

Mark Neufeld
Re-enactments



Print on demand publication of the exhibition *Mark Neufeld: Re-enactments*
presented at Gallery 1C03, The University of Winnipeg
from November 20, 2014 to February 14, 2015.

Curated by Jennifer Gibson

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the author and the artist, 2015.

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Introduction: Jennifer Gibson
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Actors: Gwen Collins and Andraea Sartison

Front and Back Cover: Mark Neufeld, *Re-enactments*, 2015,
performance with Gwen Collins and Andraea Sartison

Gallery 1C03 is the campus art gallery of The University of Winnipeg and is grateful to the University for its ongoing operational support which has made this publication possible. The Gallery also wishes to acknowledge the University of Manitoba for lending its two copies of Frederic Remington sculptures for this exhibition, themselves a gift to that institution by William R. Newman. The loan of these works would not have been possible without the assistance of former University of Manitoba Collections Coordinator Jenny Western and Interim Collections Coordinator Sigrid Dahle. Gallery 1C03 is so pleased to have had the opportunity to work with Mark Neufeld in presenting his exhibition in our space and in realizing this publication. The Gallery also wishes to thank Sigrid Dahle for her delightful and thought-provoking text; Ernest Mayer for photographing the exhibition installation and selected works; and Susan Chafe for producing an attractive publication design so well-suited to the print-on-demand format.

Introduction

Gallery 1C03 is pleased to produce this print-on-demand publication documenting Mark Neufeld's solo exhibition *Re-enactments*, presented in the Gallery from November 20, 2014 until February 14, 2015. This is the Gallery's first foray into on-line publishing, and it is our hope that this format will provide greater access to the artist's and author's work than might be offered through conventional print media. As with all Gallery 1C03 publications, we anticipate that this volume will make a valuable contribution to a wider dialogue on contemporary art.

Re-enactments includes new and recent works by Neufeld that explore painting, theatre, repetition, the found object, and borrowed aesthetics as a way of thinking about history and geographic place—specifically Winnipeg, and aspects of colonial-era Western Canada—that live on in the present day. In the Gallery, the assembled pieces functioned as a theatrical mise-en-scène that was 'activated' periodically over the course of the exhibition's run, by the presence of actors Gwen Collins and Andraea Sartison, using a script that takes the historical re-enactment genre as its departure point.

One might argue that all artworks and, by extension, exhibitions, are performative in nature. Certainly, collections of objects curated into a space for public display rely on the engagement of an audience, an ingredient necessary for both theatrical productions and visual art exhibitions. In her creative, engaging, and layered response to *Re-enactments*, art writer Sigrid Dahle notes that Neufeld is not the first painter to perform a curatorial gesture through the exhibition of his work; she cites one particular predecessor—Gustave Courbet—who shared his vision of modern reality through self-curation after the rejection of his famous piece *The Painter's Studio* (1855) by mainstream authorities.

Neufeld is keen to use curatorial strategies and multiple media to make visible his exploration of the evolving roles of objects within and outside of collections through their re-presentation and re-interpretation. The genesis of *Re-enactments* is two copies of Frederic Remington sculptures, namely *The Bronco Buster* and *Mountain Man*, which had been languishing in the University of Manitoba's art collection storage vault. When they were created more than a century ago, the originals were considered modern in their style and technique and they were highly sought after by collectors of 'cowboy art'. Countless reproductions, ranging in size and scale, have been made of these and other Remington bronzes and paintings, all of which portray a highly romanticized, settler-colonial perspective of the frontier west.

The artist's display of the Remington bronzes on plinths beside their storage crates—*Curatorial Prop Station I* and *Curatorial Prop Station II*—and his paintings of the works being measured and moved by the solid, gloved hands of gallery registrars, make obvious their position as objects within a collection. However, the sculptures' physical location in the gallery in front of Neufeld's *Prop Shelf for Actors* implies their possible slippage into the category of kitsch. And further behind the *Prop Shelf for Actors*, printed reproductions of the same Remingtons appear in Neufeld's wall-mounted collages where



Mark Neufeld, *Ladyman*, 2013

they are seductively caressed by highly feminine, manicured hands, thereby suggesting art's potential as yet another accessory in our contemporary consumer-oriented culture.

