

Casting Seams

By

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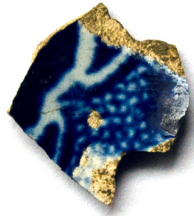
Master of Fine Arts
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Casting Seams

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Interdisciplinary Art, Media and Design

Ontario College of Art and Design University

ABSTRACT

Casting Seams presents a collection of handmade ceramic plate multiples based on found 19th century Blue Willow plate shards. Repeatedly cast and re-cast, the forms shed light on the matrix of positive and negative space in order to examine processes of reconstruction—that of the plates themselves and of the stories that are embedded within the found fragments. This site-responsive exhibition takes place at and between two relational locations in Grey County: the South Grey Museum in Flesherton, and 8 km away at the site where the shards were found on the former property of Edward Patterson, an early black settler, preacher, and stagecoach driver believed to have been held in slavery in Maryland, U.S. From the earth to the museum context, the shards materially dialogue with private and public spaces—environments where meanings and materials are made and remade—re-formulating old meanings with new objects ‘in situ.’

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Assembling and cutting sociomaterial assemblages has consequences for the lives of those involved. (Carlile et al. 2013, 8)

INTRODUCTION

Casting Seams presents a collection of restored ceramic plate multiples based on found 19th century Blue Willow pottery shards. Repeatedly cast and re-cast, printed and reprinted, moved and removed, the objects engage entangled spaces (positive/negative, visible/invisible, public/private, past/present), in a kind of material dialogue in order to examine processes of reconstruction—of the plates themselves and of the stories that are embedded within the found fragments.

This site-responsive exhibition takes place at and between two relational locations in Grey County: the South Grey Museum in Flesherton, and 8 km away at the site where the shards were found on the former property of Edward Patterson, an early black settler, preacher, and stagecoach driver who was believed to have been held in slavery in Maryland, U.S. From the earth to the museum context, the shards move amid private and public spaces—environments where meanings and materials are made and remade—re-formulating old meanings with new objects ‘in-situ’.

Circumstance

Casting Seams offers a contemporary material avowal of diverse yet entangled historical narratives. This process-based investigation commenced following a personal encounter with a shard of Blue Willow pottery that I uncovered while researching in Grey County, on Edward Patterson's former property. The shard is believed to be English in origin and I examine how my understanding of the shard as indicative of 19th century settlement in Upper Canada connects with Patterson's narrative, a man who made his way from slavery in the United States and settled in Southern Ontario.

Southern Ontario attracted many settlers with colonial ties, including my own great-grandparents who emigrated to Drumbo, Ontario, in 1929. As a British constituent who fought in the First World War, my great-grandfather accepted an offer of Crown land in Canada. Born into a wealthy Scottish family of landowners, he was disinherited for having an affair with my great-grandmother—the scullery maid. The station of scullery maid was considered to be the lowest level of servitude within the household. Subsequently, the couple sailed to Canada with their eight children, including my grandfather who was three years old at the time, and eventually established a farm in Southern Ontario—three quarters of a century after Edward Patterson.

Edward Patterson occupies a subject-position seemingly different or ‘other’ to my own, namely: past vs. present, male vs. female, black vs. white, settler vs. settled, rural vs. urban and marginal vs. dominant. I question if and how these seemingly different narratives are enmeshed, and how these entanglements reverberate in the Blue Willow shards. To do so, I am exploring the diverse meanings contained within these pieces of material evidence, and how their conventional connotations—namely my own associations of the Blue Willow shards as white and European—can at once reveal and conceal diverse historical narratives, including early black settlement in 19th Upper Canada. My thesis proposes that proliferative artworks dialogue with their seemingly opposite condition in order to offer new ways of seeing the past, present and future.

Objectives

I investigate both the material origins of the remnants and their accompanying narratives in order to understand what they might communicate about who pioneered Upper Canada, and how this history is narrated today. I question how the shards’ appearance on Edward Patterson’s former property at once reveal and conceal Canadian black history. Specifically who settled the land, in what context, and who is remembered and who is forgotten. I propose that historical denials generate erasures and disappearances—that are in turn haunted by what these denials omit. I therefore commenced a documenta-

tive and performative investigation into material-conservation as artistic practice, in order to restore the Blue Willow shards as an ongoing and moving narrative.

I focus on three aspects of the shards' material reconstruction, including: (1) the reconstructing and reproduction of their form (2) the reconstructing and reproduction of the Blue Willow design, and (3) their reinstallation on Patterson's property. Through movement-based processes of reconstruction and installation, I explore how variations and differences that arise from these processes of reproduction might renegotiate how the Blue Willow pattern is seen and read.

Method and Rational

My approach investigates dialogical material movements as a method of creative conservation. To reconstruct the plate shards, I select processes that mimic, but do not necessarily copy, the shards' original materials and methods of construction. I used virtual mouldmaking and cyanotype printing in order to reproduce the form and image of the restored plate shards. By paying close attention to instances of material variations and instabilities during these repetitive processes, I engaged in a kind of material dialogue. This material dialogue led to a number of insights into material and non-material entanglements between different spaces (negative/positive, visible/invisible, private/public),

that shed light on the unfixedness of these spaces, and proved relevant to the process of reconstruction itself.

Some of the leading differences that arose during this process include: past/present, surface/form, singular/common, private/public, presence/absence, fixed/fluid, and haunted/released. I pursued these investigations as a method of movement from/to/from/to (etcetera)-in order to grow. I do not seek permanent balance, but continual openings within shared entanglements. Ultimately, it is a ceaseless task, but its ceaselessness propels, not between distinct components, but beyond, in order to kindle dialogic explorations beyond distinct components.

Questions

My line of questioning assumes that objects engage in an ongoing process of change. Further, I accept that both object-based and text-based artifacts engender agency within social frameworks. Under these terms, I ask:

- i. On whose terms is the meaning of the Blue Willow pattern narrated and negotiated?
- ii. How can material seepages and fluidities within the processes of mouldmaking and printmaking be channeled to galvanize the fluidity within their accompanying non-material values within different systems of meaning?

Outline

This investigation was initiated by the found shards of 19th century Blue Willow pottery, and so to begin, I offer an historical account of British North America at this time. This is necessary in order to contextualize the shards within the timeframe of the Underground Railroad and Edward Patterson's arrival in British North America. Subsequently, I describe the theoretical frameworks of my work, which includes critical pedagogy, postcolonial theory and material culture. Next, I summarize a history of the Blue Willow pattern comprising its design and technical history, and how I encountered and ascertained the shards as Blue Willow. Next I outline my research methodologies and explain how my theoretical influences inform my studio practice, including 'coupling' and 'proliferating setbacks'. Finally, I conclude by describing the elements of the exhibition in location and draw conclusions around recasting cultural meanings through material's non-material associations.

CHAPTER 1

Backdrop

The backdrop and historical context of this project is indexed to the 19th century shards of Blue Willow pottery, and their speculative connection to Edward Patterson in British North America at that time. Patterson arrived in Canada in 1855 (Norquay 2011, 15); thus, the history that follows is steeped in British North American perspectives and mythologies, including the stories of the Underground Railroad.

Patterson's arrival in Canada coincides with the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a freedom movement of networked individuals and organizations that helped between 20 000 and 40 000 black refugees travel into British North America circa 1850 in order to escape enslavement in the United States. Though many African Americans came to British North America before this time, the impetus was the dreaded Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (Cooper et al. 2005, 20). The Fugitive Slave Act "expanded the ability of the government to protect the interests of slaveholders" (ibid, 82). This law required the apprehension and return of enslaved people to their captors, even those who had escaped slavery in the South and made their way to a Free State in the north. The British Parliament abolished the institution of slavery throughout its empire in

1833, which went into effect on August 1, 1834 (Brown-Kubisch 2004, 5). Thus, many refugees from slavery made their way into British North America.

Although slavery was illegal in the British colonies in 1834, historian Afua Cooper points out that the mythology of Britain's "handing down freedom" is only a partial truth (Henry 2010, 11). Cooper proposes that the Haitian Revolution induced Britain to abolish slavery in its colonies. The Haitian Revolution was fought by enslaved Africans in Haiti for thirteen years against France, Britain and Spain, whereupon the Haitians won. In order to avoid another Haitian war, Britain abolished slavery in its colonies by peaceful means (ibid, 11). Author and historian Robin W. Winks has suggested the mythology and conditions of the Underground Railroad in British North America was remade in the Canadian present in order to feel good about its cultural diversity in the past (Winks 1997, 233).

Documentation of African enslavement exists in French and British colonies as early as 1628 (Henry 2010, 18). For instance, Olivier Le Jeune was documented as a black domestic servant in New France in 1628 (Brown-Kubisch 2004, 1). At this time and until 1763, Canada was colonized by France. Historian Linda Brown-Kubisch explains that slavery developed slowly in New France for economic – not moralistic – reasons, owing to the fur trade. In 1704, France declared "that her colonies existed only to provide natural resources, which

forced New France to continue to depend primarily on its fur trading economy” (Brown-Kubisch 2004, 3). The fur trade did not economically require large amounts of manual labour for France to pursue in its colony, and therefore did not necessitate large scale slavery.

