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<sup>1</sup> Bracken Hanuse Corlett, *INSURGENCE/RESURGENCE*, exhibition catalogue (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2017): 80.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

rights to crests, stories, names and dances.

asked Hanuse Corlett to become the family researcher, taking on the responsibility to learn about the conversing with his uncle who holds knowledge of Wukinuvx culture, language and protocols. His uncle the Hosumdas chieftainship of Ted Walkus. Hanuse Corlett danced in the ceremony and spent time Raven House-Front Pole in the collection of the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver and recognises in front of the community's big house. Carved by Roy Henry Vickers, the pole is a re-creation of the and spiritual systems. The Walkus family held the event to celebrate the raising of the Hosumdas Pole ceremonies and feasting associated with yaqva are integral to the community's governance, cultural used along the west coast of what is now known as Canada. In Wuk'ala, this word is "yaqva" and the Walkus family. The word "potlatch" means "to give" and comes from the Chinook trade jargon formerly In July 2018, Hanuse Corlett travelled to the village of Wukinuvx to attend a Potlatch held by the

Following his uncle's request, the artist describes his process in the following terms: "I have been researching, studying, starting into space, erasing, crossing out, and cutting and pasting to bring this crest back to our family."<sup>4</sup> This statement exemplifies Hanuse Corlett's artistic practice more broadly, which is continually shifting between mediums, eschewing easy commodification in favour of processes that are more collaborative and often ephemeral or experiential, such as mural painting and audio-visual performance. *Qwiltix* similarly moves in this direction as it both bridges and exceeds the space of the gallery (as well as its status as an artwork per se) via its origin and function within community as well as its combination of digital and customary forms.

was meant" to destabilise our cultural practices and connection to the spirit and to the land."<sup>2</sup> Colonial ruptures such as the Potlatch Ban (1885–1951) sent Indigenous communities underground, and "Much of our old work and regalia was destroyed or taken and our crest were lost from memory."<sup>1</sup> Hanuse Corlett designed the crest at the request of his uncle, Dennis Hanuse. As the artist explains, family of the Wukinuvx Nation, located in River's Inlet on the central coast of British Columbia. Bracken The crest depicted on *Qwiltix* (2018)—the Wuk'ala word for "dance blanket"—belongs to the Hanuse

## Tarah Hogue

## Dancing Transformation



# Bracken Hanuse Corlett

## *The Commute*

22 September–22 December 2018



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<sup>4</sup> Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent, *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth* (Hazelton: Kitano Northwest Coast Indian Arts Society: 1986), 3.

<sup>5</sup> The Book Builders of 'Ksan, "Gitksan ceremonial robes," in Ibid., 74.

<sup>6</sup> Dempsey Bob quoted in "Responses: The Blanket Makers' Stories" in Ibid., 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hanuse Corlett.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

*Qwiltix* shows Kwilus, the Hanuse family crest, in their Thunderbird form, wings outstretched and talons clutching Sisiutl, the double-headed sea serpent. Kwilus is a transformer who becomes human when their feathers get too hot on their skin. The image of a Thunderbird shedding its feathers resonates with the meaning of the Hanuse name in Wuk'ala, which translates to "he who dances naked."<sup>7</sup> Being wrapped in the family crest, Hanuse Corlett explains, means "being protected under the blanket... the ancestors know who we are when we wear them."<sup>8</sup> Yet he muses, "I sometimes wonder what it would be like to dance naked within ceremony, unfettered by the colonial gaze. When I think about out potlatch system—if one was naked they would have given away all their possessions."<sup>9</sup> The redistribution of

Whether representative of poles or house fronts, the button robe is a deeply significant and powerful marker of naming, family, and community. Tahitan and Tlingit artist Dempsey Bob describes how, Our people say, when we wear our blankets, we show our face. We show who we are and where we come from. When we dance, we share part of our history with our people. It's more than just what you see when you look at a blanket. To us, it has so much meaning. The blankets become very personal.<sup>6</sup>

