TERMS

PART 1

FALL 2022

Investment

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PART 1

After focusing on the notions of "vulnerability" and "service," the third edition of *Terms* reflects on the meanings and uses of the word "investment." Finding its roots from the Latin noun "*vestis*," which means "clothing," the verb "to invest" refers etymologically to the act of dressing oneself, putting on a garment or accessory, or to the process of covering or surrounding. In the Middle Ages, the word took on the meaning of "to put in possession" of something, such as property, rights, responsibilities or specific powers. The term also came to define a military strategy of encircling or invading a territory or, more abstractly, a tactical advantage over an adversary.

TERMS

INVESTMENT

Nowadays, the word "investment" is used in the sense of a placement of capital, or an expenditure of time or energy with an expectation of profit. We invest in stocks, a house, education, a business, even in a relationship or in our health, anticipating different sets of risks and advantages. The lucrative pursuit of an investment is often implicit in our current usage of the word, reflecting a logic of development based on rates of return, increase in value, and ownership. Can investment be dissociated from capitalism today, and if so, on what criteria is it based? This edition of *Terms* reflects on the principles and assumptions on which we shape our understanding of investment, and the methods by which we can start to expand it.

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This first of the two-part issue interrogates the meaning of the word through the intersecting lenses of economic development, land ownership and settler occupation. It considers how our understanding of "investment" is shaped by the interests of neoliberal capitalism as well as historical processes of territorial dispossession pursued by the colonial regime. Five stamp-pad ink works by artist Greg Curnoe are featured in this issue, linking texts by Clifford Gordon Atleo, Assistant Professor at the School of Resource and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University, and by Stacy A. Ernst, PhD candidate in Cultural Mediations at Carleton University.

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1. I am offering one Indigenous perspective, that of a 49-year-old straight, cisgender man who is from two Indigenous communities (Kitselas and Ahousaht) on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada. There is great diversity among Indigenous peoples, and I am not advocating for a pan-Indigenous perspective but instead provide examples from specific Indigenous thinkers and nations.

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When I initially thought about 'investment,' what came to mind was the obvious: retirement savings, the stock market, and real estate. I recently came across an advertisement that encouraged people to invest in their future by enrolling in a college program. Today these seem like universal conceptions of investments, but an Indigenous perspective[1] may yield important differences in how we understand this term's relationship to economics and education. Having spent 27 years in school, one could say that I have 'invested' heavily in my future, but I sometimes feel ambivalent about my educational 'investment,' even though I have spent the bulk of my academic career critiquing capitalism from my own Indigenous perspective. Indigenous peoples in Canada have had fraught relationships with Western education, especially considering the intergenerational legacy of residential schools. While I respect my ancestors who advocated for my right and ability to pursue education in Canadian institutions, I also feel sadness, shame, and anger about the endangerment of Indigenous cultures, languages, epistemologies, and lands due to colonization.

I believe an investment is something that we value—time, effort, money—and contribute to with the hopes of

2. Ella Cara Deloria, *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), xxxiv.

a 'return' of some kind. This return need not be monetary, although this is often how people measure it today. I have heard elders in my community talk about being 'wealthy' if they had lots of grandchildren. They felt that it did not matter how much money a person had if their family was large, happy, and healthy. There is a perception that Settler cultures are obsessed with money, and that Indigenous people place a higher value on family. Of course, every culture values family, but there are important differences in how we understand wealth and investment. One key difference is that Indigenous societies tend to invest more in collective wellbeing than individual-orientated liberal societies. Yankton Dakota anthropologist Ella Cara Deloria wrote that to be a good Indigenous person was to be "a good relative."[2] In addition to placing an emphasis on relationality, many Indigenous teachings reinforce values critical to community harmony.

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer, scholar, and musician Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes the Ojibwe concept of mino-bimaadiziwin as "the good life" or "continuous rebirth." She writes, "We are not simply born Nishnaabeg... We must commit to living

3. Leanne Simpson, "Our Elder Brothers: The Lifeblood of Resurgence," in *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2008), 73-74. Emphasis added.

4. John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

5. Clifford Gordon Atleo, "Change and Continuity in the Political Economy of the Ahousaht" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, PhD in Political Science, 2018), 178.

the good life each day... We must *live* our knowledge."[3] Simpson reminds us that Indigenous knowledges cannot be sustained in an archive or book, but must be lived and renewed through our actions. In a similar way, legal scholar John Borrows (Chippewas of the Nawash) speaks about the importance of embodying the seven Anishinaabe grandmother and grandfather teachings of love, truth, bravery, humility, wisdom, honesty, and respect.[4] These foundational teachings provide another way of thinking about collective values worth investing in.