Public opinion around race and slavery is fluid and fraught throughout Canadian history. In 1759 in New France, 1132 out of 3604 peoples held in slavery were black (ibid, 3). At this time, “slave status was not thought to be inherent in man, but was a temporary condition arising from an unfortunate turn of events” (ibid, 2). However, the climate of opinion shifted in 1763 owing to the Treaty of Paris wherein Britain assumed control of New France. British law regarded people held in slavery as property without rights (ibid, 3).

In 1791 the colony was divided into Upper and Lower Canada, and in 1793 John Graves Simcoe passed a bill to ban the importation of people held in slavery, known as *The Act to Limit Slavery*. Thus, Upper Canada became the first province of British North America to take serious strides against the abolition of slavery. The legislation was entitled “an Act to prevent the further introduction of slaves, and to limit the term of contract for servitude within this province” (Henry 2010, 41). This bill was intended to prevent the growth of enslavement in Upper Canada, however it was met with resistance from Simcoe’s fellow cabinets members, who themselves held people in servitude (ibid 41). As

such, those already enslaved remained subjugated, while their children were freed at the age of 25, if they were born in Upper Canada (Brown-Kubisch 2004, 5).

In his introduction to Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, poet and author George Elliott Clarke explains, "so successfully have we whitewashed our history that we have brainwashed ourselves: we do not notice, even now, the bloodstains and *race* shadows besmirching our "virgin" snow" (Drew 2008, 11). Clarke suggests that Drew's compilation of exiled African-American slave narratives from the Underground Railroad have been used to disavow European-Canadian racisms and employed to bolster Canada's self-righteous self-image set against "the squalid inadequacies of the American republic" (Drew 2002, 23).

Robin W. Winks outlines a number of misconceptions around the Underground Railroad, including exaggerated numbers of fugitives from slavery ranging upwards to 75 000 people. Winks explains that some refugees were counted twice, while some only stayed in British North America for a couple of weeks. Additionally, some black men and women were already living in the Province of Canada¹ before 1850 and were only assumed to be former slaves. He explains

¹In 1841, Upper and Lower Canada were united as Canada West and Canada East in the province of Canada.

that in 1860 the black population in Canada West reached approximately 40 000, one-quarter of whom were not fugitives from slavery (Winks 1997, 240). Therefore, the exaggerated numbers erased other constituent groups of black Canadians already in Canada West, such as loyalists and descendants from New France.

Winks proposes the legend of the Underground Railroad operates to falsely homogenize all black Canadians into one ethnic monolith (Winks 1997, 241). Further misconceptions around the Underground Railroad assume that because slavery was outlawed in British North America, the refugees did not face racial discrimination upon arrival. Author and educator Natasha Henry explains that “whites spoke and focused on black achievement, as if discrimination was not an obstacle” (2010, 86). Racist obstacles ranged from ambivalent attitudes (“let the slaves of the United States be free, but let it be in their own country”), to exclusionary and discriminatory land deeds (qtd. Winks 1997, 213).

It is possible that Edward Patterson faced similar discriminatory land deeds when he arrived in British North America during the Underground Railroad. Although *Casting Seams* is not intended as an account of the Underground Railroad, this backdrop is necessary in order to situate Edward Patterson within the complex of American, British and British North American narratives in the 1850s. In the next section, I describe how my background in education and my

previous artworks led me to investigate the shards found on Patterson's property in Grey County, as on ongoing investigation into performative material processes.

Literature Review

Background

Casting Seams palpably grew out of a body of work that I completed in my previous year of study at OCAD University. I drew from my professional experience as a Secondary School teacher and as an artist to question how curriculums—both overt and hidden—perform within their subjects, including learners, bodies of knowledge and methods of delivery. *New Curriculum* (Fig. 1.) collapses the container and contents of curriculum by introducing difference at the same point of transfer. The entire mandatory Ontario English curriculum from grade 9-12 is engraved onto a school desk and manually rubbed using graphite to create differently textured replicas at the same point of origin. The prints engender the co-dependence of the content and container, namely the information and its method of delivery, the staid pedagogy and its iterative performance, where despite their variations; one cannot exist without the other.

This work led me to critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory as a means to locate a vocabulary through which to discuss my works. Together the-



Fig. 1. Martha Griffith, *New Curriculum*. 2013, school desk and graphite, variable size.



Fig. 2. Martha Griffith, *Vertical Bearings*. 2013, mirror and moulded bricks, variable size.

se theories inform how knowledge is colonized and how this colonization is invisible from within its parameters. *Vertical Bearings* (Fig. 2.) explores how proximity to centers and margins offers different perspective. The work positions constructions – people and materials – within a peripatetic or moving framework, whereby columns reveal and conceal each other as the visitor moves through the work. The central brick column echoes ‘other’ architectures while the shaping devices are only obliquely apparent. As my former professor and curriculum theorist Naomi Norquay points out, “sometimes we can only see what’s at the center by exploring what’s marginal to it” (2006, 113).

I first met Naomi Norquay as a banjo-playing professor in the pre-service department of Education while pursuing a Bachelor of Education at York University. After six years of practical teaching, I dug up an old essay on which she scribbled me a note of encouragement to apply for graduate school, and I did. The direction of my work at OCAD University bore the imprint of my experiences with education, and I once again found myself enrolled in one of Professor Norquay’s curriculum studies courses as a visiting student. Early in the semester she shared her research with the class around challenging the myth of the “White Pioneer”, which is also the subtitle of one of her essays, called *Dig Where You Stand*.

The article outlines her research in Artemisia Township, what is now Grey Highlands, Grey County. In 1966, her family bought three plots of land fronting the Old Durham Road. The property came with a number of stories from the neighbors, and as a ten year old child, Norquay remembers learning “that the land had been first farmed by “black slaves” who had been given the land by Queen Victoria” (Norquay 2002, 1). Professor Norquay continues to unpack the hidden lessons and meanings within this loaded narrative—as I will below. Additionally, she learned that a black preacher had built a house on the same hill that her father—also a preacher—and mother, built the new family cottage. She later found out the preacher’s name was Edward Patterson.

In author Benjamin Drew’s compilation, *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, a man named Edward Patterson explains “I was a slave in Maryland till thirty-three years of age” (1856/2008, 126). He said that he never went to school, save for “Sabbath school four Sundays”, however, he did acquire “knowledge of reading, writing and ciphering” (ibid, 127). He goes on to explain that “[t]he prejudice in Canada is among the whites to the coloured, and among the coloured to the whites. The Coloured fancy that the whites are a little against them, and so they do not treat the whites as they would otherwise – this brings back a prejudice from the whites” (ibid). Patterson’s comments highlight the already enmeshed black and white narratives and relationships in

Canada. It is possible that this is the same Edward Patterson that owned the land in Grey County and his insights into Canadian social relations echo over 100 years later in the oral histories about what is implied by having been *given* land by the Queen.

Norquay uses autobiographical narrative as a methodology to re-examine fragmented experiences within her own life as vestiges of broader socio-political influences, particularly what Marilyn Low calls the “colonial smile” of public education (2003, 65). The colonial smile traces past and present manifestations of colonialism in Canadian public education as it is expressed in the overt, hidden and null curriculum. While the overt curriculum is explicit, the hidden and null curriculums encompass what is covertly implied or omitted altogether within the official curriculum and central “(white) Anglo-Canadian culture” (Norquay 2002, 1). For example, learning that the Queen *gave* land away implies it was hers to give and frames the act as benevolent, which in turn reveals hierarchies. Norquay considers how this lesson acted on her as a ten year old, “I saw it as an act of charity – charity being something that those “who matter” confer upon those who do not...my racist assumptions about race stood in for real knowledge” (2002, 1).

The former Township of Artemesia, now the municipality of Grey Highlands, Grey County, was home to many early black settlers along the Old

Durham Road during the Underground Railroad. The early black pioneers consisted of free and refugee slaves of African descent that made their way from the United States as early as 1820 (South Grey, Virtual Museum). Eventually the black population relocated owing to an influx of Scottish and Irish immigrants in the 1840s due to discriminatory land deeds that were largely prohibitive for them to buy land (Meyler 1889/2007, 201). However, rumours persisted about an unmarked segregated burial ground of these initial black settlers.

In October 1990, the burial ground was rededicated as a 19th century segregated cemetery called *The Old Durham Road Pioneer Cemetery (ODRPC)*, in a ceremony attended by the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario Lincoln Alexander (Fig. 3). The burial ground was located on Leroy Mead's property, who deeded the land to the Township of Artemesia after "a group of people in the area decided that the cemetery should be recognized" (South Grey, Virtual Museum, 76). Reverend Wilfred Sheffield, who is a descendent from the Old Durham Road settlement, spoke at the ceremony. Below is an excerpt from his speech on October 13th 1990:

What shall we say concerning those we commemorate today? Do they not now rejoice with us at what is happening today? Was it merely an accident of history responsible for the disappearance of the black community of Artemesia? Were the gravestones destroyed and obliterated solely because of greed and bias -- or was there some higher purpose? ...For Whites from this community and Blacks who are descendants of those who lived here have reached out and touched each other. Kindred spirits have met and

embraced, permanent and meaningful friendships have been forged. All this because we now can rise above the wrong doings and injustices of the past—but also because we see the meaning of the past. We see today the fulfillment of Martin Luther King's dream—'When a man will be judged not because of the colour of his skin' (ibid, 21).