Neufeld also turns to architecture in his thinking about re-presentations of the frontier west and their continued influence on perceptions of the history of geographic place. Specifically, he incorporates the epitome of settler-colonial building in Western Canada—the fort. The era when Winnipeg was known by settlers as the Red River Colony has been marked prominently in visual art by the presence of Upper Fort Garry. Local water-

colourists like Ernest J. Hutchins and R. A. Hallam, working a century ago, included the fort in diminutive landscapes they painted repeatedly for sale to middle-class Euro-Canadian homeowners who wanted to showcase a symbol of what was already a bygone age. Hallam's and Hutchins' works, along with a woodcut (itself a reproducible medium) by H. Eric Bergman, are from The University of Winnipeg's own collection and they are included in *Re-enactments* in supporting roles for Neufeld's *Large Catalogue Reproduction (Dreams of Fort Garry: You Are Here)*.

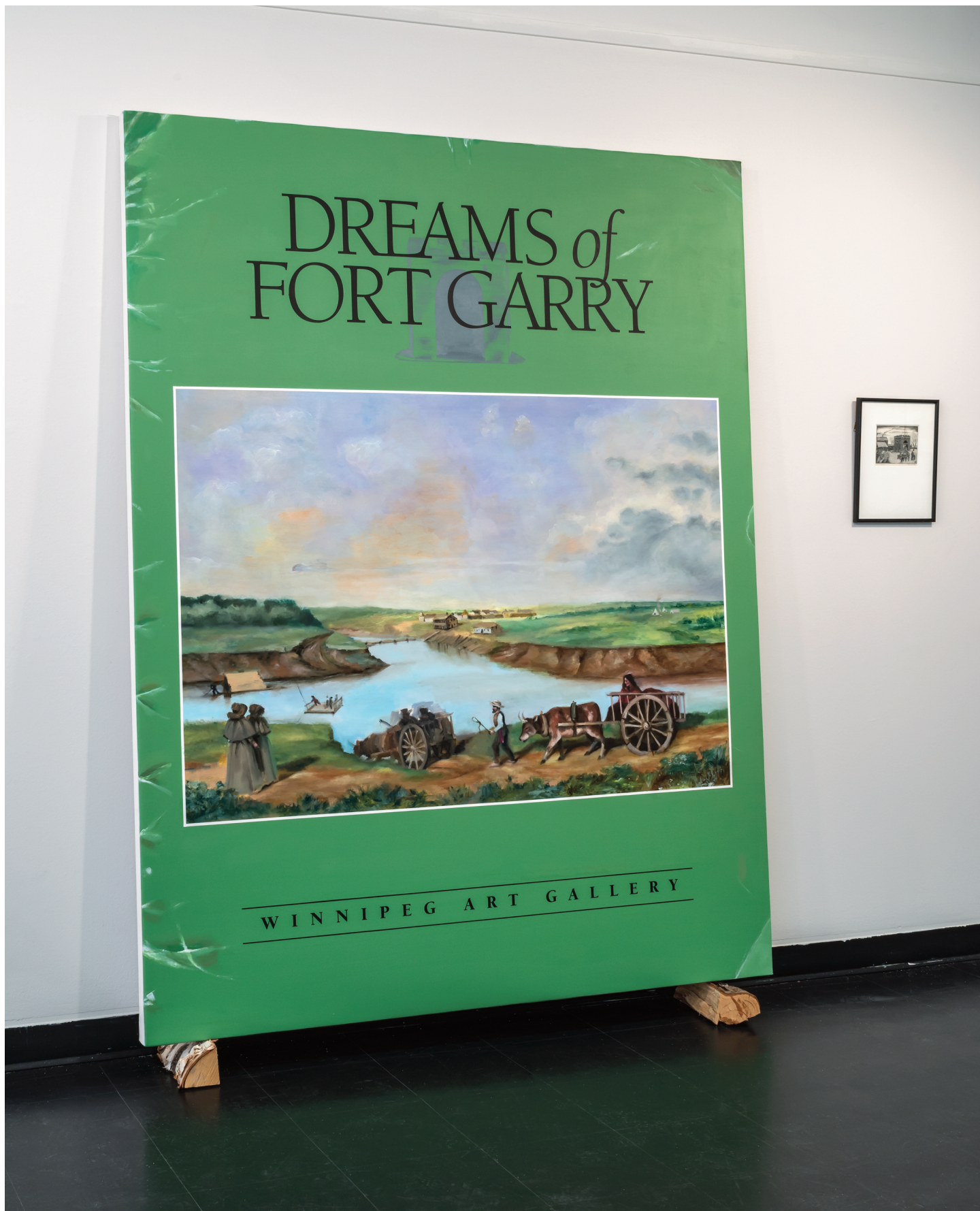
Like his smaller paintings *Measuring Mountain Man*, *Disappearance*, *Moving Sculptures I*, and *Moving Sculptures II*, Neufeld's *Large Catalogue Reproduction (Dreams of Fort Garry: You Are Here)*, draws attention to the function of the public gallery as a keeper and re-presenter of mainstream narratives. With this sizable work (made to history painting scale), Neufeld does more copying: the cover of a Winnipeg Art Gallery exhibition catalogue is replicated in every detail; he even paints the wear and tear on the publication. Neufeld further reinforces the self-consciousness of his duplication by including the actual catalogue in the exhibition space, casually draped over the mirrored screen in front of Remington's *Mountain Man*.