In many potlatch cultures on the west coast, a chief's wealth was measured not by how much they accumulated and saved, but by how much they were able to *give away*. Food and other necessities were redistributed so that each community member was provided for. This was part of a complex political economic system that allowed chiefs to "potlatch until broke."[5] In this context, "broke" means that a chief was able to give away all their material wealth, thus becoming "poor" in the process, and yet the collective cycle of sharing would continue, guided by principles of reciprocity. Under neoliberal capitalism, however, as political theorist Wendy Brown notes, most of us are "isolated," "persistently in peril," and "vulnerable" to

6. Wendy Brown, "Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics," *Constellations* 23, 1 (2016): 3.

7. For some Indigenous academic commentary on this debate see: Wanda Wuttunee, *Living Rhythms: Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience and Vision* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Duane Champagne, *Social Change and Cultural Continuity Among Native Nations* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007); Robert J. Miller, *Reservation "Capitalism:" Economic Development in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013); and David Newhouse, "Modern Aboriginal Economies: Capitalism with a Red Face," *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 1, 2 (2000): 55-61.

8. Calvin Helin, *Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success Through Self-Reliance* (Vancouver: Orca Spirit Publishing, 2006), 235.

9. Clifford Gordon Atleo, "Aboriginal Capitalism: Is Resistance Futile or Fertile?" *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 9, no. 2 (2015): 41-51.

the whims of the market and precarity of everyday life.[6] In its various incarnations, capitalism commonly prioritizes private property, individualism, (supposedly) free markets, and profit maximization. There is considerable debate whether these priorities are consistent with or counter to Indigenous values.[7] For Clarence Louie, longtime chief of the Osoyoos Indian band, "economic development is how we hunt today."[8] Considering himself a pragmatist, Chief Louie emphasizes the importance of self-reliance. Capitalism must be contended with despite being one of the means by which Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of territory and resources.[9] As Onondaga professor David Newhouse opines, "We simply have no choice."[10] Certainly, some Indigenous scholars[11] advocate for a turn away from the colonial state and economy, but capitalism remains ubiquitous, and I believe that it must be navigated—but it need not be 'embraced.'

Many Indigenous ways of learning and knowing are not consistent with settler-colonial understandings of knowledge and education. There is no starker example of this than the legacy of Indian residential schools in Canada, which tore Indigenous children from their families. It severely damaged our relationships with

10. David R. Newhouse, "Resistance is Futile: Aboriginal Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism," in *Ethics and Capitalism*, ed. John Bishop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 147.

11. See Glen Coulthard (2008), Audra Simpson (2014), Leanne Simpson (2011), and Jeff Corntassel (2012).

12. Examples include the 1995 final report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (especially the 2007 report *Sharing Canada's Prosperity: A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out*), The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development founded in 1987, and the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona founded in 2001.

each other, lands, and traditions. Although colonization occurred at different times, paces, and intensities for different Indigenous people, what is relatively consistent is the domination of Settler worldviews and institutions. Most Indigenous peoples have lost their traditional and adaptive livelihoods. To put food on the table now usually requires engaging with capitalism and investing in Settler educational institutions. Canadian society can be overwhelming, but Indigenous people work hard to remain connected to their communities and traditional teachings. This can include land and water defender movements, language and culture revitalization efforts, and the resurgence of traditional governance systems. Many political and economic initiatives[12] have intertwined education and economics in a capitalist-friendly way, but Indigenous people remain ambivalent, and struggle to re-centre their own communal teachings.

Canada has long relied on large-scale resource extraction from Indigenous territories to fuel its economy. Even while trying to reconcile the assertion of Crown title and unceded Indigenous territories, Settler governments and police forces work tirelessly to maintain a welcoming 'investment climate,' at times ignoring Indigenous rights

13. Jesse Snyder, "'We are going to get the pipeline built': Trudeau begins federal talks with Kinder Morgan to guarantee Trans Mountain," *National Post*, April 15, 2018.

14. Delgamuukw v The Queen, note 40 at 165, December 11, 1997.

15. ie. Public Safety Canada, "Canada's Critical Infrastructure," https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/crtcl-nfrstrctr/cci-iec-en.aspx.

16. Anne Spice, "Heal the People, Heal the Land: An Interview with Freda Huson," in *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NODAPL Movement*, ed. Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

and land title and other times negotiating asymmetrical agreements with impoverished communities. The Canadian government went as far as purchasing an oil pipeline to ensure its completion. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated: "We are going to get the pipeline built. It is a project in the national interest... This project will go ahead."[13] The courts have also struggled with the recognition of Aboriginal title, but have outlined criteria for "justifiable infringement,"[14] which includes a whole array of loopholes that have allowed resource extraction to continue. Canada's priority is that business must go on: critical infrastructure[15] and profits must be protected. The long-time Unist'ot'en land defender Freda Huson offers a different perspective: Wet'suwet'en 'critical infrastructure' is their intact homelands and waters, and all the life within.[16] For many Indigenous peoples, investing in place is not about short-term profits. Our investments must *protect* our homelands, peoples, and ways of living for future generations. Thus far, Settler society has not achieved sustainability in the same sense.