On the day of this dedication, the cemetery had no headstones. In the 1930s the grave markers went missing after a white farmer named Bill Reid planted the grounds with potatoes. The rededication of the burial ground as a cemetery galvanized a search for the missing gravestones, and four headstones were pieced back together from a pile of rocks behind the adjacent school-house (Fig. 4 & 5). Today, rumours persist that other headstones were repurposed as cement flooring in residents' homes and barns². Christopher Simons, whose head stone was one of the four recovered, lived on the property beside Edward Patterson.

A closed portion of the Old Durham Road runs through Norquay's property and meets up with the current Durham Road where the cemetery is located. To investigate this hidden history, Norquay decided to follow some advice that she gleaned from a published interview she conducted with archeologist Karolyn Smardz Frost, and began to look to the land, as well as textual docu-

² Jennifer Holness and David Sutherland unpack this story in the National Film Board of Canada documentary made in the year 2000, *Speakers for the Dead*.



Fig. 3. Martha Griffith, ODRPC. 2013. Grey County.



Fig. 4. Martha Griffith, ODRPC. 2013. Grey County.



Fig. 5. Martha Griffith, ODRPC. 2013. Grey County.

ments, in order to uncover information about the early black pioneer settlers on The Old Durham Road (ODR) (Norquay 2010, 16).

The land registry lists Edward Patterson as having bought Lot #8 on the ODR in 1862. He bought the 50 acre plot of land from a white resident living in Owen Sound named John Frost. John Frost was the father of John Frost Jr. an abolitionist who penned *Broken Shackles: Old Man Henson from Slavery to freedom* in 1889, under the pen name Glenelg (Norquay 2011, 13). The land was previously owned by Rozal (or Royal) Simmons, who was Christopher Simon's brother.

The land registries reveal that Patterson bought and sold the land a number of times between his 1862 and 1889. Patterson purchased the adjacent lot #9 in 1868, then sold both plots of land in 1876, before buying them back in 1881 (Norquay 2011, 14). Presumably, he bought the land as farmland because the farmer's registry from 1886-1887 lists Patterson as a farmer "with a farm on the Old Durham Road" (ibid). However, then, as now, the land remains unforgiving to cultivate because it consists largely of glacial till, swamp, rocks and gravel (Norquay 2002, 1). This might explain why Patterson is also listed as a bus driver and labourer on the Owen Sound census in 1861, 71, 81 and 1901. Norquay conjectures that Patterson, like Chauncey Simons (as is narrated in

Broken Shackles), went to Owen Sound in 1850 to find work and seasonally live in between Artemesia Township and Owen Sound (2011, 14).

Nonetheless, evidence of the property's former use as farmland remains on the property and Professor Norquay presented the traces of this arduous work to her Curriculum Studies course, including images of Patterson's house foundation and fragments of homemade local limestone mortar. The foundation wall, which is most discernible in the spring before the grass grows over it in the summertime, sits under a crabapple tree (Fig. 6). Settlers grew apple trees for cider and as a means to domesticate homesteads (Norquay 2001, 21). Other material traces of Patterson's life include a footprint of where his barn may have been, which is now surrounded with wild mint, and a pile of moss covered stones that presumably accumulated while readying the land to plough (Fig. 7). Beams of split rail fencing also remain (Fig. 8).

Professor Norquay also came across an 1858 Oxford University Press Holy Bible held at the Grey Roots Museum and Archives, with a handwritten entry listing the name and birthdate of Edward Patterson as March 10, 1825. Additional entries written below include three of his sons: Edward Allen Patterson 1870-1873, Thomas Rufus Patterson July 23, 1873 and Fredrick William Patterson October 19, 1875 (Norquay 2011, 16). These names and dates align with the same Edward Patterson on the registers and census as having owned



Above (detail) and Below: Fig. 6. Martha Griffith, *Patterson's House Foundation and Crabapple Tree*. 2013, digital photograph. Grey County.



Fig. 7. Martha Griffith, *Patterson's Vestiges: Moss Covered Stones*. 2013, digital photograph. Grey County.



Fig. 8. Martha Griffith, *Patterson's Vestiges: Former Split Rail Fence*. 2013, digital photograph. Grey County.

Lot #8 and #9 on the Old Durham Road with his wife Susannah. Further, there is an image of a “Ned Patterson” described as a lay preacher and stagecoach driver in the archives at the *Grey Roots Museum and Archive* in Owen Sound (Fig. 9) (ibid, 13). The image is a rare find.

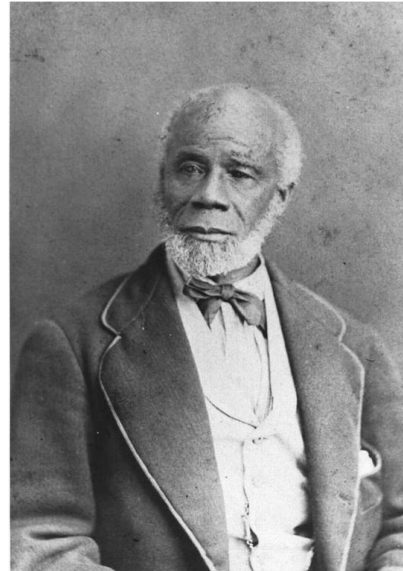


Fig. 9. Photograph of Edward Patterson. Circa 1860. The Grey Roots Archival Collection

Karolyn Smardz Frost points out that despite over twenty years of meticulous research into the lives of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn, she was never able to find a single image of either of Lucie or Thornton (2007, xxiii). The Blackburns were refugees from slavery who made their way to Toronto in 1834, and became prosperous business owners that operated the “first cab service in the city” (qtd. Frost 2007, xii). They are also the namesake of the first bi-national memorial to commemorate the Underground Railway between Toronto, Ontario, Canada and Louisville, Kentucky United States, where the Blackburns were held in slavery (ibid, xxv).

In 1985, Karolyn Smardz Frost sifted through “fragment of pottery and bits of broken glass” to piece together the material evidence of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn’s lives (ibid, xi). Likewise, while gardening in the spring, Norquay describes finding “little pieces of broken crockery; patterned porcelain

and china, thick bits of earthenware; and hand hewn nails” (2011, 22). She conjectures that her garden used to be in the same location as Edward Patterson’s kitchen midden. Norquay explains, “[t]here is an intimacy about these fragments of crockery. They are unassuming, easily overlooked and discarded again” (ibid). It was the image of these found fragments that captured my imagination (Fig. 10). I remember scavenging for similar pottery shards and pieces of water-polished glass on the shores of Lake Huron while growing up, wondering where they came from and what they were. Green glass was the most common, while blue glass and patterned pottery shards were exciting finds owing to their rarity in my searches.



Fig. 10. Naomi Norquay, *Found Shards*. Circa 1862-1892, transfer-printed earthenware clay. Grey County.

Perhaps this is why I decided to attend an annual Black history field trip that Norquay organizes on her property, which in turn led to a collaborative and

generous sharing of resources and my current art-based studio investigation that commenced on Edward Patterson's former property in June of 2013. During this time, while crawling in the dirt, I found a piece of blue and white pottery, and a number of pieces of chipped earthenware with only a hint of white glaze to distinguish them from rocks (Fig. 11). These shards continue to pull on me; they dialogue with past works that I have created amassing fragments (Fig. 12), and they kindle an inner impulse to imagine where things forgotten come from and who they might have belonged to. I contacted Jennifer Kinnard at the Royal Ontario Museum to inquire about the pattern and pedigree of the shards, and she responded as follows:

The earthenware shards (transfer-printed in underglaze mid to late blue) are English, and were likely made in the nineteenth century. The ones on the far right are decorated with the blue willow pattern- an extremely popular pattern made during this period. Many different factories, created blue and white wares including Caughley, Minton, Worcester, Spode, Wedgwood, Davenport, Leeds and Swansea. Without a makers mark it is, however, very difficult to attribute willow to a specific factory. The fragments look like they were plates or saucers (Jennifer Kinnard, pers. comm. e-mail message, July 2, 2013)

Learning the name of the blue and white pattern on some of the shards, as well as their likely English origin, anchored my imagination and directed my research in an important way. I began to research the Blue Willow pattern and in the process of doing so, I discovered the design's entangled histories across continents, narratives and technological advances.