The actors animated Neufeld's curated gallery installation six times over the course of the exhibition's run, using it as their theatrical set. During their performances, Collins and Sartison assumed several personae as they moved through time and place. Neufeld's script called for them to engage with the Remington sculptures as part of a living collage, mimicking the provocative handling portrayed in the works on the gallery's back wall; then to discuss the Latin roots of the terms 'curate' and 'care'; next to portray impressions of the Red River Colony held by two 19th century settler women from vastly different classes – American sex worker Madeleine Blair and wife of Upper Fort Garry's Chief Factor Isobel Finlayson;¹ and finally, to explain the link between the Ancient Roman goddess Cura and the creation of humanity.

In a nod to theatre and film, Neufeld juxtaposes his painting *Large Catalogue Reproduction (Dreams of Fort Garry: You Are Here)* with another equally-sized canvas placed immediately opposite it in the gallery. *Another Green; Another Screen (Nowhere and Everywhere)* can be seen as a reference to the minimalist style of high modernism or, alternatively, as a blank canvas used in the performing arts but also in this exhibition. It is a means by which the artist has made space for the audience to imagine alternative narratives.

Jennifer Gibson
Director/Curator
Gallery 1C03

1 In Neufeld's "Re-enactments" script, the actors speak words drawn directly from primary sources of the characters they portray. Finlayson's journal is held in the collection of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: "My Notebook" by Isobel G. Finlayson, HBCA E.12/5 fo. 85. A digital copy of the journal can be accessed on-line at [http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=\[PAM\]search.htm](http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=[PAM]search.htm). Also see Madeleine Blair, *Madeleine: An Autobiography* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919). This book can also be accessed on-line at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/madeleine/madeleine/madeleine.html>.



Mark Neufeld, *Large Catalogue Reproduction (Dreams of Fort Garry; You Are Here)*, (with H. Eric Bergman's *The Old Gate*), 2014

Performing the Curatorial in the Red River Colony

159 Years After *The Painter's Studio*: Seven Stories and a History Painting

*Through imitation as it occurs in art, in the games of children, in performative play, we learn.*¹

1. Bus Shelter Story

Three mornings a week, I wait in a bus shelter tucked in the southeastern corner of what was once Upper Fort Garry. The last in a series of Hudson's Bay Company trading posts located near the juncture of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, it was the regional 'head office' for a powerful, cross-continental British company; a place where hands, lips, hearts and minds exchanged goods, labour, words, gestures and ideas—and submitted to patriarchal company rule (at least most of the time). If I look northwest, I see the old stone gate, all that remains of the 1836 structure² which also served as the seat of local government for the Red River colony. From 1869-70, it became a site for consolidating resistance, a protective and symbolically resonant space from which representatives of the settlement, led by Louis Riel, negotiated the terms under which the region's people would ambivalently but peacefully enter Confederation. If I look west, I see Fort Garry Place, a late 20th century apartment complex dubbed "an act of visual vandalism."³ Looking northwest beyond the gates, I see the stately 1913 Fort Garry Hotel, where ghosts haunt Room 202⁴ and 21st century artists meet, greet and run culture under imaginary palms.⁵ The bus I board carries me south to Fort Garry where I work, a district that was an independent rural municipality before it was amalgamated into Winnipeg in 1972. Fort Garry is iconic; Fort Garry is a compass; Fort Garry is a conundrum. Fort Garry is always on my mind.

