A Riveder le Stelle
Mary Hambleton and Sara MacLean
Curated by Heather Nicol
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La duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e sanza cura aver d’alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch’i’ vidi de le cose belle
che porta ’l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

The Guide and I into that hidden road
Now entered, to return to the bright world;
And without care of having any rest
We mounted up, he first and I the second,
Till I beheld through a round aperture
Some of the beauteous things that Heaven doth bear;
Thence we came forth to rebehold the stars.

Dante Alighieri, Inferno
CANTO XXXIV, LINES 133–139
TYPOLOGY is thrilled and honoured to launch our guest curating program with Heather Nicol’s *A Riveder le Stelle | Mary Hambleton and Sara MacLean*. Aligning perfectly with our stated goal of fostering dialogue through in-depth, highly focused shows, *A Riveder le Stelle* is a deeply personal project for Nicol, and a lens onto a lesser known aspect of her multifaceted practice. As an interdisciplinary artist and curator, Nicol often seeks to bring people together through her work, and through her curatorial projects in particular, to provide opportunities for large groups of artists working across a wide range of disciplines. One such project, notable for its broad scope and ambitious scale, is her 2010 exhibition, *Art School (dismissed)*, which filled the yawning spaces of the then-decommissioned school building we now call home with the work of over fifty artists working in all media.

In contrast, *A Riveder le Stelle (once more, to see the stars)* occupies just one small corner within this now repurposed building, TYPOLOGY’s intimate third floor project space at Artscape Youngplace. Conceived as a virtual conversation, the exhibition seeks to make connections between just three artists (including Nicol herself), separated by time, place, practice—and most poignantly, death. The quotations, comparisons, and conversations herein, both real and imagined, are akin to the images they engage, seeking to pin down and give form to difficult, perhaps ineffable, emotions and ideas. Ultimately I believe Hambleton, MacLean, and Nicol each succeed, in the heartfelt and multifarious ways that they express the curiosity, wonder, terror, and longing we all feel in the face of the unexplained.

Gazing into the teeming void, we seek comfort in communion: *Do you see what I see? How beautiful, how strange...* And with this affirmation, words finally escape us. Perhaps it is only then that we can embrace the uncertainty that silence conveys, through which the artworks may begin to speak for themselves.

Shani K Parsons
TYPOLOGY Projects
As I was developing *A Riveder le Stelle*, I was drawn to the intimate quality of the two adjoining spaces at TYPOLOGY Projects. The venue’s mission of fostering curatorial dialogue also sparked my thinking, resulting in an exhibition that directly embraces conversation. I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the multitudinous nature of my role as exhibition maker.

I am an artist, and I am also a curator. While in many respects these endeavors are distinct, I am fueled by intersections and cross-pollination in the juggling of the two. Site-specific conditions, such as the architecture or geography of an exhibition space, have served as a point of departure in each case. How do the histories and physical properties of exhibition spaces impact the reception of the art that is presented in them?

Another area of overlap between my two practices is found in the sociality of art encounters, be they between people or between people and objects. *A Riveder le Stelle* is conceived as an exhibition-as-conversation featuring the late New York painter Mary Hambleton and the Toronto-based film and installation artist Sara MacLean. Hailing from different nations, generations, and mediums, their work nevertheless manifests striking formal and conceptual correspondences. The scientific gaze (particularly as it relates to diagnostic medicine), relationships between the infinitesimal and the celestial, and a sense of cycle and repetition are among their places of connection.

My professional relationship with these artists is based on a deep appreciation for their work, and a desire to present it in Toronto. But in opposition to the connoisseurship implied in the act of curating their work, my impulse to connect them is influenced by the other roles we’ve played in each others’ lives, including that of fellow artist, friend, social convener, caregiver, and confidante. Pregnancies and births, marriages and breakups, graduations, illness, and even death are among the experiences I have shared with both women, adding layers of complexity to my role as curator. Both Hambleton’s and MacLean’s work directly evidence events in their lives, particularly in the area of health, and this often private territory is afforded a public arena here.
This exhibition has been an opportunity for me to reflect upon my inclination to bring people and art practices together. I want people to see and to hear one another, and this desire for communal intimacy continuously propels me out of the private world of my studio and into extended forms of practice, including curation.

Mary Hambleton was diagnosed with advanced melanoma in 2002. Defying the odds, she lived another seven years, which were full of life, though challenging. The works on view range from 2000 to 2008; Hambleton’s longstanding interest in scientific observation, from biology to astronomy, was expressed through the language of painterly abstraction over her lifetime. After the onset of her illness, she slowly began to include images of extinct species, arcane scientific methods, and then, later, medical scans of her body.

Sara MacLean lives with a rare genetic condition that predisposes her to cancer. This has resulted in ongoing medical interventions and monitoring for diagnostic and research purposes. She uses her scans in her art practice, and references other aspects of the hospital experience through video, photographs, audio, and sculptural forms. In the midst of her creative investigations into the realms of medical systems, MacLean was diagnosed with a pheochromocytoma, which has added a new layer to the cycle of tests and results, surgery, constant waiting, and uncertainty.