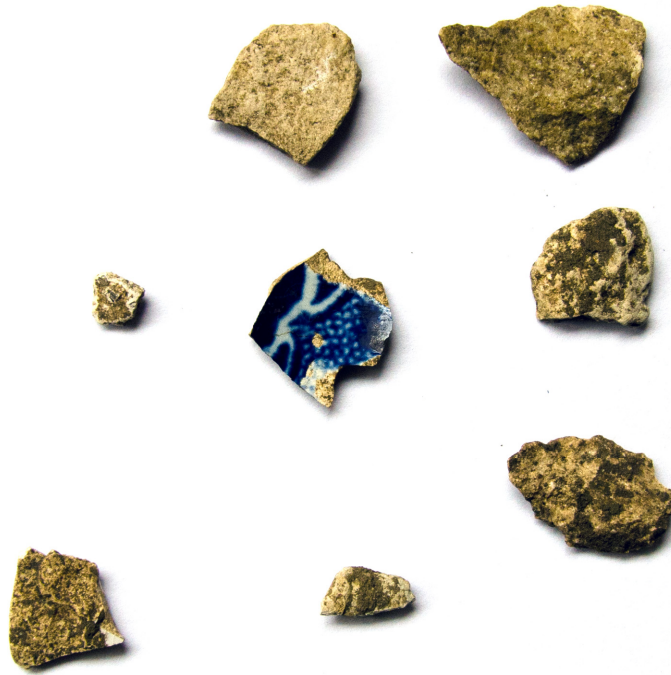


Fig. 11. Martha Griffith, *Found Shards*. 2013, earthenware clay. Grey County.



Fig. 12. Martha Griffith, *Triangle*. 2010, earthenware clay, 27.5" x 20".

Blue Willow

The Blue Willow design became a popular ceramic style in England and America with the advent of transfer-printing. As opposed to hand-painting, transfer-printing is an economical method of printing on ceramics that allows the same design to be reproduced many times. The printing technique uses engraved copper-plates, a type of ceramic paint called underglaze and transfer tissue. The underglaze collects in the engraved lines and is subsequently transferred from the copper plate to the ceramic piece with the moistened transfer tissue.

Although there are many variations of the Blue willow pattern, the Spode factory in England is attributed with what is known as the *Traditional Blue Willow Pattern*³, which includes a willow tree, fence, orange tree (often called an apple tree), water, pathway, and tea house (Frank Gaston 1996, 11). Author and collector Mary Frank Gaston explains the Blue Willow legend was not popularized until after the design itself became popular. Additionally, Frank Gaston explains that “there is not just *one* Blue Willow legend [and] there is not just *one* Blue Willow Pattern” (ibid). Many versions of the pattern and fable exist.

³The Willow III pattern created by Spode circa 1810 is often described as the *Traditional Blue Willow Pattern*.

Typically, the legend is a love story between Li-Chi (or another version of this name), who is the daughter of an affluent Chinese man. The girl's father arranges for Li-Chi to marry an older man of material prestige and wealth. However, Li-Chi falls in love with a younger man named Chang, and the two arrange to elope before the arranged marriage can take place. The couple is pursued to disastrous results, and they are murdered by either the father or bridegroom-to-be. Afterwards, the Gods transform the couple into turtle doves. Variations of the pattern often include the number of birds or people in the pattern ranging from multiple to none and the size and shape of the elements also differ, for instance some elements may be isolated or eliminated, or reversed from left to right and right to left. The shade of the blue also varies.

The Chinese discovered that blue derived from cobalt could withstand the high temperatures required to fire the glazed ceramics to a vitreous state while still maintaining the intricate detail of the blue pattern (ibid, 10). During the 1600s many Western European countries, including England, imported porcelain from China and subsequently made attempts to reproduce it. One result of which is the popular Blue Willow style, which was designed in England but inspired by Chinese motifs and techniques. Following its popularity in England and North America, many countries began manufacturing the Blue Willow pattern, including China, with Japan being the next largest producer of the

pattern (ibid). The enmeshed coming into being of the Blue Willow pattern scaffolds onto of my investigations into enmeshed narratives. As a result, I wonder how to contribute to the continued development of these narratives and technological processes, in order to further enmeshed the Blue Willow narrative with an Underground Railroad palimpsest.

Material Culture: Value-led Conservation and Postcolonial Discourse

As a response to these entanglements, I creatively adapted principles of value-led conservation theory in order to reconstruct the found shards of Blue Willow pottery. Since such an approach replaces the notion of an object's innate truth with the various values its stakeholders attach to it, it can thus activate different meanings that manifest at various stages in an object's life-cycle. My creative approach to artifact conservation seeks to accentuate material's connotative fluidity within systems of meaning (Muñoz Viñas 2005, 49).

Firstly, I will clarify between an "object-biography" and an object's "life cycle", as it is relevant to my research methodology. An object-biography study highlights the unique features of a singular object, such as the pedigree of a famous painting, whereas a life cycle study focuses on the common features of generic objects, such as the manufacturing process of an Ikea picture frame (Dannehl 2009, 123). This is applicable to my exhibition because it takes place between two locations, a museum and a private residence. Whereas museums

generally frame objects as singular; private residences tend to frame objects as common or general, albeit sentimental. Nonetheless, both locations contribute to the social and material construction of objects and their meanings, including how they are read and understood. However, these meanings are not absolute and objects can move between classifications by way of their non-material values.

The non-material values of an object are the values or meanings that its custodian(s) or stakeholder(s) attach to it. Some of the values that are relevant to material conservation include, “art value, aesthetic value, historical value, use value, research value, educational value, age value, newness value, sentimental value, monetary value, associative value, commemorative value and rarity” (Applebaum 2010, 66). Value-led conservation endeavors to locate the point in an object’s history in which it engenders the non-material values that render it meaningful for its stakeholder(s), or its ‘ideal state’ (Appelbaum 2010, 173). Thus, objects, by way of their non-material values, incarnate subject-positions.

Deciding on the ‘ideal state’ indicates how the conservator hopes the object will perform its stakeholder’s values. However, because values are not stable, meaning cannot be fixed and shifts over time. Selecting one ideal state, or value, may deny another or render it imperceptible. Given the physical im-

possibility of returning an object to a previous atomic state or material condition, as an artist, I propose to reproduce the Blue Willow shards as conserved objects by way of the material value 'flux' in order to investigate possible fluidities within material and narrative reconstructions. I explore flux by overflowing the restrictive elements in mouldmaking. Mouldmaking confines material flow in such a way that becomes invisible once the mould is removed, I propose to entwine these positive and negative spaces by allowancing flow between these spaces.

My aim is to materially dialogue with, between and beyond positive and negative spaces—in a dialogic interaction during the process of their material construction and reinstallation. Educator Paulo Freire describes dialogic interactions as generative, wherein meaning “constantly expands and renews itself” (Freire 1970/2000, 109). Dialogic interactions do not aim to synthesize understanding as do dialectic approaches, wherein a thesis and an anti-thesis are combined to create a new merged point of view in which orthodox narratives oftentimes occupy more space within the synthesis. Instead, dialogic interactions proliferate by constantly raising new questions (ibid). The exchange is an ongoing process of listening, answering, learning and problematizing while continually changing and becoming. In this way, the non-material values of the restored shards shift as they dialogue with each other and move between installation locations. Each location bears on the connotation of the objects' non-

material meanings, allowing for renewed interpretations of their past, present and future connotations.

Audience, Interlocutor, Subject-Position

The objects' speak '*with*' and '*to*' their exhibition locations instead of '*for*' them. Postcolonial theorist Linda Alcoff untangles some of the complexities of speaking '*for*', '*about*', '*with*' and '*to*' others, and as I am initiating a webbed-dialogue, her discussion is relevant.

Alcoff problematizes fixed subject-positions due to the permeable boundaries between margins and centers and consequently submits the impossibility of speaking solely for one's self. She challenges the singularity of authorship and instead places the subject in a web that effectively erases singular ownership or authorship. Even if a silo subject-position were possible, such a position is created through social constructions, not an individual creation. Therefore, central to the impossibility of speaking only for one's self are the unavoidable overlapping narratives and messy borders that cannot be neatly compartmentalized in an insular silo of exclusion.

Alcoff conflates speaking '*for*' and '*about*' others as inseparably tangled wherein "it may be impossible to speak for others without simultaneously conferring information about them" (1991-1992, 9). Despite this conflation, she explains that it is sometimes suitable to speak for others in so far as the effect

of the dialogue serves to empower the population in question. However, where viable, Alcoff agrees with Spivak that “[w]e should strive to create wherever possible the conditions for a dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for others” (ibid, 23). Key to Alcoff’s argument is the agency and effect of a dialogue instead of its origin as solely based on the subject as utterer.

I situate my project as the latter, speaking ‘to’, by way of material’s non-material values, in dialogue with the South Grey Museum, and the vestiges of Patterson’s material presence, particularly the Blue Willow shards. Through material’s shifting non-material values, I investigate how absences are revealed and re-negotiated by considering flux as a material-value to be preserved, or more precisely—restored. Thus, by way of the restored shards’ non-material values, I materially explore how subject positions are interdependent, webbed and changing. I propose my own subject-position as one in flux as I shape and I am shaped by making. In the following section I explore how processes of creative conservation, reproduction and repetition can be adopted to reveal flux, change and movement.

CHAPTER 2

Research Methodology

My studio-based investigation draws on material culture and postcolonial methodologies, including: ‘investigation through negative evidence’, ‘art-based research as proliferative practice’, and ‘value-led cultural conservation’. Through these frames, I investigate sets of fluid correlates in order to reveal how new information can be gleaned from seemingly distinct categories, including: personal/public, surface/form, pause/proliferate, real/imagined, present/absent, and positive/negative space.