According to the extensive research conducted by Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent for the 1986 exhibition and publication *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth*, "The traditional, crest-style button blanket is the sister of the totem pole and, like the pole, proclaims hereditary rights, obligations, and powers."<sup>4</sup> The Book Builders of 'Ksan, a collective of Gitksan Elders, suggest a slightly alternative theory: The red borders are the wooden frame and roof on all types [of button robes]. The break at the neck is the smoke hole [of the longhouse] in the crest-type robe... There are no bottom borders because the old houses did not have wooden floors. The crests on the blanket parallel the crests on the house front. The chief who heads the House, the chief who "wears" the name to which the house and crests belong, is both protector and protected.<sup>5</sup>

## Upcoming Events

- 29 September Queer Pride: Closing Symposium & Celebration
- 4 October First Thursdays, Carol McGregor
- 6 October Book Launch, Ryan Presley: *Prosperity*

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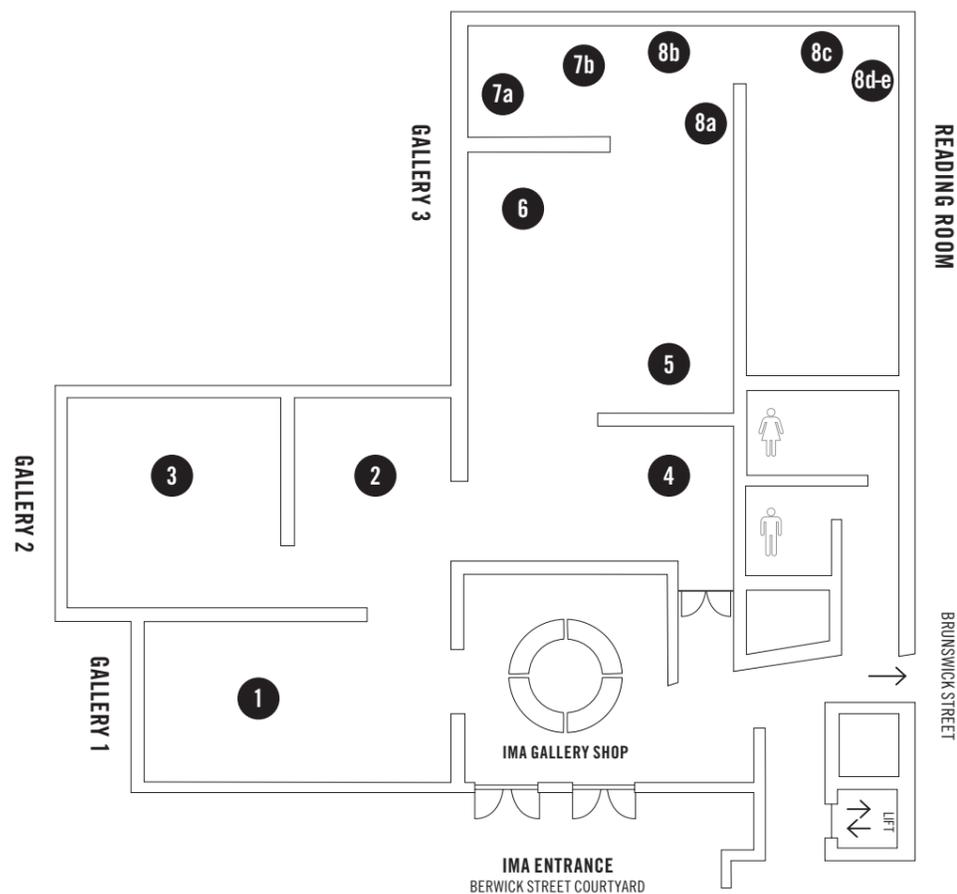
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## Exhibition Map



wealth that is central to the potlatch's economic function—to yaqva (give) for the betterment of the community, is also an aspect of Kvulus who carries an egg on their head, signifying the family's duty to look out for others. This is a role Hanuse Corlett is stepping into as the family researcher as he gifts the crest back to his family. Encouraged by his uncle Dennis to "research and employ Wuikinuxv iconography," the artist has been driven to connect with other knowledge holders in the community as well as visiting Wuikinuxv belongings in museum collections. The dance blanket itself was sewn by Hanuse Corlett's aunt, Rose Hanuse, who produces the majority of the family's robes for ceremony.