2. Cowboy Artist Story

In 1855, the Red River settlement around Upper Fort Garry was transitioning from a fur-trading outpost inhabited by First Nations people, semi-permanent Métis and other country-born residents to a permanent agricultural settlement dominated by white European immigrants—the transition was a racialized, unjust and socially painful process, if there ever was one. Meanwhile, in Paris, Gustav Courbet was exhibiting his new monumental oil-on-canvas work, *The Painter's Studio (L'Atelier du peintre): A Real Allegory of*

1 Marcus Boon, *In Praise of Copying* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 127.

2 By 1881-1884, the fort was no longer in use; it was taken down in order to straighten Main Street.

3 Martin Cash, "Fort Garry Place a downtown pioneer," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 23, 2004. <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com>.

4 Geoff Kirbyson, "Haunted hotel: Fort Garry makes website's spooky destinations list," *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 25, 2012. <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com>.

5 The Palm Lounge is an elegant, refurbished, oval-shaped lounge in the Fort Garry Hotel.



R. A. Hallam, *Fort Garry 1846*, After Paul Kane, 1922



Ernest Hutchins, *Main Street Winnipeg*, 1871, n.d.

a *Seven Year Phase in my Artistic and Moral Life*, an event retrospectively identified (by some) as the beginning of modern art.

Courbet's monumental canvas shows a self-possessed artist at home in his studio, painting a landscape of the rural Franche-Comte region where he was born.⁶ Seated at his easel, he is surrounded by a carefully arranged yet seemingly disordered collection of symbolically significant images, objects, tools, people and animals—all of them players in the theatre of Courbet's life.

The form and content of the painting—figure-saturated, allegoric, ambitious in scale—harkens back to history painting. A socio-economically divided, class-diverse cast of characters—each seemingly absorbed in his or her own private world—depicts present-day political, social and cultural turmoil in mid-19th century France. But the scenario also, implicitly, anticipates a future in which a woefully inadequate holding environment will be transformed on behalf of the ordinary people whose lives are deemed worthy of this painter's (and political reformers') care and attention.

The 1855 Paris World's Fair, having accepted 11 of Courbet's canvases, declined to take this 12' x 20' work. With the assistance of friends, he built a temporary exhibition space—Pavillon du Réalisme—near to the official World's Fair venue, where he showed 40 of his paintings, including *The Painter's Studio*. By acting as his own independent curator Courbet, the entrepreneurial 'outsider,' was able to conjure an audience of his own making (as does artist-run culture today).

In counterpoint to the urban sophistication of the modern Parisian, Courbet presented himself as a mountain man, physically robust, dynamic, and above all, independent.⁷

3. Fort Gallery Story

Meanwhile, back at Gallery 1C03, Mark Neufeld's *Re-enactments* returns to circa 1855 by way of a materially playful installation that owes as much to curatorial practice as it does to history painting—and to the material super-abundance that is North American consumer society. Masculinities, artist identities and (out-post) institutions are gleefully poked, squeezed and toyed with as though they are as malleable as Red River gumbo.

To be capable of conveying the customs, the ideas and the look of my period as I saw them; to be not just a painter, but a man as well; in short, to produce living art, that is my aim.⁸

6 Mary Morton, "To Create a Living Art: Rethinking Courbet's Landscape Painting," in *Courbet and The Modern Landscape* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 1.
http://books.google.ca/books?id=sR42AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

7 Ibid., 3.

8 "Courbet, (Jean-Désiré) Gustave," *What It's Worth!*. http://www.wiwi.net/pages.php?CDpath=3_5_6_237_238.



Mark Neufeld, *Prop Shelf for Actors*, 2014

4. Appropriated Sausage Making Story

I know that one way of cooking sausages is to look up the exact directions [...] and another way is to take some sausages and somehow to cook sausages for the first time ever. The result may be the same on any one occasion, but it is more pleasant to live with the creative cook, even if sometimes there is a disaster or the taste is funny and one suspects the worst. The thing I am trying to say is that for the cook the two experiences are different: the slavish one who complies gets nothing from the experience except an increase in the feeling of dependence on authority, while the original one feels more real, and surprises herself (or himself) by what turns up in the mind in the course of the act of cooking. When we are surprised at ourselves, we are being creative, and we find we can trust our own unexpected originality. We shall not mind if those who consume the sausages fail to notice the surprising thing that was in the cooking of them, or if they do not show gustatory appreciation.⁹