In the following section I will outline how I explored these ostensibly different pairings through coupling methodologies that are influenced by artist Fred Wilson and the *Sheffield Park Black History and Cultural Museum*. Further, I describe processes of proliferating setbacks together with methodologies used by artist Rachel Whiteread in order to activate negative space as a presence in artwork.

Location: Private and Public

The exhibition locations in Grey County are theoretically informed by what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha refers to as a ‘location of difference’ and what material culture historian Giorgio Riello identifies as ‘investigation

through negative evidence'. Both of these approaches seek to explore how culturally constructed divisions are socially shaped and interact within larger webs of relations. Difference is not denied, instead it is acknowledged as an active agent within larger enmeshed narratives and histories. Curriculum theorist Dwayne Trevor Donald explains these kinds of approaches seek "to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (2009, 6). As such, investigating differences can offer new perspectives into the construction of categorical divisions and associations.

The exhibition locations are peripheral to each other, but nevertheless each informs the construction of the other through presences and absences. 'Coupling' these two spaces is intended to establish a material dialogue between public and private spaces by tracing the trajectory of the found fragments from a private home to an institutional collection. Artist Fred Wilson adopts a similar coupling methodology by juxtaposing different objects, he explains, "I like to place things side by side, because objects speak to one another and speak to you about their relation to one another just by placing them next to one another" (Karp and Wilson 1993, 182).

Similarly, *The Sheffield Park Black History & Cultural Museum* uses methods of juxtaposition to reveal webs of interconnections across geography and time. The Sheffields were early black homesteaders in Collingwood, Ontario, in

the late 1800s. The museum was initiated by Howard Sheffield and renegotiates meanings and disavowed histories through personal family heirlooms. The family heirlooms are displayed together with objects donated by the broader community. The displays are at times disorienting, for example racist minstrel songbooks sit next to spiritual hymns. The material couplings—executed with a sense of personal investment and artistry—are evocative of the power systems that governed the imaginations of their creators (Griffith 2014, 35).

Likewise, Fred Wilson explains, “I use the museum as my palette” (Karp and Wilson, 181). In his work *Mining the Museum*, he used coupling and juxtaposition in order to reframe objects to expose racial blind spots and societal omissions in the Maryland Historical Society. Wilson explains he kept asking himself, “[w]-here am I in this space, what is this space about, and why am I having this reaction to it?” (ibid, 182). He realized that he was not only reacting to the objects themselves, but how they were displayed. Curriculum theorist John Willinsky explains, “[t]o gaze into the captioned display case of bushman weaponry was to learn as much about Western hegemony over the world as could be learned by reading about the nation’s military presence abroad” (1998, 57).

Wilson recognized the manner in which things are exhibited shape how we see them, and how we are meant to see them (Karp and Wilson 1993, 181).

He adopted a coupling methodology to create a piece entitled “Metalwork 1793-1880”. The work consisted of a display of ornate repoussé silverware juxtaposed with slave shackles that he found stored in the bowels of the Maryland Historical Society Museum. He observed that these objects would typically be displayed separately; however, placing them together informs how each shapes and constructs the other’s meaning. He explains that what museums “put on view says a lot about the museum, but what they don’t put on view says even more” (1993, 182).

I considered how placing different locations side by side through objects can also activate this kind of dialogue and unearth missing information. The practice of ‘placing together’ — that of things, locations or people, including public and private narratives — offers an instrument to make visible negative evidence via the interchanges that incurs. In this way, different places, such as the Old Durham Road in relation to the South Grey Museum (and further, in relation to the Toronto, the nearest metropolitan center) offers insights into missing influences that compose, mould and outline each other.

Presence and Absence

These different yet proximate locations are in part shaped by settlement patterns following the Underground Railroad. Although some refugees from slavery settled in Toronto, many did not. Therefore, Grey County offers a differ-

ent edge through which to mine divergent narratives that are split within themselves and between their peripheries. Cooper et al. explain that:

Many former slaves, mostly those who lived on farms and plantations in the United States, wanted to purchase their own farmland and live independently. Rural colonies of fugitive slaves such as Wilberforce Settlement north of London, the Elgin Settlement at Buxton, the Oro Settlement above Lake Simcoe and the Refugee Home Society near Windsor were testimony to the deep desire of Black pioneers in Upper Canada to own and operate their own farms and govern their own communities (2002, 2).

Owen Sound, where Edward Patterson is currently buried, became known as the northern terminus of the Underground Railroad. I suspect that the shards equally reveal and conceal early black settlement on the Old Durham Road and I question if and how the connotations of the Blue Willow pattern change if they did in fact belong to Edward Patterson. To explore this question, I embarked on a studio investigation to re-image the blue and white pattern onto ceramic-ware using local landmarks as a means to activate circumstantial differences between the traditional English Blue Willow pattern and its presence on the Old Durham Road. To do so, I composed drawings of Patterson's former property as a refracted version of similar but different elements in the traditional Spode pattern, in order to create a new Grey-Blue Willow design (Fig. 13).

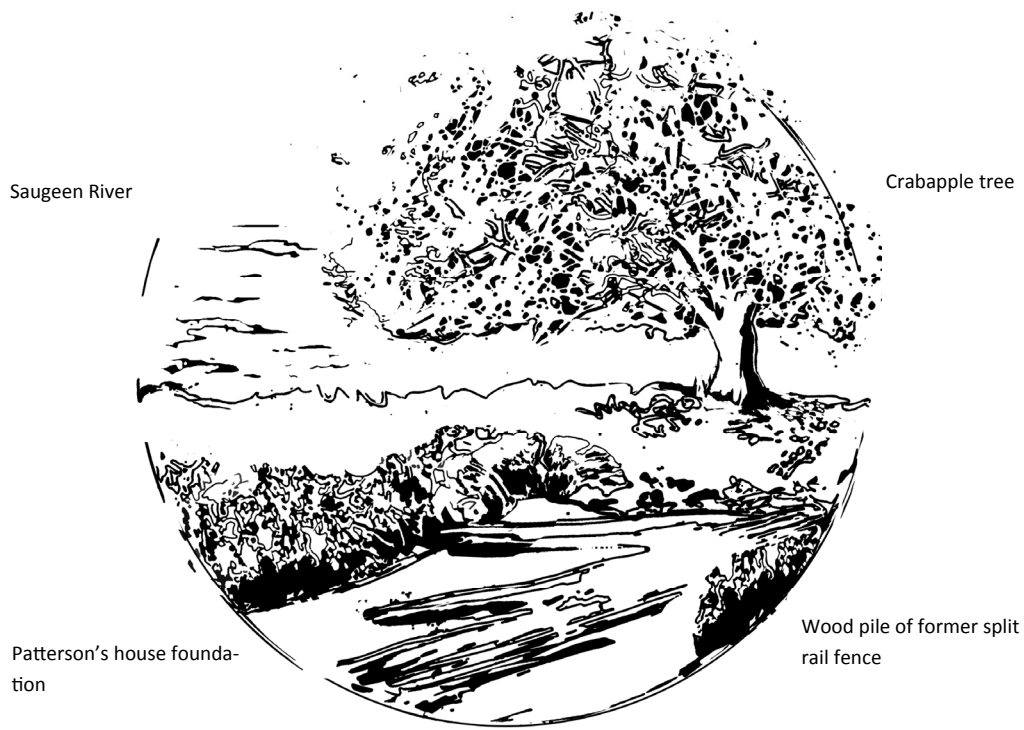


Fig. 13. Martha Griffith, *Grey-Blue Willow Design*. 2014, mixed media: pen, ink and digital drawing, 7".

Surface

The Grey-Blue Willow design disarticulates elements of the blue and white design, including: the fence, the path, river, the orange/apple tree, and the building and rearticulates the pattern with drawings of where the shards were found, including: Edward Patterson's house foundation, fence, path, crab-apple tree and river. Further, I reconstituted the plate border by arranging the shards into new a pattern by repeating and isolating details from the shards

themselves (Fig. 14). In doing so, I do not seek to disavow either history, but proliferate fixed singularity.

Artist and art educator Dr. James Haywood Rolling Jr. explains that ‘art-based research as proliferative practice’ operates to shift fixed meanings. He explains that proliferative practices “interrogates categories in a way that generates turbulence, ambiguity, the miscegenation of categories, and expand[s] discourse [to] proliferate possibility and seepages of alterity rather than reducing them” (2010, 108). I interpret ‘art-based research as proliferative practice’ as a studio-based research model that engages a dialogic methodology as opposed to a dialectic methodology as a means to uncover new directions of investigation. Owing to its emphasis on variation and proliferation, this method of studio-based research will manifest differently within different studio practices. In my practice, I adopt this research-methodology by reconsidering unforeseen studio outcomes as openings into new avenues of exploration, I call this approach ‘proliferating setbacks’. An instance of this occurred while I was experimenting with cyanotype printing.

