out with all that future potential.

Cole Thompson is the Coordinating Curator with the University of Saskatchewan Art Galleries and Collection. Cole's first article in this two-part series was published in the Jan/Feb issue of the CARFAC SASK Newsletter.

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Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick,
Love Songs to End Colonization, 2022
- ongoing. Public performance at the
Kenderdine Art Gallery in Saskatoon.
Photograph by Carey Shaw.





Above: Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick using the large-scale scanner at the University of Saskatchewan Digital Research Centre on 21 January 2025. Photograph by Cole Thompson.

Next page (top): Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick, *Love Songs to End Colonization*, 2022 – ongoing. Public performance at the Kenderdine Art Gallery in Saskatoon, SK, featuring karaoke video for “What’s Love Got To Do With It” in the style of Tina Turner, produced during the duo’s residency at the University of Saskatchewan. Photograph by Carey Shaw.

Next page (bottom): Peter Morin and Jimmie Kilpatrick use the UCreate Studio at the University of Saskatchewan Media Production department during a production residency on 21 January 2025. Photograph by Cole Thompson. (See story on pg. 12).