5. Re-enactment Story (Choosing A Character)

Each February, the French immersion students at my daughter's elementary school look forward to "French Days," an event that coincides with Festival du Voyageur. Held in St. Boniface, this winter festival "celebrates Canada's fur-trading past and unique French heritage and culture..."¹⁰

Students of all genders and ethno-cultural identifications are invited to participate through historical reenactments, dressing in a 'chemise cardrillée' (checkered shirt) and a 'ceinture fléchée' (red arrowed sash), two items available to voyageurs by their employer, The North West Company, which was head-quartered in Montréal.¹¹ Some students complete their costumes by wearing moccasins and donning a make-believe beard. Bannock and hot chocolate are customarily served by parent volunteers at least once during the week.

The Cree, Ojibwa and Saulteaux 'country wives' who cared for the voyageurs are never mentioned, despite their significant contribution to both the fur trade and to the literal survival of their intimate French partners. "They made moccasins, snowshoes, maple sugar, and pemmican, planted and harvested potatoes, gathered berries, paddled and guided canoes, interpreted unfamiliar Native languages, pitched tents, cleaned and scrubbed the fur posts, snared small game, netted fish"¹² and bore and raised the couple's children. These productive unions (in all senses of the word) eventually gave birth to a distinct people—the Métis—and even a language—Michif.

9 D. W. Winnicott, "Living Creatively" in *Home is Where We Start From* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 51.

10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festival_du_Voyageur.

11 Angela Gottfred, "What Voyageurs Wore: Voyageur Clothing from Head to Toe, 1774-1821", *Northwest Journal* online. <http://www.northwestjournal.ca/XVII1.htm>.

12 "Living History — Selecting a Character", *Northwest Journal*, Part I, Vol. IV, 1994-2002: 9-15. <http://www.northwestjournal.ca/charactr.html>.



Mark Neufeld, *Another Green; Another Screen (Nowhere and Everywhere)*, 2014

In effect, all students are urged to identify with a single protagonist—the adventurous white (French) heterosexual male hero. But what if, for example, a self-identified Asian-Canadian male student chose to re-enact a country wife instead of a voyageur? What if he chose to complete his costume by wearing a long-haired wig and fake breasts, as well as moccasins? What would our response to his decision tell us about “the customs, the ideas and the look of [our] period”?

6. Good Enough Holding Environment Story

The British object relations psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott, who died almost 100 years after the Red River settlement joined Confederation, likely wasn't thinking about forts or curators when he came up with the concept of the 'holding environment'—though he easily could have been. Mothers and infants were foremost in Winnicott's mind, but his theories are adaptable enough to speak to a host of contexts where people enjoy relying on one another.

For living beings of any age or species, a holding environment is a collectively produced space—physical, emotional, psychological, social, material, cultural, intellectual—that enables us to experience a sense of psychological security, well-being and creative purposefulness or agency. A 'good enough' holding environment, like a caregiver's arms, should be sure and stable enough to offer support but generously adaptive enough to welcome an infant's curiosity, need for movement and desire for social interaction. Good enough holding environments reduce the need for defensive self-protection and facilitate what Winnicott referred to as 'creative living'—being able to embrace the experience of making sausage without a recipe, for example. In other words, holding environments worthy of their name would make cowboys of the hard-cast variety redundant.

7. Muddy Waters Curator Story

The Latin word, *cura*, which means both care and to be burdened by cares,¹³ has given us the words 'curator,' 'concern' and 'curiosity' as well. *Cura*, moreover, is the name of a character in a story by Gaius Julius Hyginus (c. 64 bc - AD 17), a figure that also appears in *Re-enactments* as a 'fort' prostitute turned performance artist.

In Hyginus's story, the divine *Cura* is credited with making the first human(kind) out of river clay, a process that can only be completed in collaboration with *Terra* (the body) and *Jupiter* (the spirit). *Cura*'s reward for her labours is to have and hold the human(kind) for as long as it lives.¹⁴ Read through Winnicott, *Cura* is both a (maternal) holding environment and an artist, as well as veritable poster girl for Winnicott's theories. Read through Mark Neufeld's *Re-enactments*, *Cura* is the measure of a man and an artist 159 years after *The Painter's Studio*.

Sigrid Dahle

13 Warren T. Reich, "History of the Notion of Care," *History of Care Project* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2007). <http://care.georgetown.edu/Classic%20Article.html>.

