



## **CURTIS GRAHAUER**

*As far upriver as you can go before having  
to switch to a pole*

# As far upriver as you can go before having to switch to a pole

Curtis Grahauer's works should be analyzed in layers, from outer crust to inner core. In *As far upriver as you can go before having to switch to a pole* (2015/2018), the outstretched arm of an apparatus counter-balances projector and screen. They are digital conveyors of analog processes, buzzing with electrical charges. Get closer and the video reveals film grain, the mottled shadows left by silver salts in darkroom processes. These dotted textures are not *in* the image, they *are* the image—microscopic filaments that, during exposure and development, shifted on the surface of the photographic emulsion and deeper within. They've overlapped, clumped together or moved apart, now displaying patterns of lightness or darkness that form the compositions in plain sight.

Dust particles are harder to place, appearing as licks of black or white on single fleeting frames, so quick that they trigger doubt—the eye questions what it saw. These tiny specks obstructed every clip as it was shot, or scanned, or clung to the sticky gelatin of negatives as the lengths of film hung to dry. Each passing projected blip could be a wayward slice of grass, or insect fragment, or a technician's hovering merino wool fibre, eyelash, or misplaced noon hour crumb.

Somewhere between the cinematographer and the forms of his subject is a soft haze—attributed to the open air, to the body of the camera in hand, or to the wound up reels of clear acetate or polyester inside. It floats over segments of the footage, faintly perceivable when portions of projected views are a uniform grey. Was it caused by a minor light leak, an unseen source of smoke, or left behind by milky developer residue? Is it owing to lightly fogged film, stretched beyond its date of expiration? It's running cloud lends the steadied picture a swift tempo, even without the flicker of a mechanical shutter.

Now to the imagery, shot entirely in Chilliwack, British Columbia: A pronounced dip in a sloping tree line. A shadowy clearing and the blowing leaves of a towering willow, or a craggy bigleaf maple. A dirt road, fading into the distance, and sprawling transmission towers. Swaying grasses, in and out of focus, parting to reveal glimpses of the highway behind. A winding river and ripples on the surface of still water, and sunlight glinting across car windows. The lustrous hide of grazing cattle, thick with flies, activated by the



swish of a tail, or the thrash of a muscled neck. Condominiums encroaching on a pastoral scene, and the manicured lawn of a wide field, with a scatter of plump and tidy evergreens.

For all of this, an accompanying score—at once correspondent with the action on screen and also detached of it. Distant moans echo over a cracking and wet chorus, reverb and delay heavy. There's a sense that what is heard is known, but has been reduced to a to a halting pace and rendered unfamiliar. Auditory associations move in and out, latching onto visuals and altering interpretation—the camera circumnavigates a mighty trunk to croaking sounds, like an iceberg breaking in slow motion. It pans right, over a wooded area, to a percussive screech—an indecipherable warning or distress call.

Some years ago, Grahauer facilitated a public walking tour of these sites. Attendees hiked the flat, manmade trails of the Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve, overlooking the Vedder River, and traversed the well-groomed mounds of the Kinkora Golf Course. In a scruffy field near Keith Wilson Road, where black cattle nibbled under the shadow of looming real estate developments, we surveyed the earth at our feet. Evidence of a time before poked up from the soil in bits and pieces—plastic remnants, rusted metal and other refuse matter—and we could sense a time thereafter. The condos would inch closer by the year, the cattle would be slaughtered within months, and the weather of the coming days would erase the ridges of our muddy footprints.

An overwhelming awareness of the march of human influence has implicated views of even the most unspoiled landscapes—we know that somewhere ice is melting, rivers are flooding, and forests are burning. Nature is no longer a conceptual refuge. Yet, as our bodies creep closer to our tombs, new growth appears on graveyard heaps—life, in its many forms, is as sure as death. As such, informed viewers will take in Grahauer's landscapes of our current geological epoch with an appropriate mix of admiration, anxiety and awe.

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*Lucien Durey is an artist and writer based in Vancouver.*



**Curtis Grahauer** *As far upriver as you can go before having to switch to a pole*

March 7 - April 14, 2018

ODD Gallery

**CURTIS GRAHAUER** completed his MFA in Interdisciplinary Studies at Simon Fraser University in 2015. His recent exhibitions include *Floodplain* at Dynamo Arts Association, *A Dark Shape on the Horizon* at the Arts Council of New Westminster and *Tidal Pool for Platforms: Coastal City*, a public art project for the City of Vancouver. In 2016, he was shortlisted for the The Lind Prize in photography and he has participated in residencies in Dawson City, Reykjavik and Sointula. He currently lives in Kelowna, B.C.

**ARTIST STATEMENT**

A basic theme in my works is survival. To survive is to overcome stressful and catastrophic events to stay alive, but it is also an everyday adaptation to environmental circumstances. Considering survival as adaptation, I have approached it as a creative process: a way of forcing ingenuity through limited and simple means. This is why I tend towards using scavenged and cheap building materials, as well as analogue photographic equipment, in my work. These materials and tools allow for mistakes to enter during my attempts to recreate and document natural processes of adaptation.

— Curtis Grahauer, 2018

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GALLERY

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