In order to work on location in Grey County, I began working with cyanotype printing. Cyanotype printing is an early method of permanent image reproduction invented in 1842 by English astronomer Sir John Herschel (Hewitt 1995, 12). The process uses a mixture of ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferric

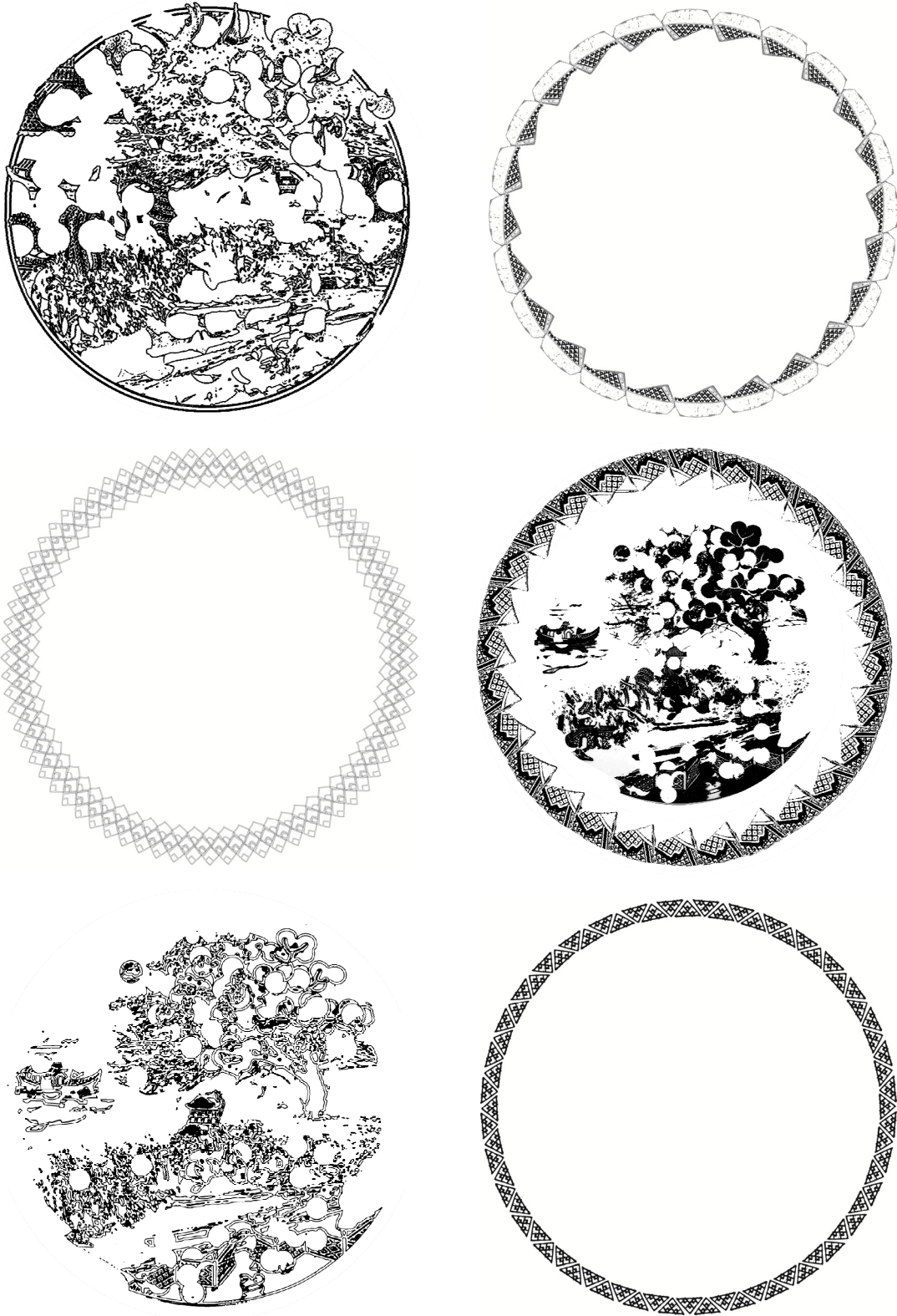


Fig. 14. Martha Griffith, *Grey-Blue Willow Variations*. 2014, mixed media: photography and digital imaging, 7"-10.5"

cyanide to create a blue reproduction, otherwise known as a blueprint. The process was later adopted by architects to create reproductions of large-scale architectural drawings. I chose this printing technique because it generates a blue-colour similar in hue to the blue value of the found shards. Additionally, the technique does not require a darkroom and can be done on location using the sun to expose the image and water to fix it to a substrate. I used un-glazed earthenware tiles as test-surfaces for this printing method.

My initial aim was to print stable images on the surface of ceramic-ware in order to at once re-contextualized the shards locally with the regional landmarks, and maintain the blue and white attribute of the English shards. I printed images of the landscape where the shards were found onto the tiles by coating them with a cyanotype solution and exposing them using sunlight (Fig. 15). During this process I discovered that prolonged exposure to U.V light faded the image. I conducted further experiments to test colour-fastness by exposing the tiles to sunlight for extended periods of time (Fig. 16, 17). Subsequent observations revealed additional changes; when the tiles were taken out of the UV light, the images regenerated. When I put the tiles back in direct sunlight they again faded.

Most photographic images will fade after prolonged exposure to sunlight. However oxygen will partially regenerate cyanotype images on paper



Fig. 15. Martha Griffith, *Various Tiles*. 2013, cyanotype print on earthenware tile, 4" x 4".

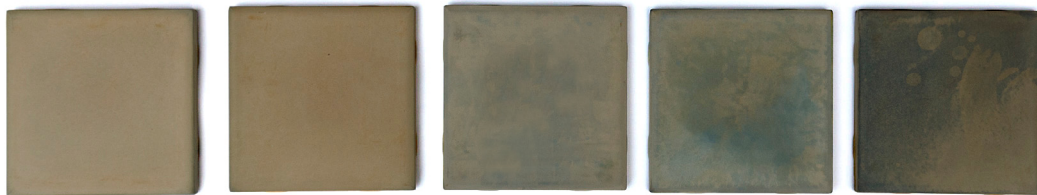


Fig. 16. Martha Griffith, *Cyanotype Regeneration*. 2013, cyanotype coated tiles exposed to UV light over time, 4" x 4" each.



Fig. 17. Martha Griffith, *Memory Surface*. 2013, cyanotype print on earthenware plate and found sherd, 13".

when removed from UV light. I imagine this effect is more pronounced on the un-glazed tiles because of their porosity. The tiles underwent a number of regeneration cycles as I again set the tiles back out in the sun and then moved them back indoors. Eventually, the more this was carried out, the fainter the image became.

My initial reaction was to 'solve' this instability by investigating ways in which the image could be stabilized onto the ceramic-ware. I explored various methods, including: altering the chemical components of the cyanotype mixture, pre-coating the ceramic surface using polymer medium, using gelatin as a binding agent, and coating the exposed tiles with a UV resistant varnish. These failed experimentations brought me to the realization that allowing for an unstable image at the outset mirrored an object's inherent contingency within social constructions. Objects can appear to be stable at arbitrary moments in time. The test tiles reveal this instability by performing change in faster intervals.

To inform and incorporate this finding, I adopted an art-conservation framework through which to investigate stability and change within an object. Value-led conservation methodologies dialogue with each of an artifact's phases — physical and cultural — in order to repeatedly interpret, negotiate and renegotiate its meaning. Barbara Appelbaum outlines three prevalent phases in

whole-object material aging, including: (1) the induction phase, (2) the autocatalytic phase and (3) the auto-retardant phase. During the initial induction phase the object shows little outward signs of change, in the next autocatalytic phase the object undergoes the most physical change which subsequently begins to slow during the auto-retardant phase when the catalyst wears itself out.

An object's material phases, together with its cultural phases negotiate how the object is read. Cultural phases include: creation, original use, discard, collection, and institutional acquisition (Appelbaum 2010, 122). Applebaum explains that "each new stage in the life of an object typically involves a change of location, change of ownership and change in use, with accompanying changes in attitudes towards many of its aspect" (ibid, 124). I adopt this process of change by traveling the materials between two locations—the residence and the museum—as a methodology to activate an associated shift in perception. Likewise, I explore variation and change within the restored forms themselves in order to galvanize a shift in their non-material connotations.

Pause and Proliferation

Value-led art-conservation is a suitable framework for the Grey-Blue Willow reproductions because it acknowledges that an object's physical and value-based conditions are transient. Applebaum explains that owing to physical and cultural shifts, any given moment in an objects' life-cycle is arbitrary and

always already experiencing change (ibid, 7). In this way, an object may appear to be stable or fixed even as it is undergoing physical and/or cultural changes. Value-led conservation aims to activate a particular moment in an object's biography by securing its physical properties as a simulacrum of that moment, while allowing for the possibility of future change through reversible conservation methodologies.

The appearance of stability is necessary to derive meaning through momentary pauses. Meaning is inaccessible if it is constantly relocating, just as a moving vehicle needs to stop in order to be entered. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains that in order "to say anything at all in particular, you have to stop talking. Of course, every full stop is provisional...a politics of infinite dispersal is the politics of no action at all" (1987, 45). Likewise, I adopt value-led conservation's notion of 'ideal state' through the lens of 'art-based research as proliferative practice', wherein the 'ideal state' offers a momentary pause that provisionally consolidates an object. I paused the restored shards on Patterson, through his material vestiges, while allowing continued speculation and change.

