

# History inhabits each of us

## Creative engagements with personal story in troubling times

October 10-20, 2018



Photo credit: Lea Kabijo



We live in troubled times. Millions are being displaced from their homes. Refugees and other minorities are facing intense Islamophobia and racism. Guns are killing our children. Economic inequality is growing. People are being left-behind. We are living the consequences of empire and settler-colonialism. The future of our planet is at stake.

Now more than ever, it is easy to think that history belongs to political and economic elites. These are the voices that we hear. But history inhabits each of us. Ordinary people live extraordinary lives and they have much to teach us. By going public with their stories, their extraordinary lives break the silence and move us to further social change.

Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling is proud to present a rich tapestry of research-creation projects this October. This has been timed to coincide with the US Oral History Association conference, when more than 600 oral historians from around the world will be converging on Montreal for four days.

These public projects bring oral history to the streets. They engage with personal story, and our troubling times, in creative ways: live performances, audio and art walks, visual arts, graphic stories, photography, street art, visits, and multimedia and museum installations. The projects include a diverse range of community members, students, alumni, professors, representing the richness of community-university collaboration.

The public launch, for these projects and the conference itself, is Wednesday October 10<sup>th</sup> from 5pm to 8pm in Concordia's new "4<sup>th</sup> Space" as well as the adjoining LB Atrium and the new "Performing Listening Lab" at COHDS itself. The reception is sponsored by the Concordia Library. Come join us!

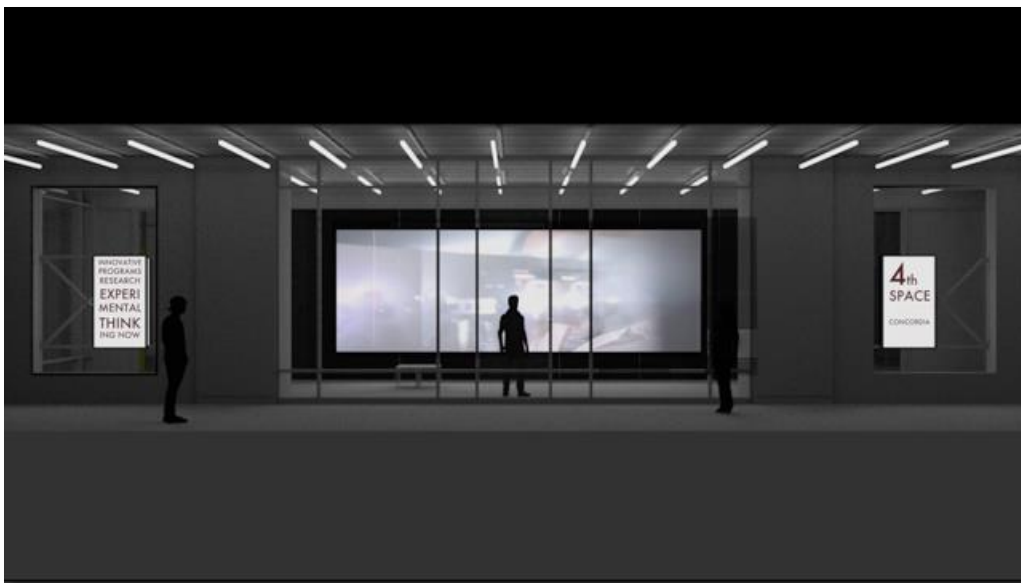
- The OHA Local Arrangements Committee:  
Steven High, Cynthia Hammond, Marie-Josée Allard,  
Kathleen Vaughan, Luis Sotelo Castro, and Kathryn  
Boschmann

## INSTALLATIONS / EXHIBITS

Many of the research-creation projects will be located in Concordia's new street-level "4<sup>th</sup> Space" area and the adjacent Atrium of the Library Building as well as the new Performing Listening Lab at COHDS on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. Much of this exhibition will be running from October 10-20.

### THE FOURTH SPACE (Concordia's Library Building, ground floor)

The Fourth Space will be a hive of activity this October. During the Oral History Association conference (October 11-13), a public stream of sessions will be held in this space – amidst the research creation projects. We are calling this special public programming "**Oral History on the Streets.**" Come join us and learn about the exciting work being undertaken across North America and beyond. We are hoping to live-stream these public sessions as well as provide simultaneous translation (English/French/Spanish). We will publicize the schedule.



