

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Artist's Talk | Friday 4 April 2014, 6:30 PM | Free - all welcome
Sarah Pierce will speak about the exhibition.

Opening Performance | Friday 4 April 2014, 7:30 PM onward | Free - all welcome
There will be performed elements throughout the opening reception.

Saturday Talks | Every Saturday, 2 PM | Free - all welcome
Join Joan Wilson or Katie Lyle for an informal introduction to the exhibition.

UPCOMING EVENTS

In Studio: Nadia Belerique | Thursday 24 April 2014, 7 PM | Free for Sustaining Members & above
Peek inside Belerique's studio before her solo exhibition at Daniel Faria Gallery. See over for details...

One Hour Mixer | Friday 25 April 2014, 7-8 PM | Free for all Mercer Union members
One Hour Mixer | Friday 23 May 2014, 7-8 PM | Free for all Mercer Union members

The Wandering Eye | Saturday 24 May 2014, 2 PM | Tickets \$250
Five curators, fifteen artists, a surprise studio tour, and one fabulous party. See over for details...

Platform: Music at Mercer | Friday 30 May 2014, 8 PM | Admission \$10 | Members \$5
with Absolutely Free, Weaves, and Swiss Dice. See over for details...

For a full list of forthcoming events, talks, screenings and in studios please see the gallery website or become a member and keep up to date with regular invitations and monthly Friday members' mixers.



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Director of Exhibitions and Publications: Georgina Jackson
Gallery Administrative Coordinator: Liana Schmidt

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Gallery Attendant: Joan Wilson

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Cover Image: Sarah Pierce, *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part one)*, 2014.
Courtesy the artist and Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre. Photo: Rita Taylor.

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Sarah Pierce was born in 1968 in Connecticut and grew up in Oakville, Ontario. She received a BA from Occidental College, Los Angeles; an MFA from Cornell University, Ithaca; and completed the Whitney Independent Study program in 1995. Recent exhibitions include: *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues*, curated by Jesse McKee, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, (2014); *Monogamy*, an exhibition by Gerard Byrne and Sarah Pierce, curated by Tirdad Zolghadr, The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Bard; *Anguish and Enthusiasm: What do you do with your revolution once you've got it?*, curated by Sarah Perks and Declan Clarke, Cornerhouse, Manchester (all 2013); *Something to Do Something to Say*, VOX, Montreal; *I Proclaim, You Proclaim*, Stroom den Haag; *Towards a Newer Laocoön*, commissioned by Sarah Glennie, the National College of Art and Design Gallery and the Irish Film Institute, Dublin (solo); *Anti-establishment*, CCS Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson; *After the Future*, Eva International, curated by Annie Fletcher, Limerick; *The Artist Talks*, curated by Emily Pethick, The Showroom, London (solo) (all 2012). She is one of seven artists who represented Ireland in the 51st Venice Biennale (2005). She lives and works in Dublin.

Olivia Simpson is a fourth year student in the studio art program at the University of Guelph.

Kayla Krische is a fourth year student in the studio art program at the University of Guelph. She is currently focusing on drawing, sculpture, and painting. Kayla's work has been included in various group exhibitions including *Hygge*, *O*, *Something in Between*, and *Letters From Spacecamp*. She is the recipient of the Juried Art Show 2014 Drawing Award.

The third part of this trilogy, *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part three)* opens on Saturday 10 May 2014 at SBC Gallery for Contemporary Art, Montreal.

Mercer Union and Sarah Pierce would like to thank Pablo de Ocampo and Kate McKay at Images Festival for their support in the production of the film work, as well as Ryan Forneri, Fiona Marron, Monica Tap, the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto, and V-Tape for their assistance in the production of this exhibition.

IN STUDIO with Nadia Belerique

Thursday 24 April 2014, 7 PM

Join Mercer Union for a visit to Nadia Belerique's studio in advance of her upcoming show *HEADLINES (Have You Seen This Man)* at Daniel Faria Gallery (opening 2 May 2014). Refreshments will be served. Free for Sustaining Members and above; open to other members and select non-members for \$25. Space is extremely limited. RSVP to York Lethbridge, at york@mercerunion.org or by calling 416.536.1519



Nadia Belerique (born 1982; lives and works in Toronto) constructs installations that engage with the poetics of perception and asks how images perform in contemporary culture. Primarily invested in questions around materiality and dematerialization through the illusion of photographs, her image-based works are often interrupted by sculptural objects. She received her MFA from the University of Guelph, and has recently exhibited at such venues as Daniel Faria Gallery, XPACE, The Drake Hotel, Diaz Contemporary and Gallery TPW in Toronto. She has upcoming shows at Daniel Faria Gallery in Toronto and 221A in Vancouver.

The Wandering Eye | Saturday 24 May 2014
Tickets \$250 | includes studio tour and after party

This spring, Mercer Union is excited to introduce *The Wandering Eye* – a new fundraising event wherein small groups of art lovers will accompany one of five influential curators on studio visits to three artists, followed by dinner for all involved at an elegant home on Rusholme Road. It is an opportunity to witness the workings of curator-artist discourse, and for deep and convivial engagement with the often invisible workings of studio practice and exhibition creation.