I combined printing techniques that at once enabled fixed and unstable imagery, in order to activate the interplay between stability and fluidity. I printed the 'Grey Willow' images onto the ceramic plates using both cyanotype and underglaze techniques whereby the cyanotype process is unstable, and the un-

derglaze process is stable. To print the stable images in underglaze, I created multiple silkscreens of the Spode design combined with my own drawings in order to transfer sections of each image onto a single surface. This method allowed for variations during the printing process and as a result each plate is printed differently.

The plates are varyingly printed; some with only underglaze, some with only cyanotype and others are a combination of both mediums while others are not printed at all. Combining transient and fixed imaging techniques gestures towards an object's continually changing interpretations while maintaining the appearance of stability over time. The printed combinations of underglaze and cyanotype continually shift the images within their own circumference and in relation to each other. This interplay oscillates between inclusions and exclusions, and nods towards different sets of relations within different timeframes.

Form

To construct the physical form of the plate, I considered how mouldmaking dialogues with aspects of both of positive and negative spaces. Artist Rachel Whiteread uses mouldmaking as a methodology to reveal negative spaces. In her artworks entitled *House* and *Ghost*, Whiteread filled Victorian houses slated for demolition with liquid concrete and then stripped "the mould – that is, the house itself, roof tiles, bricks and mortar, doors and windows and

all - away from it” (Graham-Dixon 1993). In doing so, Whiteread materializes the negative space that is within and around an object, which is, as she describes it, a way in which to "mummify the air in the room" (National Gallery 2009). In doing so, she renders external living spaces visible. These spaces are deeply internal but oftentimes invisible in this way.

The process of mouldmaking typically centers on positive form, while the mould, or negative void-form, is rendered invisible within this process. However, if the mould’s positive—in this case the plate—can be characterized as such, the inverse is also true. In order to render this construction visible and destabilize the polar positive-negative relationship, I constructed plate moulds from plates that never had a physical positive, only a virtual original. In this way, the mould itself had a material presence before the plate.

To do so, I modeled or reconstructed the Blue Willow shards as a virtual plate or “virtual ghost” using RHINO 3D software (Fig. 18). I subsequently created a series of moulds (Fig. 19) and meta-moulds from the virtual model by CNC milling moulds in Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF) (Fig. 20). I hand-finished the MDF moulds with sandpaper and varnish in

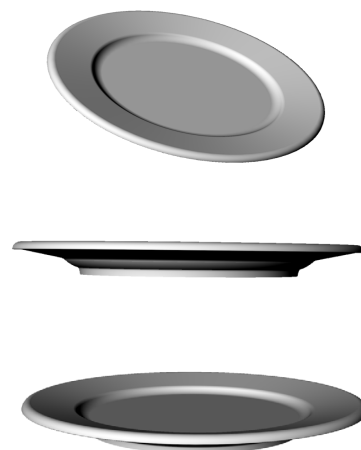
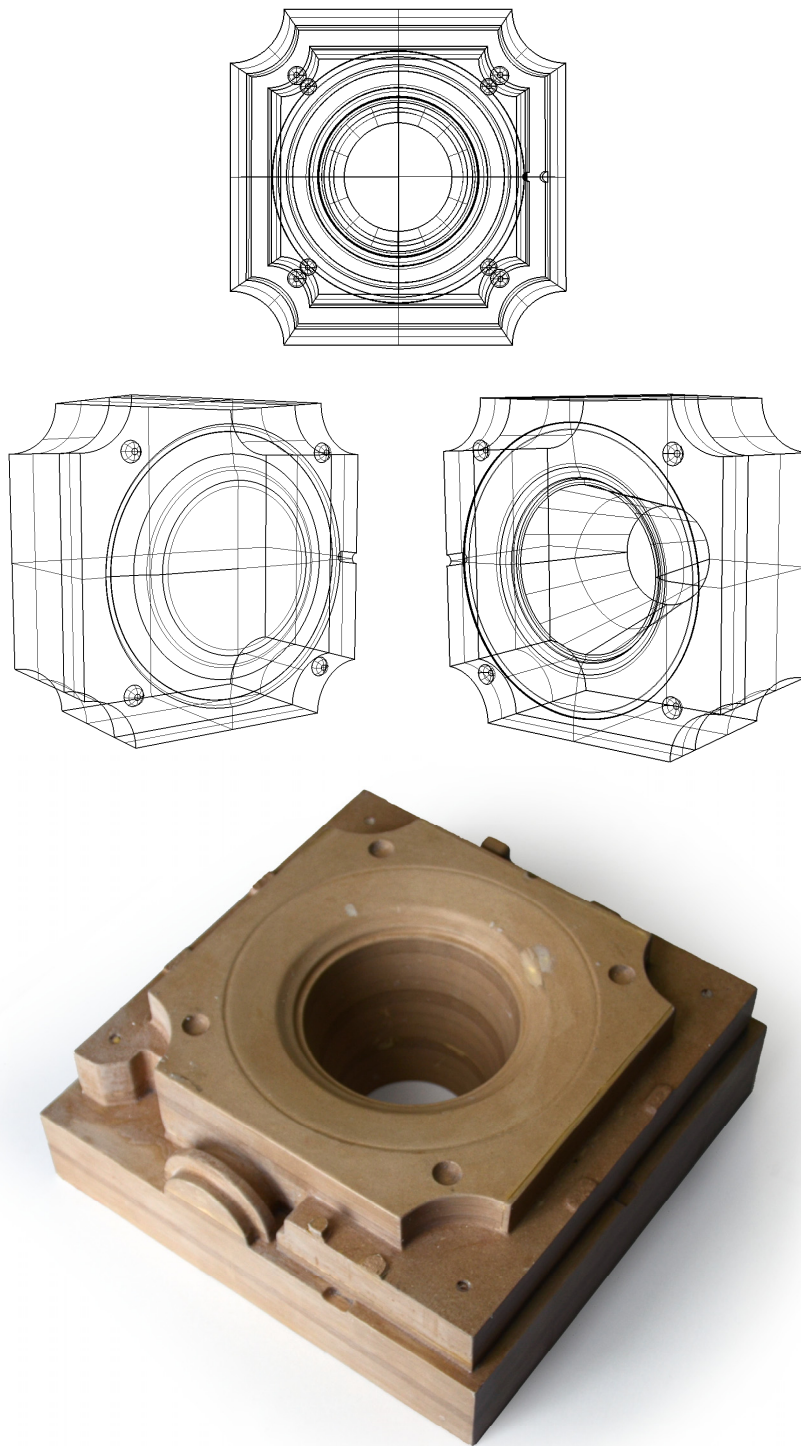


Fig 18. Martha Griffith, *Ghost Shard: Virtual Plate*. 2014, 3D image.



Above: Fig. 19. Martha Griffith, *Virtual Mould*. 2014, 3D model.

Below: Fig. 20. Martha Griffith, *MDF Plate Mould-Bottom*. 2014, CNC milled MDF, hand finish.

order to cast plaster moulds from them. Plaster moulds are used in ceramics for slip-casting⁴ because the plaster absorbs water from the clay to facilitate its release from the mould. The virtual process necessitated the creation of meta-moulds in order to cast multiple plaster moulds from the MDF master-negative.

The interlocking of positive and negative forms moving between virtual and physical constructions, together with the number of steps involved at each stage, began to obscure the origin of the virtual plate, which is in turn an interpretation of the shards which themselves have unclear origins. Material constructions—as social constructions—begin to lose their origin through repetition and history. Bhabha explains that “[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (1990, 1). My objective was to employ a process that reifies variation from oblique origins and symbolically obscures the artificial bifurcation between real and imagined constructions by generating physical material from a virtual void-form. The process brought variability from singularity, and confused the mould’s origins as a virtually constructed source in order to emblematically consider how prevailing realities can manifest from imagined constructions.

⁴ Slip is a form of liquid clay

Positive and Negative Space

The multiple stages involved in the process of mould making, including: moving between materials, cure times, accounting for material readiness, calculating volumes and designing interlocking shapes and forms—both virtual and material—allowed for instances of ‘proliferative setbacks’. One significant ‘proliferative setback’ resulted from of a studio miscalculation. I had not accounted for the degree to which the plaster expanded while curing in the MDF meta-mould. As a result, the walls of the MDF mould were too high, and the plaster became stuck in the mould. I subsequently needed to break the plaster mould in order to remove it from the MDF meta-mould. After correcting the design problem, I decided to cast the broken mould instead of throwing it away to see how the breaks affected the form. The liquid clay ran into the seams of the cracks and in so doing re-presented the mould as a built enclosure that is subject to flow and alteration.

The resulting plate called attention to its own outline by glimpsing the surrounding space external to its pressed form (Fig. 21). The cast seepages document the fissures within its construction process and disrupt the boundaries between positive and negative space. I continued to cast with the broken moulds in order to activate the plates’ contiguous space, and subsequently explored using the moulds themselves as part of the exhibition process.



Fig 21. Martha Griffith, *Unruly Bits*. 2014, earthenware clay (greenware), 12".

