

# PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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## PREFIX.

For Immediate Release (September 16, 2015)

### CHARLES STANKIEVECH INVESTIGATES MILITARY SURVEILLANCE IN NEW EXHIBITION AT PREFIX

(Toronto) – Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *The Soniferous Æther of the Land Beyond the Land Beyond*, the first solo exhibition in Toronto of work created by multidisciplinary artist Charles Stankieveh. Curated by Scott McLeod, the show features a 35mm film installation produced during the artist's residency at the Canadian Forces Station (CFS) Alert, along with a selection of accompanying artifacts. As such, this exhibition represents the first time that the installation has been exhibited with all of its constituent elements.

An opening reception will be held on Thursday, October 8 from 8 to 10 PM at Prefix, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The artist and curator will be present. Prior to the reception, the artist will present a lecture on Thursday, October 8 at 7 PM. Titled *The Field of Silences and Silences*, the lecture will combine archival material, scientific theories and geopolitical maps with the artist's own fieldworks to engage ideas of military colonialism and communication technologies. Admission is \$5 and tickets are available only at the door, beginning at 6:30 PM. The gallery is open from Wednesday to Saturday, 12 to 5 PM, as well as on Saturday, October 3 from 7 PM until sunrise for Nuit Blanche. The exhibition continues until **November 21, 2015**. Admission is free.

Located on Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, the CFS Alert is the northernmost permanent settlement on Earth. Formerly a weather station, it became a signals intelligence facility used to eavesdrop on Russian communications during the Cold War and it is now used exclusively as a Canadian military surveillance outpost. Addressing this site, *The Soniferous Æther of the Land Beyond the Land Beyond* (2013) is one of a series of fieldworks in which Stankieveh examines remote settlement architecture, military infrastructure and the "embedded landscape"—a term used by the artist to refer to how the landscape shapes us as much as we shape it.

Shot during the continuous darkness of the Arctic's winter months, the artist employed a computer-controlled, time-lapse tracking camera to capture a series of black-and-white photographs, which were then transferred to 35mm motion-picture film. The result is a sequence of shots that slowly pan across the barren landscape and through the eerily empty interiors of the station, culminating in a distant view of the military spy outpost aglow against the blackness of the Northern sky. Equally haunting is the film's soundtrack: a composition of indecipherable numerical sequences and electrical pulses, sound bites obscured by radio static, and ghostly music sampled from Glenn Gould's recording of J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

Accompanying the film installation are a selection of artifacts: a pair of wall-mounted clocks that use different power sources and, as a result, are out of sync; a vinyl record; an artist's book; and a selection of photographs, redacted post cards and archival documents from CFS Alert. While references to science-fiction tropes and Kubrickian aesthetics are evident in the film, the artifacts provide a reminder that the project is grounded in the documentation of an actual site, one that exists at the very edge of Canadian sovereignty and that is deeply embedded in the history of military surveillance.

#### About the Artist

**Charles Stankieveh** is a multidisciplinary artist who was born in 1978 in Okotoks, Alberta. In sculptures, fieldworks, sound pieces, installations and films realized in a host of remote locations, he critically examines the history, specificity and geopolitics of place. In 2007, he received an MFA in

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Open Media from Concordia University (Montréal) and, in 2011, he was a finalist for the Sobey Art Award. His work has been widely exhibited at institutions including the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (North Adams, MA), Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienna) and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Copenhagen), as well as at the 10th Venice Biennale of Architecture. He has participated in residencies at numerous institutions including Flaggfabrikken (Norway), Museums Quartier (Austria), Nodar Artist Residency Centre (Portugal), Waterpod (New York) and the Banff Centre for the Arts. Also a writer, curator and educator, he was a founding faculty member of the Yukon School of Visual Arts (Dawson City, Yukon) and is the founder and co-director of K. Verlag, a critical art and theory press based in Berlin. Currently, he lives and works in Toronto, where he is the director of Visual Studies in the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto.

### **About the Curator**

**Scott McLeod** is an independent writer and curator based in Toronto. The founding director of Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, he focuses on contemporary practices, with a specialization in photographic, media and digital art. With the support of the Ontario Arts Council, he is currently writing *Land and Its Discontents*, a book of collected essays on the relationships between art, property and spatial politics.

### **About Prefix**

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts through exhibitions, publications, public programmes and related activities.

### **Acknowledgements**

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*The Soniferous Æther of the Land Beyond the Land Beyond* appears courtesy of the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artist or curator, please contact:

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