



Detail of installation, 2016, Tara Cooper

Tara Cooper / *God Love Brigus II*

Exhibition: January 6 - February 18, 2017
Opening Reception: January 6, 2017 8:00pm - 9:00pm
Artist Talk: January 6, 2017 7:00pm - 8:00pm



Alberta Printmakers Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

God Love Brigus II – Tara Cooper
Written by Tracy Wormsbecker

Working under the moniker Weather Girl, Tara Cooper has been building an impressive body of work that encompasses a multifaceted exploration of weather. In both process and presentation, she employs a scientific exploration of weather as a meteorological phenomenon while thoughtfully integrating a reflective approach that also considers the personal impact of weather as it is experienced. Straddling this interface, she combines rigorous on-site field research with creative non-fiction to create work that amalgamates multiple art forms such as print media, sculpture, illustration, writing, artifact, and video. This visually results in work that poetically embeds scientific methodologies of observation, categorizing and archiving within personal and historical narrative and vice versa.

In God Love Brigus II, Cooper presents an alluring representation of personal, historical and weather research that she collected during a 3 week residency with Landfall Trust at a 200-year-old cliff side cottage in Brigus, Newfoundland. In line with other Weather Girl explorations, this exhibition continues to blend a scientific perspective of weather with the human experience of it. Particularly noteworthy in this collective work, is that a discernable dichotomy between the two is almost entirely removed. In a way, Cooper is drawing us in, inviting us to vicariously experience and consider Brigus fully, as a “landscape where nature is at the helm,” and as a unique place where “fog lies thick on the harbor” and a clear distinction between history, weather and daily experience is notably obscured.

In the center of the gallery, her thorough fieldwork manifests as a tactile arrangement of sculpture, print, text and illustration laid out atop a long table to be explored. In no particular order, viewers slowly encounter and consider the array of visual research that rests upon the table. Sculptures suggesting cloud formations, weathered sea vessels and other seafaring paraphernalia are dispersed throughout the display. Settled in among them, photographs, prints and drawings are presented along with weather-specific phrases of varying severity from “saltwater rainbow” to “weather the storm” to “lost at sea.” Multiple arrows appear, some revealing atmospheric forces and weather systems, while others direct attention to curious historical belongings and artifacts, eliciting further investigation. While the connections may not all be immediately clear, each component appears both independent and unified with an apparent shared significance.

Surrounding the table, screen-printed banners of written text and other images adorn the walls, embedding the display within a rich narrative context to be discovered. Some of the encompassing writings read as a personal diary of Cooper's encounters with the landscape, weather, and local residents. Others reveal seemingly outlandish tales, like those of the infamous Captain Bob Bartlett, that were discovered through Cooper's historical research and even directly from residents who maintain personal connections to these stories, only a few generations removed. Captain Bob is a particularly captivating character who is known for his formidable arctic expeditions that were fraught with such astonishing anecdote and bleak peril that they would seem pure folklore were it not for the dangerous climatic reality that Cooper has nestled throughout the exhibition. Weather remains the true protagonist here, the common denominator that blends science and subjectivity and bridges past and present.

In it's entirety, the exhibition is truly engrossing. Each encounter with an object, image, or written text encourages the next as lines are drawn to elicit a deeper experience of this place. Cooper describes her work as visually poetic. Indeed, the installation that comprises God Love Brigus II itself serves as a comprehensive field journal describing Landfall and Brigus. Though this description of the exhibition hints at its allure, it is no substitute for experiencing the installation, and in a way, Brigus, in person.



Writer Bio:

Tracy Wormsbecker is a Calgary-based artist who holds a BSc in psychology and a BFA in visual arts from the University of Calgary. In addition to developing her own artistic practice, she is passionate about the benefits of fostering artistic enrichment within communities.

Artist Bio:

Tara Cooper works in a range of mediums from print, photography and video to installation and book arts. Her teaching experience encompasses time-based media (video, sound, animation), all print-related media (lithography, serigraphy, relief, intaglio, book arts and digital imaging), as well as contemporary art issues and theory. As an educator, she has worked with the following institutions: OCAD University, Sheridan College, the Canadian Art Foundation and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Currently, she works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo.

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization's goals are to increase public awareness of print media, to engage a diverse audience, to provide resources for the artistic community and production facilities for printmaking.

A/P has an open membership, and is governed by a board of directors. Management and administration of A/P's activities are the responsibilities of its Directors, who reach out to volunteers in accomplishing A/P's goals. A/P also hosts residency and summer student programs.

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