There is a well-known principle originating with the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace: the Seven Generations principle. We must plan so that our people

17. Kayanesenh Paul Williams, *Kayanerenkó:wa: The Great Law of Peace* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018).

seven generations from now can continue to live sustainably.[17] When I worked for my home tribal council in the early 2000s, one of my uncles, Sennen Charleson from Hesquiaht, also used to implore our people to truly think and plan long term. I remember him saying that we should plan with the next 500 hundred years in mind—about 25 generations. That might sound ridiculous to some people now as it did to some then, but he was not simply being hyperbolic. At a time when many of us have grown accustomed to instant gratification (scrolling and swiping, same-day deliveries), planning for the next 500 years would require a radical paradigm shift. In terms of investments, planning on a 500-year timeline reminds us of our intergenerational connections and obligations: that we honour our ancestors by making mindful decisions that will impact those yet to be born.

Someday, we will be the ancestors who acted foolishly or wisely. Our efforts today, while seeming small and insignificant in the face of overwhelming challenges like climate change or settler colonialism, if projected over a long enough timeline, have the potential to play a small but crucial part in a much longer legacy. Visualize a course correction of a single degree in the present

18. Jeannette Armstrong, "A Single Strand: The Nsyilxcin Speaking People's Tmixw Knowledge as a Model for Sustaining a Life-Force Place," in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*, ed. Melissa K. Nelson and Dan Shilling (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 95.

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time. The angle is very narrow at first, but over succeeding generations, it has the capacity to make much larger impacts. I find this realization both humbling *and* empowering. Small investments now, rooted in principles of respect, generosity, reciprocity, and empathetic foresight, have the potential to bring about perpetual positive change. This requires that we re-think what we value and make investments that sustain life, rather than destroy it. Syilx Okanagan activist and educator Jeannette Armstrong writes, "The Syilx social matrix reveals knowledge that whole-system regeneration is grounded in an ethic for which the fundamental requirement is non-destructive land use."[18] That is the world I want to invest in for my children.