14 Stephan Nowotony, "The Curator Crosses A River: A Fabulation" in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, Ed. Jean-Paul Martinon (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), Kindle edition, pt. 2, chap. 6, 1241 of 4842.



Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Prop Station I*, 2014



Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Prop Station II*, 2014



Mark Neufeld, *Re-enactments*, installation view, Gallery 1C03, 2015





Mark Neufeld, *Holding Mountain Man*, 2013



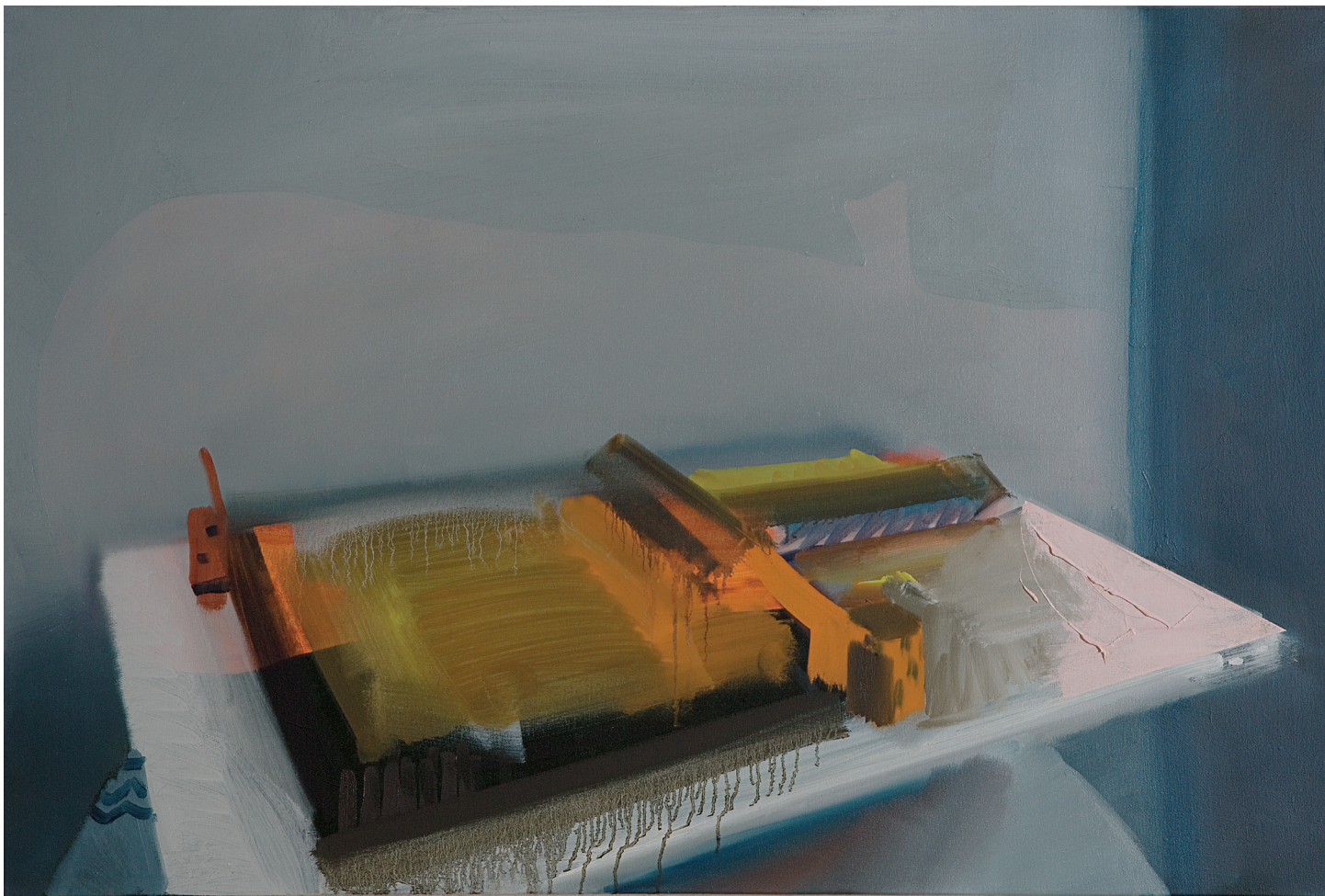
Mark Neufeld, *All Hands on the Bad One*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Studies*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *The Liberated Man*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Building a Fort: The Model I*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Building a Fort: The Model II*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Measuring Mountain Man*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Disappearance*, 2012



Mark Neufeld, *Moving Sculptures I*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Moving Sculptures II*, 2013



Mark Neufeld, *Re-enactments*, 2015, performance with Gwen Collins and Andraea Sartison



Mark Neufeld, *Re-enactments*, 2015, performance with Gwen Collins and Andraea Sartison

LIST OF WORKS

Height precedes width.