I included the moulds and MDF meta-moulds in the exhibition as an extension of the plates themselves. Conservator D.E Cosgrove explains that “it is the act of conservation itself that makes an object part of the cultural heritage, not the cultural heritage that demands conservation” (1994, 176). I place value on the moulds by pausing their function as plate-producing proliferative objects so as to reveal their usually invisible negative space as the counterpart to their positive material production.

I ‘paused’ them at this point by embedding them in blocks of paraffin wax. Paraffin Embedding or Paraffin Infiltration is a method of organic conservation that preserves tissue in blocks of paraffin wax. Embedding the plaster moulds similarly allowed them to function as movable bricks (Fig. 22). In the following section, I explain how I use movement in the installation process in order to engage a dialogue between private and public spaces.

How is the Past Made in the Present?



Fig 22. Martha Griffith, *How is The Past Made in the Present?* 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, 16' x 20'. Installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation, Grey County—where the plate shards were found.

CHAPTER 3

Installing the Work

I installed and reinstalled the material elements of the exhibition—the plates and the moulds—at the South Grey Museum and at the location where the shards were found on Patterson’s property, in order to engage a dialogue between these two spaces. From these locations I reproduce elements of the Blue Willow narrative in situ. The material vestiges of Patterson’s life offer similar yet different elements also found in the traditional Blue Willow design, including: a river, house, path, and apple/orange tree. By installing the newly cast objects at these sites, I question how these material elements might be mobilized to dislocate the traditional repetition of the Blue Willow legend. I therefore move, and remove the material elements of the installation back and forth along these material vestiges, in order to engage them in a dialogue with Patterson’s private space and the public museum.

I include the South Grey Museum as an installation counterpoint to the private installation on Patterson’s property, in order to consider exchange and change between these two spaces. Whereas museums generally isolate objects both spatially and biographically in order to emphasize an object’s particular value, here the objects materially dialogue between locations in order to create a plural landscape that highlights variation instead of singularity. Taken togeth-

er, these locations gesture towards the ongoing movements within each other's construction and reconstruction.

Installed in the museum, the plates form an archaeological landscape on the museum floor (Fig. 23). Their counterpart—the virtually materialized moulds—are arranged in a 16' by 20' footprint on Patterson's former property beside his original house foundation, under a crabapple tree, where the Blue Willow fragments were found (Fig. 24-31).

The material installation discourses Patterson's foundation with these same elements in the Blue Willow pattern, unearthed below. The translucent wax blocks haunt the empty foundation on the land and offer a glimpse into Patterson's domestic space. The rectangular formation also echoes the task of having to build a structure of that size, in addition to clearing five acres of land, before qualifying for a land deed on the Old Durham Road.



Fig. 23. Martha Griffith, *Archaeological Landscape (version 1)*. 2014, ceramic plates, size variable. South Grey Museum, Flesheron.

This movement-based method of installation relocates material elements within and between different locations in order to underline the flux that





Opposite: Fig. 24-27. Above: Fig 28-31. Martha Griffith, *How is The Past Made in the Present?* 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, 16' x 20'. Installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—above found shards, Grey County.

is already at play in an object's biography. Further, the reinstallations press the materials to entangle the various elements of the traditional Blue Willow pattern—including the tree, house and river—within a local context. As Applebaum explains, a change in an object's location, is often accompanied by a shift in attitudes towards the object itself (2010, 122). I thus continually move, and remove the materials between locations in a kind of performative gesture, to materially enmesh a shifted Grey-Blue Willow association that comprises marginalized black narratives, and white settler narrations.

Back and forth between the locations, I move the moulds in a meandering path from the house foundation (Fig. 32) to the museum (Fig. 33), then unmooring the moulds in the Saugeen River (Fig 34). The plates, in turn, are removed from the museum floor and displayed on the moulds-turned-plinths, and then relocated to Patterson's property. Here, the plates pause in a 16' x 20' rectangle beside Patterson's remaining house foundation (Fig. 56). These domestic markers at once pause and flux, as their printed cyanotype images react with the UV light prompting the image to shift and fade. Finally, the plates are reinterred and left to regenerate in the ground as fluctuating narrative artifacts (Fig. 60). The images that follow (Fig. 32-71) narrate this material process.



Fig. 32. Martha Griffith, *How is The Past Made in the Present?* 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, 16' x 20'. Installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—above found shards, Grey County.



Fig. 33. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig. 34. Martha Griffith, *Blue River, Grey County*. 2014, plate mould forms, wax, size variable. Grey County—Edward Patterson's former property.



Above: Fig. 35. Martha Griffith, *Blue River, Grey County*. 2014, plate mould forms, wax, size variable. Grey County—Edward Patterson's former property.

Below: Fig. 36. Martha Griffith, *How is The Past Made in the Present? 2014*, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, 16' x 20'. Installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—where the shards were found. Grey County.



Fig. 37. Martha Griffith, *Blue River, Grey County*. 2014, plate mould forms, wax, size variable. Grey County—Edward Patterson's former property.



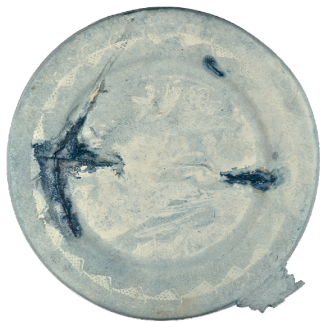
Above, left to right: Fig. 38 & 39. Martha Griffith, *Blue River, Grey County*. 2014, plate mould forms, wax, size variable. Grey County—Edward Patterson's former property.

Below: Fig. 40. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Top: Fig. 41. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.

Bottom: Fig. 42. Martha Griffith, *Grey-Blue Willow*. 2014, ceramic plates. 10.5" each. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.





Opposite, left to right: Fig. 43-54. Martha Griffith, *Grey-Blue Willow*. 2014, ceramic plates, 10.5" each.

Above: Fig. 55. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig. 56. Martha Griffith, *Grey Foundation*. 2014, ceramic plates, 16' x 20'. Grey County, installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—where the shards were found.



Fig. 57. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig 58. Martha Griffith, *Grey Foundation*. 2014, ceramic plates, 16' x 20'. Grey County, installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation.



Fig. 59. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig. 60. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.



Fig. 61. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig. 62. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.



Above: Fig. 63. Martha Griffith, *Grey Foundation*. 2014, ceramic plates, 16' x 20'. Grey County, installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—where the shards were found.

Below: Fig. 64. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.



Fig. 65. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.



Fig. 66. Martha Griffith, *Grey Foundation*. 2014, ceramic plates, 16' x 20'. Grey County, installed beside Edward Patterson's house foundation—where shards were found.



Fig. 67. Martha Griffith, *Staging Seams (version 2)*. 2014, conserved plate moulds, wax, plaster, ceramic plates, variable size. South Grey Museum, Flesherton.



Fig. 68. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.

Epilogue: Research Results

Beginning and ending in the ground, I embarked on a series of performative material-led processes to creatively restore the found shards of Blue Willow pottery. The resulting material artifacts are documents of material processes undergone that enmesh the recovered fragments within a thicker descriptive context. The impetus for these actions—the found shards of blue willow pottery—billowed into a series of processes that yielded material reconstructions that ultimately found their way back into the earth of their datum point, as shifted and shifting remains (Fig. 67). However, the intermediary processes between un-earth and re-earth, raise questions around the transparency and opacity of artifacts, and how they have the potential to at once disrupt and conceal previous, present and future storyline(s), which are always already incomplete and partially buried.

Though I speculate the shards belong to Edward Patterson, the personal details of Patterson's life are not evident in the shards themselves or the textual records that situate him on the landscape. The material fragments are perhaps less revealing of Patterson's intimate reality, and more revealing of the manifold hidden narratives and disavowals concealed within them. My intention is not to fictionalize the unknown aspects of Patterson's life through an invented narrative, but to consider how historical narrations are always only partial and

continually unfolding. I consider movements in material and non-material entanglements as a vehicle capable of reshaping, remaking, and reinstalling established material tropes.

The attention paid to these small pieces of material culture seek to reveal the erased traces of black history within white Canadian narratives. The process is a meditation on how these deletions produce denials that continue to position us in relation to each other in the present moment. By adopting a practice of cultural conservation that emphasizes movement—that of the physical materials and their flowing narrations—I entwine the similar but different elements found in both the traditional Blue Willow design and on Patterson's former property, in order to reinter the found fragments as newly restored Grey-Blue Willow variants. This abstract method of material conservation presses the restored shards to connote shifting meanings and aims to enmesh the Grey-Blue Willow remnants within a thicker, speculative narrative complex.



Fig. 69. Martha Griffith, *Found Shard*.
Circa 1862-1892, transfer-printed
earthenware clay. Approximately 1.5"
x 1". Grey County, Edward Patterson's
former property.

Blue Reposition



Fig. 70. Martha Griffith, *Blue Reposition*. 2014, ceramic plates, variable size. Grey County, Edward Patterson's former property.



Fig. 71. Martha Griffith, *Unruly Bits*. 2014, ceramic, 12".
South Grey Museum, Flesherton—Permanent Collection.

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