**Storytellers-Illustrer les mémoires de l'éducation autochtone: une case à la fois** (Emanuelle Dufour) is a graphic art project on indigenous education, historical awareness and cultural safety. The installation will explore the research-creation process in the making of graphic memories.



**Decolonial Street Art – live mural making and video installation** (Ioana Radu, Aude Maltais-Landry, Laurence Desmarais and Unceded Voices) aims to promote the work of Indigenous street artists (mural and wheatpaste and stencil makers) and recognizes the importance of walls and structures as critical spaces to reclaim unceded Indigenous land. The goal of Unceded Voices is three-fold: to develop a network of solidarity and support between Indigenous women/2Spirit/Queer and Women of Color street artists; to promote anticolonial resistance through diverse street art interventions; and to foster relationships and dialogue between the collective and the broader community. The project will include a live mural making by one of the Unceded Voices members, Cedar Eve Peters, a video installation, and a guided tour of the seven murals in St-Henri. [Thursday early-bird 7:30-10:00]



**Oral History, New Media and Our Changing Climate – The Shore Line** (Elizabeth Miller). *The Shore Line* online documentary project is a collection of slow resistance stories featuring individuals who are confronting the threats of unsustainable development, storms, and rising seas with both persistence and imagination. In this project, the coast serves as metaphor and method - a way to challenge boundaries and narratives in addressing climate-disasters. The shore line is a site of change and resilience - where the land meets the sea, where excessive development meets the power of nature, and where climate change impacts lives and ecosystems. Change at the shoreline is often spectacular with storms that result in massive destruction, displacement and death. Yet changes are also gradual, involving the seeping of toxins into the water or the displacement of shoreline communities. Likewise, resistance at the shore is also a **slow strengthening**, enacted through processes that involve creativity, a deepening knowledge of coastal ecosystems, and collaborative frameworks. This will comprise a pop-up gallery with a touch screen and featured stories.



***Walking in the Water/Marcher sur les eaux*** (Kathleen Vaughan) is a polyphonic exploration of the neglected and polluted Pointe-Saint-Charles (Montreal) shoreline of the St. Lawrence River, using archival material and interviews with local residents as well as with experts. The project uses textile mapping (hand piecing and digital and hand embroidery) that will integrate embedded, touch-sensitive audio exploring the lore and lure of this length of shoreline along the de-industrialized River, which remains an important commercial trade route and an integral aspect of the city's imaginary. The textile map is 9 feet high by 12.5 feet wide, with embedded audio playback features.



***Threading a map, spinning life stories*** (Hourig Attarian) is an exploration of how history bleeds into the present. The installation draws on the archival records of a women's shelter administered by the Armenian General Benevolent Union in the aftermath of genocide in post WWI Aleppo, Syria. It explores the ways visual language can be connective, bridging with the textual, especially when the latter encounters the impossibility of verbalizing difficult memories. As I thread the deportation trajectories of the girls and women from the shelter, I am mindful of the routes they have trodden. The thread becomes an extension of their fragmented life stories, stretching as a lifeline across time. The performance is 25 minutes and will lead to an installation for the duration of the conference.



***Birds Crossing Borders*** (Khadija Baker) is based on collected stories of the displaced participants primarily from displaced Syrian communities to create a site-specific sound and installation. The interdisciplinary installation will include stories of refugees while crossing borders. The project is a conceptual reflection on the displaced movement and the process of belonging to ones' home; it is to examine the process of feeling at home and integration. This reflection on the connectedness of human movement, but also a on the displaced feeling in relation to the new land and new people. A question will be tested here: How the host society will own the collective



memory and generate the sense of understating and get more familiar with the new comer; this moment of connection is when the acceptance or at least their real image of these refugees is imagined.



***Animating the Syrian Crisis*** (Amina Jalabi) will animate the life stories of Syrian political prisoners now living in Montreal. As a Syrian, and an artist and art educator, her research interest is in how can art represent difficult knowledge and be curated in public spaces. The animated film will be of 10 minutes duration.



