Alex McLeod
GHOST STORIES
April 11 - June 8, 2019

Division Gallery Toronto is proud to present *GHOST STORIES* an exhibition by Toronto-based artist Alex McLeod.

GHOST STORIES explores notions of connectivity between the technological and organic, focusing specifically on perceived ideas of digital life cycles. If digital creations are deemed 'finished' or 'complete' after being processed or rendered, McLeod's characters are ghosts of the process — shadows of the data that made them. Through print, animation, and sculpture, *GHOST STORIES* puts forward compelling, and seemingly optimistic narratives from the digital grave.

By spotlighting elements that would normally sit on the peripherals of online games, McLeod serves as a champion of rejected or unwanted pixels. In past projects, the artist focused on two building blocks: first developing alluring environments, then inhuman characters to populate the grounds. Specifically McLeod gave prominence to virtual NPCs or 'Non-Player Characters'. These NPCs take the shape of clumsy, endearing characters whose objectives are to play antagonist or act as bystander for players to nominally interact with. By giving these characters the spotlight, as well as distinctive personalities, McLeod challenges our capacity to sympathize, or empathize, with non-sentient creatures. Furthering this inquiry, McLeod poses *GHOST STORIES*, a hypothetical funerary exhibition for dead characters, pixels, and codes — positing can these zeroes-and-ones die, and how best can we memorialize and honour them?

McLeod's animations display micro-environments where anthropomorphized forms are granted the gift of motion. Devoid of any urgency, their slight shifts, breaths, and twists affirm simple priorities dedicated to tactile pursuits. Equally lovable and lethargic, these creatures roam utopic environments — seemingly

content to live out simple routines. With these videos, McLeod considers the implications of playing creator, and questions how we engage with digital characters on a daily basis online in games, marketing, and design.

GHOST STORIES is McLeod's first and most ambitious venture going beyond digital tools to render works, finishing the sculptures hewn in paint, flocking, and textiles. These works, although eternally-frozen are granted tangible bodies in the analog world, and further effaces the line between what can be defined as 'real' or 'fake'. McLeod fully embraces the unpredictable nature of the mixed processes. Reinforcing the characters as relatable, flawed beings, the artist welcomes their shortcomings as poetic character quirks, further reminding us of their vulnerabilities and mortality.

Attempting to situate McLeod's practice into a conceptual oeuvre, *GHOST STORIES* resists easy classifications of Post-Internet Art. Counterintuitively Post-Internet Art refers not to art created *after* the internet, but *during* this internet-saturated moment. If the movement can be defined most-basically as an evaluation of the internet's effects on arts and culture, McLeod's work feels remarkably optimistic — somehow running parallel to the movement, celebrating the rejects and digital scraps that designers frequently hide or throw away. Through this upbeat outlook, *GHOST STORIES* veils criticality with saccharine environments and colours, revelling in the new technological methods we have at our avail to create these new, alternative worlds.

Alex McLeod has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Ontario College of Art and Design (2007), and a Masters of Digital Media (2016) from Ryerson University. McLeod's print and video work is collected by several major corporate and government institutions, including Global Affairs Canada/ Affaires Mondiales Canada. Recent achievements include his first solo exhibition in New York City, at Postmasters Gallery in November 2018, and the award of several major public artwork commissions. Including the Davenport Diamond: Guideway Integrated Artwork (2.8 km) in Toronto, by Metrolinx, their largest commission to date.

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Special Presentation
SONGS
May 8th, 7 PM
A Part of Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival

Running in tandem with the exhibition, Division Gallery Toronto is proud to present a special event for CONTACT Photography Festival 2019: a collaboration between Alex McLeod and acclaimed, Chicago-based opera singer Meghan Lindsay. The one-night only performance will recontextualize selected historical arias into an immersive virtual setting, affording new meaning and interpretation to our auditory and visual senses. Alongside the event, *GHOST STORIES* will remain on view.

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