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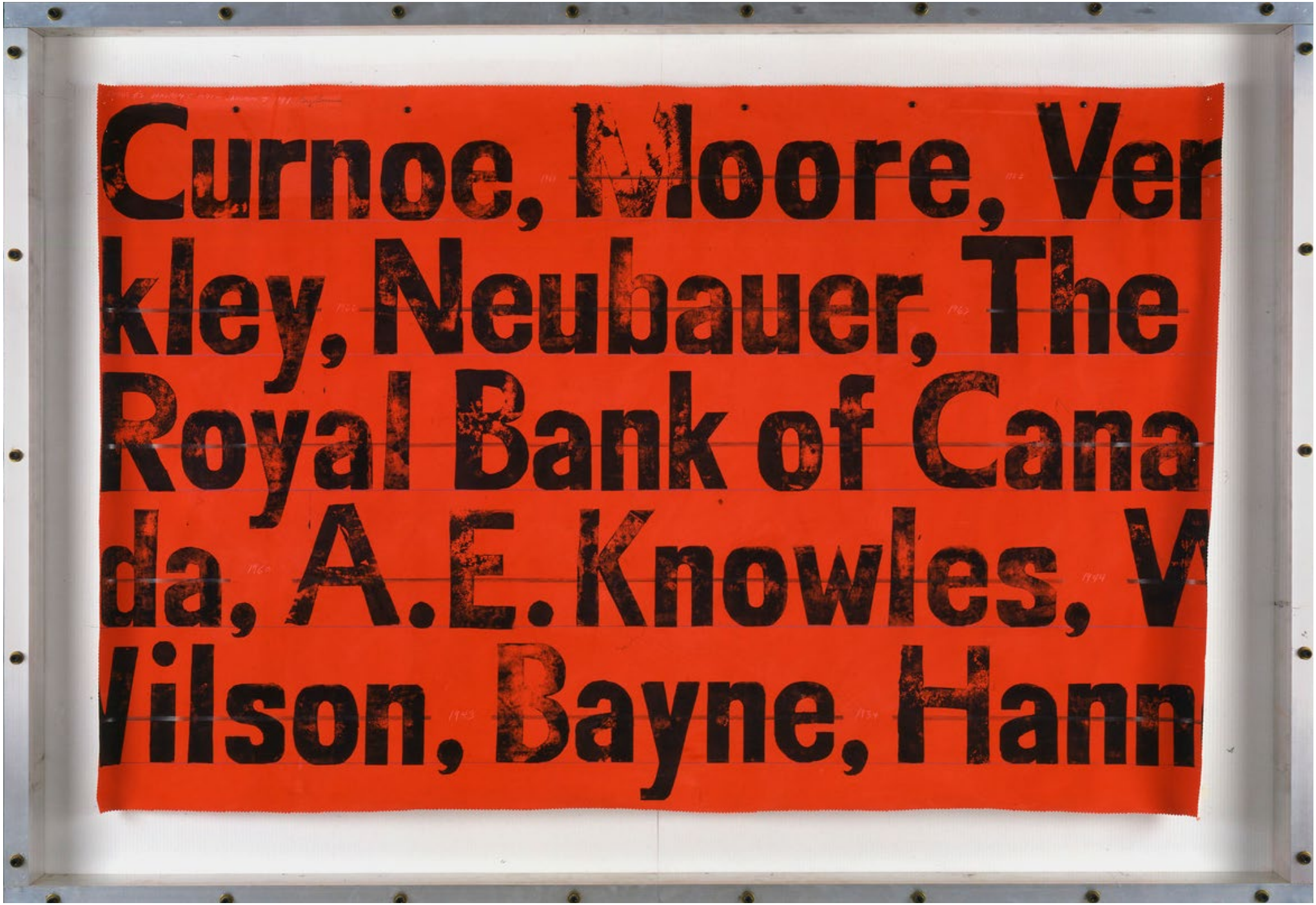
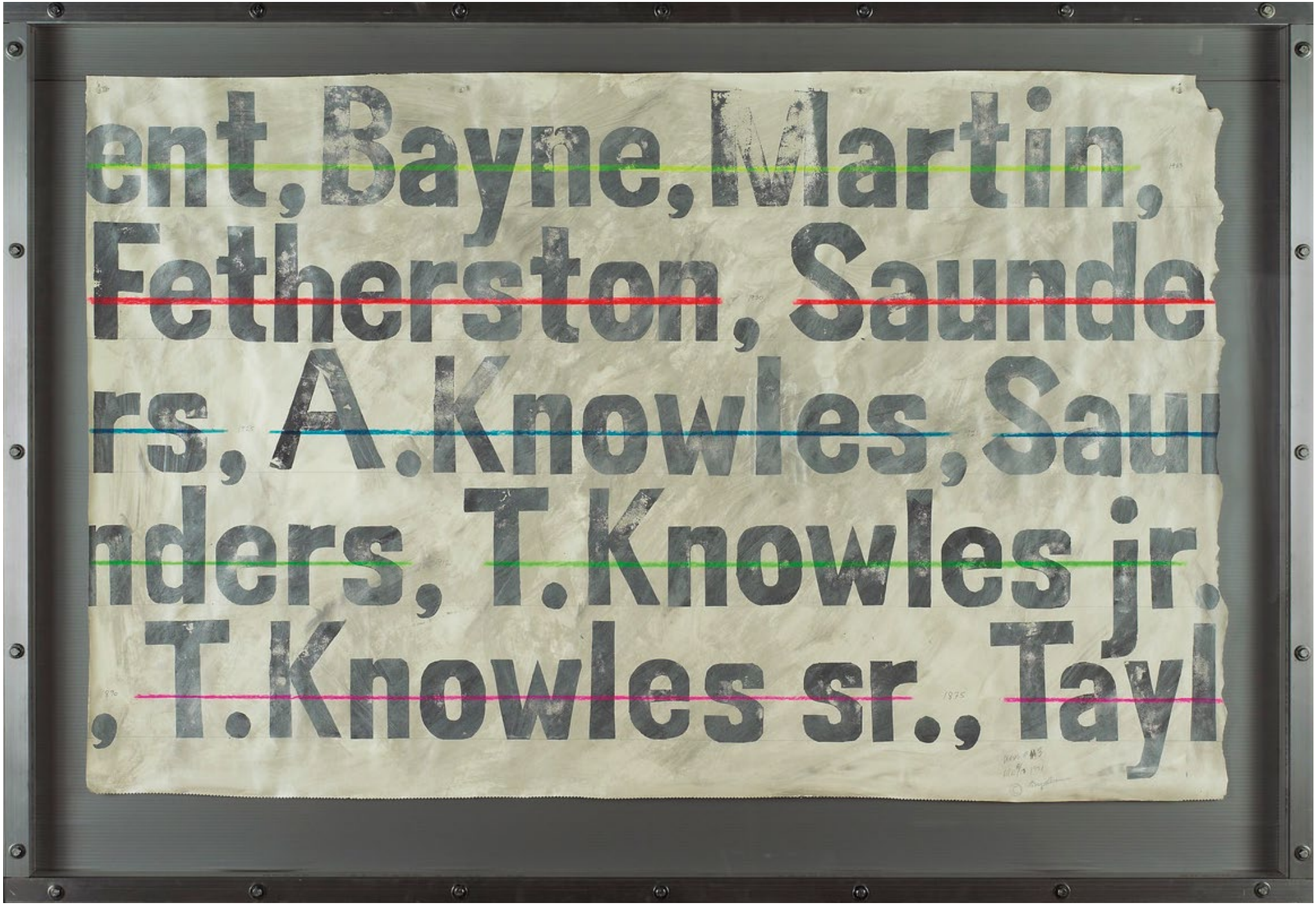
Greg Curnoe
Deeds