Both of these artists are concerned with repetition, layering, masking, cycles, and notions of the medical, or scientific, gaze. Their practices are rooted in the physicality of experience as it approaches the outer limits of apprehension. Their distinct but interrelated fascination with the condition of their bodies extends from their process-driven artistic investigations, and dovetails with their embodied experiences in the face of invisible forces.

The word convergence is defined as a specific meeting place, and as a biological term describes the independent evolution of similar characteristics in species from different territories and lineages. As a conversation in exhibition form, this project embraces encounter, and is a place of convergence between artist and curator, between friends, and between the living and the deceased. Like Dante at the conclusion of his allegorical journey, A Riveder le Stelle aspires to grapple with the substance and wonder of the unknowable, in the company of another.

Heather Nicol
Exhibition Curator
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION
See exhibition checklist on p. 60 for detailed artwork information
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST / INDEX TO IMAGES

Works in the exhibition

SARA MACLEAN
CHROM02, 2014
Video loop installation
Running time 06:30
installation views pp. 22-23, selected stills pp. 24-26; additional stills pp. 1, 70; and installation views pp. 10, 15, 69

MARY HAMBLETON
Untitled, 2008
Collage, polymer, oil, and alkyd on panel
21.5 x 29.5 x 1.5 inches
p. 26

MARY HAMBLETON
Works on paper, 2000-2008
pp. 29-59, installation views, p. 8, 20, 73
listed in roughly chronological order

Untitled, 2002
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
7.5 x 5.5 inches
p. 35

Genesis, 2000
Shellac, charcoal, oil, and acrylic on paper
13 x 9.75 inches
p. 29

Untitled, 2000
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
11 x 7 inches
p. 31

Untitled (Mirus Series), 2000
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
10.5 x 8 inches
p. 33

Untitled (Mirus Series), 2000
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
11.25 x 7.5 inches
p. 39; also p. 14

Untitled (Mirus Series), 2005
Shellac, charcoal, oil, and acrylic on paper
12.25 x 9.25 inches
p. 41

Untitled (Mirus Series), 2006
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
15 x 11 inches
p. 43; detail, front and back covers

Genesis, 2000
Shellac, charcoal, oil, and acrylic on paper
13 x 9.75 inches
p. 29

Untitled, 2004
Charcoal and shellac on paper
7.5 x 5.5 inches
p. 37

Untitled (Mirus Series), 2004
Charcoal, shellac, acrylic, and oil on paper
11.25 x 7.5 inches
p. 39; also p. 14

Core, 2006
Shellac, charcoal, oil, and acrylic on paper
11.25 x 7.5 inches
p. 45

Genesis, 2000
Shellac, charcoal, oil, and acrylic on paper
13 x 9.75 inches
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Core, 2006
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11.25 x 7.5 inches
p. 45
Untitled (PET Series), 2006–2008
Gouache on archival digital print
8.5 x 11 inches (image 7 x 5 inches)
p. 47

Untitled (PET Series), 2006–2008
Gouache on archival digital print
8.5 x 11 inches (image 3 x 3 inches)
p. 49

Untitled (Ballinglen Series), 2008
Ink and gouache on paper
11.25 x 7.5 inches
p. 51

Untitled (Ballinglen Series), 2008
Ink, tea, gouache, and polymer on paper
7.5 x 5.5 inches
p. 53

Untitled (Ballinglen Series), 2008
Ink, gouache, and polymer on paper
7.5 x 5.5 inches
p. 55

Untitled (Ballinglen Series), 2008
Ink, tea, gouache, and polymer on paper
7.5 x 5.5 inches
p. 57

Untitled (PET Series), 2008
Gouache on archival digital print
8.5 x 11 inches (image 7 x 5 inches)
p. 49

MARY HAMBLETON Limited Edition Print
Untitled (PET Series), 2014
Archival digital print on Epson Enhanced Matte paper
Edition of 10, with certificate of authenticity
6 x 9 inches (image 4.5 x 6.25 inches)
see p. 47 for original

SARA MACLEAN Limited Edition Print
CHROMO2 (still), 2014
Archival digital print on Epson Premium Luster paper
Edition of 20, signed and numbered by the artist
6 x 9 inches (image 4.125 x 6.25 inches)
p. 66

Additional works by Mary Hambleton
I’ve always been fascinated by science and the aesthetics of science, how everything breaks down into beautiful parts—cells, molecules, genetic mapping. There has always been a grappling in my work with the philosophies of life—of living and dying, presence and non-presence, being and non-being. Where did we come from and where do we go from here?

Mary Hambleton
In conversation: Mary Hambleton with Ron Janowich
The Brooklyn Rail, March 2004
A Letter, Never Mailed
SARA MACLEAN

Dear Mary,

An important part of my own experience of illness has been to declare that there are infinite possibilities. I do so in defiance of the numeric medical probabilities that are otherwise used to explain the unfathomable, to wager our seemingly narrowing chances. Having said that, writing to you in this manner feels a bit presumptuous and lays bare my inability to formulate in words what I have felt at the core of my being to be true. I think the word for that is “impossible.”