***Moving Homes*** (Amanda Chalupa, Donna Gabaccia, Nuriye Kilinc, Mounir Nasri, Asha Siad) is a series composed of 6 pieces that portray migration-related experiences. They represent several (moving) homes and communities that are in, or that have passed through, Greece, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Poland, Iran, Zambia, Tanzania, USA, and Canada. Whether it relates to resettlement and integration, or separation and reunification; identity and belonging, or nostalgia and remembering... we have increasingly been asking who controls, portrays, and hears these narratives, and how? The pieces in *Moving Homes* are curated and created by current, former, children, and grandchildren of migrants, who lead viewers on migration and memory paths across time and space both in the exhibition hall and around the globe. Through paintings, photographs, pastel drawings, and projections, it will be revealed that "home" takes on different meanings at different times, and is associated with various emotions, identities, and places.



***Inter-Intra: Artful Experiences of Community Art Education and Migration*** (Arianna Garcia-Fialdini) is a semi-interactive group of ten wooden-sculptures combining wood-prints, ink, watercolor, tea, light and sound. One minute sound pieces in eleven languages, based on the lived experiences of migrants to Montreal are incorporated in each sculpture. The project is intended to represent some of the many diverse cultures that share Montreal as a new home and living environment.



***Digital Representations of Resistance: Participatory Video Expressions of Young Arsi Oromo Women's Challenges and Expressive Strategies for Change in Ethiopia*** (Leila Qashu) is a multimedia sound, photo, video and website exhibit of the young Arsi Oromo women's works and of the works documenting the participatory process. The project focuses on challenges young women face, and their strategies – especially the use of expressive arts – for discussing, questioning, resisting and changing cultural practices and affirming their rights.

### ATRIUM OF THE LIBRARY BUILDING



***Striking Memories*** (Nadia Hausfather, collaborative co-curator with various artists) is a visual installation accompanied by performance art exploring the experiences of Quebec's general unlimited student strikes since 2005, as remembered by activists, with a focus on those affiliated to Concordia University in 2012. Paying close attention to the emotional dimensions of the strikes, the installation will include the research-creation work of Concordia students, alumni, part-time professors, and affiliates of the COHDS, notably: the experimental photographic practice of Shahrzad Arshadi; the sensorial documentary works of Florencia Marchetti; visual artworks and photographic documentation by Rushdia Mehreen; David Widginton's "Ici comme ailleurs on a raison de ne rien lâcher" textile banner print/video collage surrounded by his archival

banner collection; and theatrical and dance performances coordinated by Jennifer Spiegel. All of the above will be interwoven with Hausfather's PhD thesis video, audio, and textual work about the emotional experiences of participants during Québec's student strikes (2005-2012).



***Here I am in Montreal — J'arrive à Montréal*** (Centre d'histoire de Montréal) is a travelling exhibition based on an educational program the Centre d'histoire de Montréal has undertaken with high-school students in "classes d'accueil" (classes for recent immigrants learning French before they integrate regular classes). These young people are invited to share with us family heirlooms or other objects of significance and to relate the often-emotional stories attached to them. They also give their takes on Montreal through the filter of their respective cultural and personal backgrounds. Their varied perceptions of the city open a window on the reality of immigration.

### PERFORMING LISTENING LAB @ COHDS (LB 1042)



***Being Heard Might Prove Fatal*** is a sound installation and research-creation project that Luis C. Sotelo (Canada Research Chair in Oral History Performance) is currently undertaking at Concordia University in collaboration with a family of Colombian refugees and sound artist Barry Prophet. During an oral history interview (in Spanish) at a recording studio, members of the family shared memories of their violent past in rural Colombia with us. In small groups of 9 - 12 people, the listener-participants will be invited to be still and in silence for a few minutes inside a long narrow room with partitions that visually block the exit until the last corner is reached. Visitors will listen to the walls tell the story.

**ROOM "F" ON THE 9TH FLOOR OF THE MB (Molson) BUILDING**





***Through Their Eyes*** (Lea Kabiljo) is a photo-interview exhibition focused on seven residents of Santa Marianita, Ecuador. Often oral historians consider the ways that photos can elicit memories in the recorded interview. The methodology here is the inverse, exploring ways that the oral history interview can elicit photographs of their inner lives. The exhibition panels will be in English and Spanish. [October 10-13]