The interior of *Qvùtix* doubles as a projection screen, enlivening the blanket as it would be when adorning its wearer. The animation reflects the button robe as being representative of the longhouse, outlining the walls and roof of the structure, which contains a central fire. Moonlight shines in from the smoke hole, illuminating a figure who—naked and tattooed with the image of a Thunderbird head—carefully delivers an egg to the fire's heat, initiating a supernatural transformation. The activation of the dance blanket by the digital animation signals Hanuse Corlett's renewal and innovation of Wuikinuxv forms both in continuity with the past and with a vision toward the future.

**Bracken Hanuse Corlett** (Wuikinuxv, Klahoose) is an interdisciplinary artist who has studied Northwest Coast art, carving and design. His work fuses painting and drawing with digital-media, audio-visual performance, animation and narrative. He has received recent public art commissions from the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Mural Festival, and is a recipient of the BC Creative Achievement Award for First Nations Art.

**Tarah Hogue** (Métis, Dutch) is a curator, writer and uninvited guest on xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ilwətaʔ4 (Tseil-Waututh) territories/Vancouver, B.C. Her work engages collaborative methodologies and a careful attentiveness to place in order to decentre colonial modes of perception within institutional spaces. She is the inaugural Senior Curatorial Fellow, Indigenous Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

**GALLERY 1**  
1 **Carol McGregor**, *Skin Country*, 2018  
Possum skins, charcoal, ochre, binder medium, waxed thread

**GALLERY 2**  
2 **Bracken Hanuse Corlett**, *Qvùtix (Dance Blanket)*, 2018  
Akoya, abalone, and mussel shell buttons, wool, digital animation, 2:00

3 **Ahilapalapa Rands**, *Lift Off*, 2018  
3-channel animation, 3:25

**GALLERY 3**  
4 **Chantal Fraser**, *The Way*, 2018  
Wind turbine, generator, rhinestones, steel

5 **Hannah Brontë**, *FUTCHA ANCIENT*, 2018  
Lightboxes, photographic prints, textiles, ink, shell

6 **Lisa Hilli**, *Sisterhood Lifeline*, 2018  
Latex ink on wallpaper, inkjet print on cotton rag paper, office partitions, iMac, office telephone with vocal recordings, books, Post-It notes, pens, swivel chair

7a) **Natalie Ball**, *When Harry met Sally. I mean, when my Mom met my Dad. I mean, when my Ancestors met my Ancestors. I mean, when a Lace Front met Smoked Skin*, 2018  
Beaded elk hide moccasins, synthetic lace front wig, shell beads, metal pins, sinew thread, tube sock

7b) **Natalie Ball**, *I Bind You Nancy*, 2018  
Coyote skull with lower jaw, sinew thread, vintage plastic dolls, beaded deer hide moccasins

8a) **T'uy'tanat Cease Wyss**, *K'axwch'k Nexw7'á'yulh (Turtle Journeys)*, from the *Sacred Teachings* series, 2018  
HD video, 5:59

8b) **T'uy'tanat Cease Wyss**, *Shkweh Wéwshkem Nexw7'á'yulh (To Explore, To Travel by Canoe)*, 2018  
Lau hala, coconut hull fibre, sea gress, red cedar bark, wool, abalone shell, and mother of pearl buttons

**READING ROOM**  
8c) **T'uy'tanat Cease Wyss**, *Sk'éytl'tanaj (Medicinal Plants)*, from the *Sacred Teachings* series, 2018  
Indigenous plant medicines gathered in Coast Salish, Kānaka Maoli, and Greater Brisbane Aboriginal lands

8d) **T'uy'tanat Cease Wyss**, *K'axwch'k Nexw7'á'yulh (Turtle Journeys)*, from the *Sacred Teachings* series, 2018  
360-degree VR video, 5:59

8e) **T'uy'tanat Cease Wyss**, *Nexwníw Tkwi Sxwí7shen (Teachings from the Deer)*, from the *Sacred Teachings* series, 2018  
360-degree VR video, 6:08