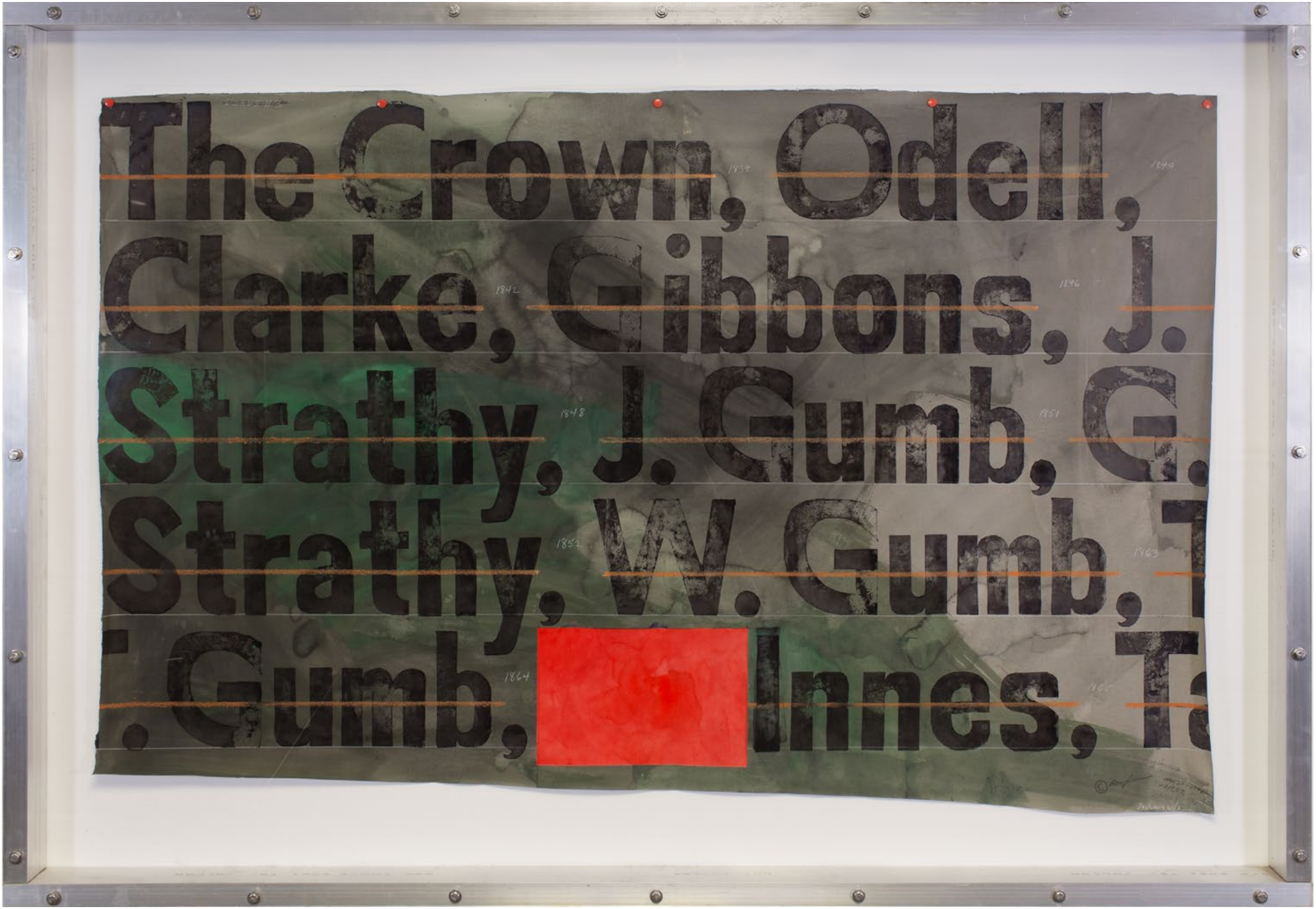
Greg Curnoe, *(Mis)deeds #1*, December 5, 1990 – January 9, 1991, stamp-pad ink, gouache and blueprint pencil on paper, 108 x 162.6 cm.
Private collection, Toronto. Photo and courtesy Michael Gibson Gallery © Estate of Greg Curnoe / SOCAN (2022)



Greg Curnoe, *Deeds #2*, January 5 – 7, 1991, stamp-pad ink, graphite, blue and white coloured pencil and gouache on paper, 108 x 168.9 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Purchased with funds donated by AGO Members, 2003, 2003/1366. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario.



Greg Curnoe, *Deeds #3*, April 15 – 17, 1991, stamp-pad ink over graphite with metallic acrylic paint, fluorescent wax crayon and India ink on paper, 107.4 x 171 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Purchased with funds donated by AGO Members, 2004, 2004/44. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario.