Participating curators include **Jon Davies**, **Jennifer Fisher & Jim Drobnick** (by proxy), **Georgina Jackson**, **Jonathan Shaunessy**, and **Sarah Robayo Sheridan**; selected artists will remain secret until the event.

Visit www.mercerunion.org for more information.

PLATFORM: Music at Mercer | Friday 30 May 2014, 8 PM
with Absolutely Free | Weaves | Swiss Dice

Admission \$10 | Members \$5 (available at the door)

Absolutely Free are a 3-piece band based in Toronto, comprised of former members of DD/MM/YYYY. The group formulates musical experiments based on instrumentation, compositional structure and other formal qualities ubiquitous to popular rock music. Their music integrates analog synthesizers, African polyrhythms, Krautrock hypnotism, and Bollywood hooks all through a psychedelic haze.
<http://absolutelyfree.ca>



Weaves are a band focused on mirroring pop sensibilities while evoking a visual and vulgarized experience. They are Jasmyne Burke, Morgan Waters, Zach Bines and Spencer Cole. On April 1, 2014, Weaves will release their highly anticipated, self-titled debut EP on Buzz Records.
<http://weaves.bandcamp.com/>

Despite a lean and ruthlessly tactical approach to instrumental composition, the music of **Swiss Dice** emerges fresh and vivacious. By respectfully considering the conventions of popular song form, it manages to straddle disparate genres, incorporating experimentation and sophistication, and still incite dance.
<https://soundcloud.com/swiss-dice>



Sarah Pierce

Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part two)

With Kayla Krische and Olivia Simpson

4 April–24 May 2014

Artist's Talk Friday 4 April, 6:30 PM
Opening Reception, 7:30 PM

Sarah Pierce

Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part two)

With Kayla Krische and Olivia Simpson

Front and Back Galleries

Since 2003, Sarah Pierce has used the umbrella term - The Metropolitan Complex - to describe her practice. Despite its institutional resonance, this title does not signify an organization. Instead, it demonstrates Pierce's broad understanding of cultural work, articulated through working methods that often open up to the personal and the incidental. Characterized as a way to play with a shared neuroses of place (read 'complex' in the Freudian sense), whether a specific locality or a wider set of circumstances that frame interaction, her activity considers forms of gathering, both from the perspective of historical examples and the situations that she initiates.

Sarah Pierce's *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part two)* refers to the 'lost illusions' of the recent past, and present. In this exhibition, support structures from recent exhibitions re-appear as material excluded from the institution's archive while the galleries are divided into black and white. Artworks or ceramic test pieces belonging to an unofficial archive at the Banff Centre of works that have been left behind, are presented in the form of large posters while the gallery has become a work space to make these objects again, transforming from mutable material to robust form while drying out during the exhibition's time span.

These physical forms are installed against the backdrop of two art students working individually and together, connecting and disconnecting memory and image, movement and gesture, voice and chant, to embody the process of making art. This two channel film, documenting a workshop organised by Pierce and employing techniques from Brecht's 'learning-plays' displacing mimesis by combining physical gesture and attitude, exists in duplicate, as two films and two individual students struggling with issues of translation, manner, chant and action.

In gathering material left behind from previous exhibitions, remnants of an institutional archive, forgotten objects, and a 'learning play' workshop with two art students, Pierce brings to the fore artworks, objects and moments that have been recently suppressed, renegotiating the role of the object, the artwork, the timeliness and contingency of gestures, actions and questions of community. The processes of research and presentation that Pierce undertakes highlight a continual renegotiation of the terms for making art: the potential for dissent and self-determination, the slippages between individual work and institution, and the proximity of past artworks.

This exhibition is the second in a trilogy of solo exhibitions, beginning at the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, in January; now taking place here in Toronto; and opening at SBC Galerie d'Art Contemporain, Montreal, in May 2014.

We are delighted to partner with Images Festival in the production of the film work for this exhibition and acknowledge the gracious support of Culture Ireland.

— Georgina Jackson, Director of Exhibitions & Publications



Between 1837 and 1843, Honoré de Balzac wrote *Lost Illusions* in three parts; *The Two Poets*, *A Great Man in Embryo* and *An Inventor's Tribulations*. As part of his *La Comédie Humaine*, *Lost Illusions* charted the trials and tribulations of Lucien Chardon and David Séchard. Chardon's move from provincial France to cosmopolitan Paris, and subsequent return to provincial life. Balzac's densely descriptive narratives portray layers of French society, societal interactions and upheld manners against a backdrop of the industrialization of the printed press. Lucien's transition into gentrified society is scarred by his inability to convincingly mimic those he wishes to emulate or to read the gestures which surround him. Interweaving biographical realities and fiction in nineteenth century France, 'lost illusions' become both singular and shared. And yet a certain duplicity prevails: two men, two names, the two-facedness of family, friends and humankind, and the double gesture of misreading and misjudging one's ability to transform.

