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PRISM

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**Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, Brian Jungen,
Charles Stankieveh**

'Science Fiction 21: The Last Frontier'

Or Gallery

555 Hamilton St.

Through February 19

Conventionally, a prism is a transparent optical element with flat, polished surfaces that refracts light. PRISM is the code name of a mass surveillance data mining program developed and maintained by the United States Government's National Security Agency. A prism is a solid geometric figure whose two end faces are similar, equal, and parallel rectilinear figures, and whose sides are parallelograms. PRISM is constructed around a sophisticated database designed to surveil the homeland for terrorist activity. In order to protect Americans, the PRISM program covertly collects hundreds of millions of user accounts from companies such as Google, Apple, and Yahoo. Since its creation

in 2007, the program has been the number one source of raw intelligence used for NSA analytic reports. Meanwhile, prisms are tools to provide a better understanding of the nature of light.

Charles Stankievech's *Gravity's Rainbow* (2009) refracts the exhibition. Cleverly, Stankievech's connection to George Hardie's artwork for Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of The Moon* wraps together a meditation on visible light. The spectrum of colours produced by *Gravity's Rainbow* connects phenomenologically to viewing. While the white noise accompanying the work constructs a theme akin to Earth's relationship with extraterrestrial radio contact, like NSA's PRISM, *Gravity's Rainbow* is installed in the background, quietly circumnavigating in order to produce result.

Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen's *1967: A People Kind of Place* (2012) documents the development and inauguration of the world's first UFO landing pad in St. Paul, Alberta. The video's 19-minute collage of sound and footage from Super 8, 16mm, and 35mm films creates an auricular narrative for the exhibition. Adjacent to the video sits an enlarged pigmented inkjet print of the St. Paul landing pad, entitled *Slide* (2012). The image mocks the sterility of Soviet brutalism. Both works strive to critique the paradoxical struggle within Canada's identity, pride for neutrality, and the colonial aspirations to assimilate native cultures. The landing pad becomes

a symbol of the constituent spectrum of ethnicities and races we understand as Canadian. As an optical prism can be used to separate white light into the colours of the rainbow, Nguyen and her reflection on post-colonial doctrine suggests an investigation on the myth of multiculturalism.

Brian Jungen's *Modern Sculpture (After Iceland)* (2005) is a set of four sculptures made of lava rock. Materially, their form coalesces the formation of land and geological phenomena. As earthworks made sellable, Jungen's interest in corporate branding endows the chrome soccer skin the futuristic sensibility needed to fit in the exhibition's thematic. The connection between Jungen's objects and Stankievech's two slides entitled *Astral Projection Charts* (2009) are activated by an aesthetic interest in manufactured material. More importantly, the two 2.7 x 2.7" slides framing scorched NASA space blanket material and space crystal bring together concepts relating both to the failure and illusion of reaching *the last frontier*. From here, Nguyen's *Slide* can now be better understood. While demonstrating the scientific dispersion of light, the exhibition refracts through the use of fiction and the ulterior motives developed in the name of progress.

Jabari Jordan-Walker