Mark Neufeld, *Ladyman*, 2013, photo collage, 24" x 18 3/4".

Mark Neufeld, *Large Catalogue Reproduction (Dreams of Fort Garry; You Are Here)*, 2014, oil and acrylic on canvas, stretcher, logs, 83 3/4" x 65".

H. Eric Bergman, *The Old Gate*, 1932, wood engraving on paper, 13 1/2" x 10 1/2".
Collection of The University of Winnipeg. Gift of H. E. J. Bergman.

R. A. Hallam, *Fort Garry 1846, After Paul Kane*, 1922, watercolour, 11" x 12 1/2".
Collection of The University of Winnipeg.

Ernest Hutchins, *Main Street Winnipeg, 1871*, n.d., watercolour, 15 3/8" x 17 3/4".
Collection of The University of Winnipeg.

Mark Neufeld, *Prop Shelf for Actors*, 2014, mixed media, dimensions variable.

Mark Neufeld, *Another Green; Another Screen (Nowhere and Everywhere)*, 2014, latex acrylic on canvas, stretcher, painted logs, 83 3/4" x 65".

Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Prop Station I*, 2014, mixed media, including Frederic Remington, *Mountain Man*, date unknown, bronze mounted on marble base, 26" x 16". Collection of the University of Manitoba. Gift of William R. Newman.

Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Prop Station II*, 2014, mixed media, including Frederic Remington, *The Bronco Buster*, date unknown, bronze mounted on marble base, 31 3/4" x 17". Collection of the University of Manitoba. Gift of William R. Newman.

Mark Neufeld, *Holding Mountain Man*, 2013, photo collage, 24" x 18 3/4".

Mark Neufeld, *All Hands on the Bad One*, 2013, photo collage, 24" x 18 3/4".

Mark Neufeld, *Curatorial Studies*, 2013, photo collage, 24" x 18 3/4".

Mark Neufeld, *The Liberated Man*, 2013, photo collage, 24" x 18 3/4".

Mark Neufeld, *Building a Fort: The Model I*, 2013, oil and acrylic on canvas, 32" x 48".

Mark Neufeld, *Building a Fort: The Model II*, 2013, oil on canvas, 32" x 48".

Mark Neufeld, *Measuring Mountain Man*, 2013, oil on canvas, 42" x 36".

Mark Neufeld, *Disappearance*, 2012, oil on linen, 30" x 22".

Mark Neufeld, *Moving Sculptures I*, 2013, oil on linen, 26" x 20".

Mark Neufeld, *Moving Sculptures II*, 2013, oil on canvas, 30" x 22".

About the Artist

In 2011, Mark Neufeld moved from Vancouver to Winnipeg to accept a teaching position at the University of Manitoba School of Art. He has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Victoria and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Neufeld works with a variety of media, with painting as the starting point for his activities. His exhibitions often take the form of installations that interweave paintings with readymade objects, assemblages, and presentation strategies borrowed from the curatorial domain. Recently, the artist has positioned these features of the “expanded painting” vocabulary within the discursive framework of history painting. Here, the artist takes an active role in addressing aspects of the gallery as a site within broader networks of representation. Neufeld is the recipient of a number of awards and grants, in particular, the Joseph Plaskett Award, which was created to support Canadian painters for a year of living and producing art abroad. He has exhibited across Canada, in the United States, in Germany, Australia, and Norway. Neufeld’s most recent exhibitions include *Performance with Two Sculptures* at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge, *The Undiscovered Continent* at Deluge Contemporary Art in Victoria, 55 Tschaikowskistrasse (along with Cedric Bomford) at Gallery Atsui in Vancouver, and *The Greenhorn* at Atelierhof Kreuzberg in Berlin.

About the Essayist

Sigrid Dahle is a curator-artist and art writer who lives in Winnipeg.