Sarah Pierce's *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues* echoes Balzac's tripartite form, a trilogy of solo exhibitions in three locations: a gallery within a larger art centre in Banff, an artist-run space in Toronto, and a research and gallery space in Montreal. Pierce's 'lost illusions' are those of the recent past and present, gathered in divergent occurrences, as remnants and institutional histories. While elements are recurrent in each context, their form and manner alters and recent histories from each institution are brought to the fore; material is appropriated, approximated and brought into closer proximity.

Documents displayed within Mercer Union speak to the seizure of five paintings and thirty-five drawings from the gallery in 1993, and charges against the artist and Mercer Union's director. The artist Eli Langer was only 26, and it was his first solo exhibition. At the time, Pierce was also a young artist living in L.A. and in looking through these materials was reminded of a period of time during which there was such antagonism towards artists. While charges were dropped against the artist and the director, the subsequent court case brought against "Paintings, Drawings and Photographic Slides of Paintings" played out in the media, rallying the artistic community. The seminal case of censorship is re-inserted into the present, in the form of an informal archive, which has remained in institutional hands. The proposal to re-stage the Langer exhibition in 1995 alludes to events that could have been, might have been.



Support structures from recent exhibitions (Geoffrey Farmer's *A Light In The Moon*, 1 November 2013 – 11 January 2014, and *Push and Pull*, 7 February – 22 March 2014) appear as a material archive, and delineate the institutional compulsion to suppress what has only just taken place. The dismantled circular plinth for Farmer's work *Boneyard* (2013), lays on the floor of the front gallery, while plinths from *Push and Pull* become modular artworks in Pierce's exhibition. Through this gesture, Pierce points to the economy and speed of exhibition making. As an audience, we enter the demarcated space and temporal zones that shape our perception of, and our response to artworks.

In a ceramic workshop in Banff, an unofficial archive of objects left behind by visiting artists has been accumulating over the past twenty years. Presented in *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues (part one)* at the Walter Phillips Gallery, this collection is further abstracted through mechanical reproduction in the format of large black and white posters. Material objects, test pieces, or forgotten artworks' roles and functions become unclear in shifting from one space to another. During the week before the exhibition, Pierce used the back gallery as a workshop to replicate these objects using clay which alter from mutable form to formed, slowly drying over the course of the exhibition. Digitized stop-motion films of stage maquettes produced by the renowned Czechoslovakian scenographer Joseph Svoboda, who taught at and designed stage sets for The Banff Centre in the 1970s, are also shown. The purpose and origins of these 16mm films remains unclear. They are not directly related to Svoboda's work in Banff and their recent discovery in storage was a surprise to both the staff of the Archives and the Theatre department.

On Sunday 27 February 2014, Pierce led a day-long workshop in the gallery with two art students from the University of Guelph where the students performed sounds and gestures developed from a series of meditations. Starting with a recalled personal photograph, they manipulated their bodies to create a tableau vivant, moving from close, emotional attachment, and formal mimesis towards repeated gesture and chant. They participated in exercises enabling them to characterize the movement and sounds of their own bodies. In the tradition of Bertolt Brecht's "learning-plays," described as plays without an audience, Pierce asked the students to consider their roles as art students in the making of an artwork.

Stills from Sarah Pierce *Lost Illusions/Illusions perdues* (2014), two channel video with sound. Performed by Kayla Krische and Olivia Simpson. Produced by Images Festival and commissioned by Mercer Union.



Developed into performative situations, these moments embody the art student's 'role' within the making of an artwork. The documentation of this workshop is projected as a two-channel video in the gallery, and live performances will spontaneously take place throughout the opening of the exhibition.

Lost Illusions/Illusion perdues presents a series of archives, formal and informal. Layers of history of both an institution and a site are re-presented with echoes from the recent past. In rearranging and representing institutional archives, the accidental or incidental often invites the view to look again at past events and renegotiate both the past and present. As Jacques Derrida argued, 'the question of the archive is not, I repeat, a question of the past ... but rather a question of the future, the very question of the future, question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.'¹

Published papers, re-presenting archived material, workshops, and gathering material forms from previous instances, are all methods that Pierce mobilizes in her practice. As she suggests "Instead of a canon, I imagine a more affectionate past. Formative and unfinished, not yet art, not yet within the realm of the documentable."² Through layering materials, archives, gestures and events within the structures of the exhibition there is an assertion of the present, and the potential of other possibilities and narratives to come into play. Echoing a duplicity manifest in Balzac's *Lost Illusions* – the Langer exhibition in 1993 and its proposed re-staging in 1995, two art students imagining two photographs, two archives, while existing in synchronicity within the exhibition – allude to the potential of different narratives, histories, and gestures, present and future.

— Georgina Jackson

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36.

² Sarah Pierce, 'The Archival Fourth Dimension', *Afterall* online, published 23 November 2009, <http://www.afterall.org/online/the.archival.fourth.dimension>