



Greg Staats

October 13 - December 5, 2014

Ne sa-ni-kon-ra de-sa-ka-se-ren-ton nyon-ne? wisdom, that which did sustain our minds with teardrops falling as you came Ni-ya-wen-ko-wa ka-di non-wa o-nen sken-nen-ji Thi-sa-ya-dir-heh-on great thanks that now you have crossed the forest safely Then-de-se-wen-ni-ne-ken-ne den-de-wa-de-te-nongh-whe-ra-don once more breathe peacefully speaking out calmly Ken-den-yet-hi-ren-tyon-ni-deh ne kan-hogh-dak-deh De-wagh-sa-da-yengh-ah we will place it on the wall of the house where the shadow falls O-nok-na en-je-ye-wen-da-neh they will console them

—Greg Staats

Greg Staats, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, is a Toronto artist who works in photography, performance, video installation, and sculpture. His current work is part of an ongoing process of reconnecting with a Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) restorative aesthetic. This includes the condolence ceremony with its shared repetitive response to trauma and renewal, and the Haudenosaunee methods of acquiring and retaining knowledge: visiting, observing, participating, reflection, witnessing, and dreaming. Staats's practice uses language, mnemonics, familial archival evidence, and the natural world to reconnect with this worldview.

As artist in residence Staats created a new photographic/video installation which combined earlier works from the beginning of his investigation into condolence referencing the psychological histories of linked to place, while conceptualizing and visualizing verb-based gestures found within the condolence ceremony. Staats used the studio as a site for reflecting on the experiences while researching the AGO's archival methods and institutional memory retention. This research allowed Staats then to embed a visualized universality to the works produced and to solidify a repeatable framework moving forward. An online conversation with Andrew Hunter, the AGO's Fredrik S. Eaton Curator of Canadian Art, made visible this research and residency period.

On October 14, 2014, to mark the beginning of Staats's residency, the AGO hosted a public talk entitled "Constantly thinking about this: a reflection of Haudenosaunee worldview, mnemonic continuum, and the retention of knowledge." Jolene Rickard, Rick W. Hill Sr., and Staats discussed the power of reflection, Staats's recent visual language, the multiplicity of relationships to trauma and renewal, and life experiences.

Image detail of Greg Staats' personal archive. Image by the artist.



Above: Greg Staats, *untitled (restraint_constraint)*, 2015. Inkjet print on Hahnemuhle Paper, mounted on dibond. Edition 1 of 3. 44 X 48 ¾ in.

"At the edge of condolence and within the liminal space prior to renewal, lies a hesitancy to move forward and for external/internal barriers to be overcome, the process requires encouragement and moving from the darkness of the forest into the clearing where the light illuminates the breath and one's footing becomes clearer. All while experiencing reciprocal gestures and words, repeatable to lifting up the mind after it has dropped down."

Top Right: Greg Staats with work in progress inside the studio.

Centre Right: Greg Staats, installation view *Greg Staats*, 2014. John Ridley Gallery.

Bottom Right: Greg Staats helped transform a seating area in the Learning Centre into a reading nook with a selection of books for young audiences featuring First Nations, Métis, and Inuit stories.