Greg Curnoe, *Deeds #4*, January 21, 1991 – March 3, 1992, watercolour, graphite and stamp-pad ink on paper, 102 x 165 cm. Collection of The Canada Life Assurance Company, 1994.
Photo: Jennifer Martin. Courtesy of The Canada Life Assurance Company © Estate of Greg Curnoe/SOCAN (2022)

Greg Curnoe, *Deeds #5*, August 19-22, 1991, stamp-pad ink, poster paint, graphite and watercolour on paper, 110 x 168 cm.
Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Acquired with funds from the Volunteer Committee to the Winnipeg Art Gallery and The Winnipeg Art Gallery Foundation Inc. G-94-238.
Photo: Ernest Mayer. Courtesy of WAG-Quamajuq. © Estate of Greg Curnoe/SOCAN (2022)

Stacy A. Ernst *Decolonization on Weston Street.* Deeds *by Greg Curnoe*

Investment is a contribution made in the hope of acquiring a return. Perhaps it is the financial meaning that comes to mind when faced with this term, but dedicating oneself through the contribution of less tangible things like time or effort to achieve a result is also an investment. In 1967, artist Greg Curnoe made a financial investment in a piece of land located at 38 Weston Street in London, Ontario. In acquiring a deed for the land, Curnoe and his wife Sheila made a home and in the attached studio the artist grew his art practice. His 1991-1992 watercolour series, *Deeds,* lists the names of those who made a similar financial investment through their ownership of the property before the Curnoe's. *Deeds* thus chronicles the process of land made into property through what authors Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker call "settler structures of invasion."[1] However, when *Deeds* is contextualized within the larger research and writing project it is a part of, Curnoe's investment in what is now recognized as a process of decolonization becomes apparent.

In 1980 and again 1990, two small disagreements regarding the western and eastern boundaries of 38 Weston Street caused Curnoe to investigate the history of his property. His curiosity was further piqued when his

1. Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker explain that settler societies are built through three structures of invasion: space, systems, and stories. Space is the act of creating space for settlers by removing Indigenous people; systems include everything from schooling, to laws, to banking, to social norms that shape settler society; and finally, stories are what settlers tell themselves about who they are both formally and informally. These stories often downplay the violence that brought settler society into existence. See Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, Manitoba and Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2015), 31.

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son Galen found a fragment of lithograph stone buried in the hillside.[2] His interest in the lot resulted in two posthumously published texts, *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot* (1995) and *Deeds/Nations* (1996), and two groups of artworks, *Deeds* (1991-1992) and *It Is I* (1992).[3] It is impossible to consider the painted series *Deeds* without the texts. As Curnoe explained, "*Deeds* involves rubber stamp works, a lot of written material, archeological and archival research, and oral histories."[4] *Deeds* streamlines the knowledge Curnoe brought together over the course of two years spent meticulously researching the deeds, abstracts, and stories that intersect at 38 Weston Street and the surrounding London area. This work led Curnoe to question the process by which his investment in 38 Weston Street depended on the seizure of land from the First Nations people who had lived with it since time immemorial.[5]

The brick and wood structure located at 38 Weston Street was built in 1891 by the Knowles and Company Lithographers. The Knowles family name appears five times across the *Deeds* works, in *#1, #2,* and *#3*, indicating multigenerational family ownership of the lot. Over the years the lot was also owned by numerous different

2. Greg Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot*, ed. Frank Davey (London, ON: Brick Books, 1995), 156.

3. *It is I* is a series of twenty-five text-based self-portraits. The phrase 'It is I' is stamped onto a watercolour background in Munsee, Oneida, Ojibwa, Cornish, English, and French. These are the languages that have been or are spoken in the London region. In *Deeds/Nations*, Davey refers to these works as *It Is Me*. In a letter dated March 20, 1992, Curnoe calls them *It Is I*. The various titles of the works are likely due to the fact that in a June 1992 letter Curnoe inquired about the Cornish translation of both 'I' and 'me.' Letters located in box 13-1, Greg Curnoe Fonds, E. P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.

4. Greg Curnoe, Letter to Scott July 22, 1992. Letter located in box 13-2, Greg Curnoe Fonds, E. P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.

families and the building housed several commercial businesses. When Curnoe searched the public land settlements records, he located the deed for each holder of the lot back to the first European—farmer John Odell who was assigned lot 25 in February 1811.[6] Prior to that, Curnoe found no Indigenous accounts in the official archival record. "We live in a culture where pre-existing cultures lived and live,"[7] wrote Curnoe; he realized this 'omission' was deplorable and sought to remedy it by making all the stories of the region available, not just non-Indigenous accounts. His research took on added significance when he discovered his lot was connected to Indigenous land surrenders No. 2 — The McKee's Purchase in 1790, and No. 6 — the London Township Treaty in 1796.[8] Curnoe had spent his career railing against what he considered the imperialistic force to the south: the United States. The realization that his ownership of 38 Weston Street was itself connected to imperialism was crushing.[9] In his foreword to *Deeds/Nations*, Frank Davey observes that "from the outset, [Curnoe] had been motivated by a strong sense of responsibility to First Nations culture as a white individual who had benefited directly from the injustices First Nations peoples had suffered."[10]

5. Frank Davey, "Editor's Note," in Greg Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot*, ed. Frank Davey (London, ON: Brick Books, 1995), 15.

6. Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts*, 62. After the cession of the land to the Crown in 1790, a series of townships were created and collectively referred to as the County of Middlesex. When the township of Westminster was surveyed in 1810 by Simon Zelots Watson, it was divided up into numbered lots. Lot 25—where Weston Street would eventually be—consisted of 123 acres.

7. Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts*, 22.

8. Frank Davey, "Forward," in Curnoe, *Deeds/Nations*. eds. Frank Davey and Neal Ferris (London, ON: Ontario Archaeological Society Inc., 1996), viii. Surrender No.2, The Mckee Purchase was signed on 19 May 1790 by Alexander McKee and chiefs of the Ottawa, Potawatomi, Chippewa and Wyandot. It covered the southernmost portion of the Ontario peninsula. Treaty 6, The London Township purchase,

This understanding led the artist to invest himself completely in the larger Weston Street project,[11] working on it between January 1991 and November 1992, twelve hours a day, most days of the week.[12] He filled seven archival boxes with thousands of pages of photocopies, notes, and drafts of the manuscripts. He sought out descendants of the First Nations signatories of the surrenders, and included their oral histories in his texts. He requested permission from the surrounding First Nations communities to go ahead with the project, receiving both their help and encouragement.[13] The Weston Street project was personal for Curnoe, but he intended for the material he assembled to transfer to a broader context. As he wrote, art "has a role in shaping and moving [his] community and [his] country."[14] While researching and writing the *Deeds* texts, Curnoe maintained an active art practice. However, it was not just an act of translating knowledge into aesthetics. Rather, the long gestational period of the paintings, some taking days while others evolved over months, demonstrate that the artworks were also a way for Curnoe to think through and reflect on his changing understanding.

Each of the five *Deeds* paintings lists the last names of the owners and occupants of the Weston Street lot begin-

which covers most of present-day London and its surrounding areas, was signed on 7 September 1796 by Alexander McKee and the Chippewas of the Thames.

9. Davey in Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts*, 16.

10. Davey in Curnoe, *Deeds/Nations*, viii.

11. I refer to all the research, text works, and artworks that came out of the inquiry into the lot as the "Weston Street project." I have not found any conclusive indication in the Curnoe archive of what he would have called the collected work. Perhaps it would have been "the Deeds project," given the centrality of deeds to this work. I call it the Weston Steet Project because, though the inquiry went far beyond Weston Street, this is where Curnoe began to pose and work through questions of settler ownership.

12. Davey in Curnoe, *Deeds/Nations*, viii. In January 1991 the Curnoe's bought an I.B.M. compu-

ning with Curnoe in *Deeds #2,* stretching back through Surrender No. 2 to the Paleo-Indians in *Deeds #5. (Mis) Deeds #1,* was made before Curnoe had done a thorough investigation into the land abstracts.[15] "Weston" appears as the fourth owner, however William and Annah Weston lived on part of lot 24, on the south side of the street.[16] Rather than destroy the work with the error, he let it stand, thus drawing attention to the imperfect decolonial learning process he was invested in. When he learned more, he tried again. *Deeds #4* has fewer names listed than *(Mis) Deeds #1* but is more detailed. First initials appear before the repeated surnames "Gumb" and "Strathy" showing the deed of ownership passing to various generations of families. However, his second attempt is also imperfect. At the bottom of *Deeds #4*, the paper is cut-out between "Gumb" and "Innes." Curnoe accidently stamped "McInnes;" rather than destroying the work, he simply removed the "Mc" and replaced it with a bright red rectangle pasted behind. Curnoe then notated the front of the work: "removed Jan 27, 1992." Here again, an error left visible makes evident the process.[17]

Curnoe began making text-based paintings in the late 1960s, around the time he became interested in concrete

ter. Curnoe notes in his text "Lettered Works and Equipment from 1946" that it was upon purchasing the computer that he began working on a book called *Deeds*. The last entry on the book manuscript was in the early morning of November 14, 1992, the day Curnoe was fatally struck by a car while riding his bike with the London Centennial Wheelers Cycling Club. In addition to Davey, see "Lettered Works and Equipment from 1946 to February 16, 1992" in Greg Curnoe, *Deeds Abstracts* (London, Ontario: Forest City Gallery, 1992), 28.

13. Davey in Curnoe, *Deeds/ Nations*, ix.

14. Greg Curnoe, 1979, "Personal Ideology" (unpublished paper). Art and Ideology Symposium. Greg Curnoe Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario box 4 – 7: n.p.