The act of writing carries the risk of amplifying the traditional sense of our separateness, suggesting a distance between us that can’t be traversed, a fundamental difference between the living and the dead. But we’re both here, and I deny that division.

Our paintings, drawings, lights, and sounds are together in this small space, and in endless space. I believe that we are shifting forms of the same matter. Not fixed opposites, but boundless, endless configurations of the smallest and largest things, in constant, varied motion. For lack of a better word, we are both in this way “alive,” and materially present.

We’ve come forth, through a circular passageway one after the other to meet the stars. We are in movement, not stillness, we are beholding, not simply seeing. This is not an act of the eyes or of the ears, but our entire bodies and very essence. I follow just one step behind you, only to continue on in our endless looping motion, from our cells to the stars and back again.

This work is of the body, not the heavens. It enacts another form of passage—between beings and things, the blurring of bodies and the world. My installation engages with the forces that pass through us, glancing off or penetrating our various inner densities, vibrating our cells, and spinning our atoms. It’s an encounter with a great resonance that doesn’t distinguish between flesh and ash, body and air, the organic and the inert.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mary Hambleton (1952–2009) lived in Brooklyn, NY. Solo exhibitions include Leslie Heller Gallery, Pamela Auchincloss Gallery, Littlejohn Contemporary (all in New York), Don Soker Gallery (San Francisco), Victoria Munroe (Boston), The Stewart Center Gallery, Perdue University, (West Lafayette, IN), Machida City Museum (Tokyo) and Knoedler Gallery (London). She was the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial, Adolph Esther Gottlieb Foundation, and two Pollock-Krasner awards.

Sara MacLean’s art practice flows from, through, and to the body. Working with embodied camera techniques alongside darkroom experiments, sculpture and set design, she creates subtly choreographed spaces that offer a physical encounter with her time-based media projections. The work develops from observations of multiple and individual bodies in movement; from everyday quotidian actions to embodied responses to crisis. She enacts the impossibility of stillness, and considers the porous, slippery boundaries between our bodies, our surroundings, and each other. Dance, gesture, and material practice intermingle in an exploration of our shared physical experience in space and time. Sara’s films and installations have been exhibited at International Film Festival Rotterdam, Anthology Film Archives (New York), Exis Experimental Film & Video Festival (Seoul), and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, among others.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Heather Nicol is a Toronto-based artist and independent curator. Her site-specific installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally, including The Allan Lambert Galleria–Brookfield Place and Union Station–Nuit Blanche (Toronto), SculptureCenter and The Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York), Chateau de Courannces (France), and Kunsterhaus Betanien (Berlin). In March 2015 a public art commission will reopen New York City’s grand Wintergarden atrium, opposite the new World Trade Center. Consistent with her art practice, her independent curatorial projects have explored site conditions specific to transitional, underutilized and repurposed locations, and include makingROOM, and Art School (dismissed) (Toronto). Currently on view is Running On Empty at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Oshawa, Ontario).

www.heathernicol.com
ABOUT TYPOLOGY

TYPOLOGY is a not-for-profit project space devoted to curatorial and artistic experimentation in the production of exhibitions, editions, and related events. Providing opportunities for independent curators and participating artists to mount fully realized exhibitions within a critical framework, TYPOLOGY seeks to build curatorial community and resources for the exchange of ideas on art and exhibition-making as a way to engage and inform audiences from all walks of life.

Opened in 2013 by independent curator and exhibition designer Shani K Parsons, TYPOLOGY’s program emphasizes highly focused projects with an eye toward making cross-disciplinary connections between artists, art forms, ideas, images, objects, and environments. Through our publishing program, projects are documented in an exhibition catalogue with original curatorial writing. Affordable limited-edition prints are also produced in collaboration with exhibiting artists as an invitation to entry-level as well as experienced collectors. Through an inclusive and varied program of events and workshops, TYPOLOGY seeks to enrich the exhibition experience and encourage active audience participation in our projects and programming.

www.typology.ca

Director’s Bio

Since the mid-90s, Shani K Parsons has pursued a multidisciplinary practice focused on exhibition-making—initially through the lenses of architecture and urban planning, then graphic and exhibition design, and most recently through writing, curation, research, and collaboration. In the process she has produced an eclectic body of work ranging from intimate book works and publications to immersive installations and exhibitions for venues including the American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Rhode Island School of Design and RISD Museum, the Museum of Chinese in America (MoCA NY), and Mixed Greens, a contemporary art gallery in Chelsea.

After nearly a decade of living and working in New York, Shani moved to Toronto with her family. Bringing together her experience in all aspects of exhibition-making—as artist, designer, critic, and curator—she is building a hybrid space for collaborative and cross-disciplinary experimentation, an independent venue for exhibitions on all forms of local and international contemporary culture.

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CATALOGUE DESIGN
Shani K Parsons

PHOTOGRAPHY
CHROMO2 stills by Sara MacLean
Exhibition views and Mary Hambleton artwork scans by Shani K Parsons

All images courtesy the artists and TYPOLOGY

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