## LIVE PERFORMANCES



***“It Is Only Sound That Remains”*** is a live, sound theatre performance, held in the dark, from a script that Shahrzad Arshadi wrote about her introduction to Ziba Kazemi’s life, after her tragic death at the hands of Iranian authorities in the summer of 2003. People enter a dimly lit space and sit in a comfortable, almost living room like space decorated with Iranian carpets, pillows and couches. Tea and homemade Iranian cookies are served. Sounds are playing softly in the space. After everyone is settled, the lights go out. The play begins with the beautiful sounds of a Santor (Iranian instrument) played by Iranian master musician, Ardavan Kamkar, and after a little while, we hear a voice, it is Ziba. She joins us through her old recordings. It’s an invocation of her spirit that exists beyond our visual realm. Sounds of archival conversations and audio footage of her life, music, her conversations with her four-year old son Stephan (Salman) while Ziba prepared dinner, teaching him to say certain phrases, mixed with professional actors reading from the script, these private moments heard by the audience in the dark allow each person listening to draw an image of this living, breathing woman and her life in their mind’s eye and come into the intimate sphere of a woman whose life became very public only after her death. A living document is created. Sound and language has no boundaries in this performance. [Part of Public Launch, Evening of Wednesday October 10th]



***Come wash with us: Seeking home in story*** (Tasht Collective) is a collaborative research-creation piece by a collective of four women. The members of our collective originally come from the Middle/Near East. Having lived in a volatile region before calling Canada home, all four of us have inherited memories of atrocities from our families. Our starting point is our personal stories and family memories of doing laundry, which woven together with shared history from our originary communities become the springboard for creating our own community sitting around a circle of washtubs to explore our collective stories of loss, dispossession, war, genocide, and exile. The one-hour performance features an open dialogue amongst ourselves and with viewers who join our process of washing. [Part of Public Launch, Evening of Wednesday October 10th]

## IN-SITU LISTENING AND MOBILE METHODOLOGIES



***Survivors on the Main: A Historical Walk*** (Stacey Zembrzycki, Anna Sheftel, Nancy Rebelo, and Joyce Pillarella) will recreate the postwar social worlds of child Holocaust survivors and the storied neighbourhood that received them. Situated in the Plateau, along Saint-Laurent Boulevard, Jeanne Mance Street, and Esplanade Avenue, the walk's 1.5-hour narrative, developed in collaboration with survivors themselves, will take participants to the places that were central to survivors' early experiences in the city. [Wednesday October 10<sup>th</sup>, 12 noon-4pm] PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.



***Parlons violence: Oral Histories of Displacement and Resistance in St-Henri*** (Fred Burrill) is a bilingual guided audio walk of St-Henri, rooted in oral history interviews with long-time residents that explore the theme of violence. The neighbourhood is known for both the rapidity of its gentrification and the ferocity of its resistance. Participants will be invited to stop, listen, and reflect not only at sites of political violence but also at former sites of industry, on side streets to hear stories of eviction and landlord harassment, and in spaces

like public parks and squares where tensions between old and new populations further the psychological trauma of displacement. [Thursday October 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:30-10:00; and Saturday October 13<sup>th</sup>, 5pm- 8pm – meet at 4<sup>th</sup> Space]



***Walking With*** (Pohanna Pyne Feinberg) is an audio walk that explores walking as an artistic process and practice. Montaged excerpts from interviews with Montreal-based artists who are women and who walk as an aspect of their practice are emplaced in selected locations around the downtown Concordia University Campus. While listening to the artists' insights and moving between the designated locations, the audio walk invites you to reflect on your experiences with the emergent and generative dynamics of place. Mp3 kits and accompanying booklets are available for loan from the 4th space. A guided group walk will also be offered (see program for details). [Guided Tour, Thursday October 11, 8am-10am – meet at the 4<sup>th</sup> Space; self-guided from October 10-20]



***Une promenade parlante: episodes in a changing neighbourhood*** (Cynthia Hammond, Shauna Janssen, Wendy Allen, Eric Craven and the Living History Group - Atwater Library) is a creative, episodic walk that explores the built environment of Shaughnessy Village, which is a zone of intense social, economic, and architectural contrast. This zone links the Golden Square Mile, once the richest district in Canada, with the "garden city" of Westmount, and the heavily industrialized neighbourhoods of Saint-Henri and Little Burgundy. Working with the seniors' living memory and urban research, our walk invites delegates to explore the history, politics, and built form of 5-7 specific locations through a series of creative episodes and performances, set into the scenography of the city. The walk will conclude at the Atwater Library, where participants will have the opportunity to further dialogue with the seniors and enjoy refreshments. [Friday October 12, 8am-10am – meet at the 4<sup>th</sup> Space]