15. Greg Curnoe, letter to Gary Dufour, August 4, 1992. Box 13-2, Greg Curnoe Fonds, E. P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.

poetry.[18] While it has been argued that the artist's letter works were explorations in form alone, aesthetics merely a by-product,[19] this is not the case in the five *Deeds* paintings. The aesthetic choices Curnoe made mimic the work and ambiguity of the Weston Street project. In *Deeds*, each letter has been pressed onto the paper using a handmade stamp along a visible graphite line. Yet all is not as orderly as it first appears. The distribution of ink is inconsistent, some areas have no ink at all—echoing the absences Curnoe found in the archive. Some names spill off the picture plane to be picked up at a different place in the line below, drawing attention to the effort of reading. As Curnoe had to work to research the broader history of Weston Street, one needs to work to read and decipher some of the names listed. The lettering is positioned on top of a layered watercolour background. The juxtaposition of depth in the background and flatness of the lettering creates a tension, reminding us that behind the names that appear boldly in black there is a deeper, fraught history.

Deeds traces history with an eye on the future. In the space between most names, Curnoe has written in small handwriting the year each family or individual was associated with the lot. That is until *Deeds #5*, which lacks

16. Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts*, 83.

17. Judith Rogers. Email communication with Sheila Curnoe August 31, 2022. Shared by Sheila Curnoe with the author.

18. Sarah Milroy, "Greg Curnoe: Time Machines," in *Greg Curnoe: Life & Stuff* (Toronto and Vancouver: Art Gallery of Ontario and Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 55.

19. Christopher Dewdney, "Reference and the Self: The Limits of Subjectivity," in *Blue Book 8: Dec. 7, 1988, Oct. 2, 1989*, ed. Greg Curnoe (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1989), 175.

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handwritten notations and uses cultural group identifiers—Archaic Culture, Woodland Culture, Attawandaron, Ojibwa—instead of individual names. Each name across the five works has been punctuated by a colourful strike-through, indicating they are no longer the deed holder. Except, of course, for Curnoe's on *Deeds #2*. Looking at the work, one cannot help but visualize the line that will eventually go through Curnoe's name once his family no longer holds the deed for 38 Weston Street. A dialog between the past, present, and future is made visible in *Deeds*. Each aesthetic choice Curnoe made works to express an in-process or non-fixed sensibility, just like his unfolding understanding of Weston Street.

The Weston Street project demonstrates Curnoe's investment in his shifting awareness of Weston Street, the London region, and ultimately his identity as a settler. Settlers working towards decolonization must expose the systems that enable them to maintain power and take responsibility for the ways in which they have benefited from colonization.[20] Curnoe's effort to expand the historical record made obvious how stories silenced Indigenous people for the benefit of settlers. He took responsibility for his colonial benefit by placing a small heart before each

20. Adam Barker, "From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances Between Indigenous and Settler Peoples," in *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynne Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 319, 323.

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Deeds *by Greg Curnoe*

entry in the books that connected to the lot and therefore to him. When it came time to choose which names to include in *Deeds*, Curnoe selected those that had hearts next to their entries; his name thus appears alongside others who invested in colonization. The *Deeds* paintings invite viewers to similarly question the place they call home and their position in it. Who owns the land where you stand? Before you, who? Most importantly, *how* did it come to be owned in the first place? *Deeds* challenges viewers to become invested in decolonizing their understanding of where and how they stand.

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Stacy A. Ernst
Decolonization on Weston Street.
Deeds *by Greg Curnoe*

TERMS

INVESTMENT – PART 1

FALL 2022

Concept:
Michèle Thériault

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Artworks:
Greg Curnoe

Editing:
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Michèle Thériault

Design:
Karine Cossette

Publication available in digital
and printed editions

Legal Deposit
Bibliothèque et Archives
nationales du Québec
Library and Archives Canada, 2022
ISBN: 978-2-924316-38-2

ellengallery.concordia.ca

How does a term circulate through society, and how does its dissemination within contemporary discourse inform us about the way that society thinks about itself? By what means do certain words instill themselves in language and the public sphere to the point of becoming commonplace? *Terms* is an online discursive and artistic program that individually unpacks a series of broad and polysemous terms that are commonly employed to address a range of sociopolitical issues in contemporary society. While some words acquire multiple definitions the more they are used, they also often tend to become generalized and run the risk of having their meaning become diluted, confused, or unclear over time. Nevertheless, their continued presence in our vocabulary requires careful attention and analysis as to their etymological value, their semantic density, and their use across and beyond disciplinary boundaries.

For each selected term, a researcher from outside the visual arts publishes a text that examines it in its many variants, tensions, and ambiguities through the specific lens of their field of activity. The word is then considered by pairing it with a resonating artwork shared on the Gallery's website. In turn, a writer from the cultural sector uses this same work as the starting point for a second text that draws from the first and from beyond to probe aspects of the term in its various dimensions.