

UNIT 17

GABRIELLE L'HIRONDELLE HILL

Money

30 March – 26 May 2019

artist talk: 25 May 3pm

Unit 17 is pleased to present *Money*, a solo exhibition of new work by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill. This marks Hill's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Hill uses tobacco as the exhibition's crux and as a tool to analyze its Indigenous and colonial economic histories. As a material, tobacco was the first currency in the English colonies of North America; it was used to pay wages, taxes, dowries, fines and to purchase goods. Tobacco evolved into Tobacco Notes, squares of coloured paper representing different given amounts of tobacco stored in a warehouse. Tobacco Notes were the first exchangeable paper money in the United States, precursors to the dollar bill.

The rise of this new economy was accompanied by an effort to outlaw and extinguish Indigenous economies, in which tobacco also played a central role. Prior to colonization, tobacco was the most widely traded material in the Americas, and it continues to have a place in Indigenous economic systems today.

Hill's works in *Money* suggest key principles of Indigenous economies: reciprocity, interdependence and dispersal rather than accumulation. Hill renders tobacco as the basis for each sculpture and the larger field in which they exist. Included in the exhibition are a number of sculpted figures, human and animal, installed throughout the gallery on various platforms. The walls of the gallery have been treated with residual pigment from rubbing tobacco leaves, soaking the space with its subtle mark and deep scent. Objects are cast along painted tables, building certain confrontations and acknowledgments between works at the centre of the gallery. Two striped flags, sewn out of various strains of tobacco, borrow their dimensions from the American dollar bill. Seed pods have been attached to the base of these sculptures, gradually releasing their contents over the duration of the exhibition. Seeds will be carried out from viewers' feet, into the gallery's garden and beyond.

Hill (b. 1979) is a Cree and Metis artist who lives and works on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Hill's sculptural practice explores the history of materials to enquire into concepts of land, property, and economy. Most recently, her work has shown at Cooper Cole (Toronto); Polygon Gallery, and the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery (Vancouver); the Alberta Art Gallery (Edmonton); SBC galerie d'art contemporain (Montreal) and STRIDE gallery (Calgary). Hill is a member of BUSH gallery, an Indigenous artist collective seeking to decentre Eurocentric models of making and thinking about art, prioritizing instead land-based teachings and Indigenous epistemologies. Hill's writing has been widely published, most recently in *Beginning with the Seventies* (Helen Belkin, 2019). She is also the co-editor of *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* (ARP 2009) and *Read, Listen, Tell: Indigenous Stories from Turtle Island* (Wildred Laurier 2017).

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list of works:



Dispersal, 2019, Virginia tobacco, Perique tobacco, thread, seed pods, support stocking, wood, found pole, 109.2 x 46.4cm



Kiss, 2019, pantyhose, thread, tobacco, dandelions, wildflowers, aluminum can tabs, happy tree charm, found brooch, hair tie, bunny fur, 45.7 x 50.8 x 81.3cm



Sonshine, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, beer can tabs, dandelion, thread, 17.8 x 17.8 x 17.8cm

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Purse, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, dandelion, dollar store locket, bluebell, tobacco seeds, seed pod, horseshoe charm, thread, 15.2 x 12.7 x 12.7cm



Cousin, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, thistle, spider charm, dandelion, thread, 15.2 x 10.2 x 17.9cm



Mint, 2019, pantyhose, beer can tabs, tobacco, bunny fur, thread, 14 x 17.9 x 24.1cm



New Growth, 2019, fresh tobacco leaves, aluminum can tabs, dimensions variable

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Disintegration, 2019, Virginia tobacco, Perique tobacco, seed pods, thread, wood, found pole, 109.17 x 46.41cm



Offer, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, beer can tab, wildflower, cigarette, thread, 10.2 x 19 x 11.4cm



Trade, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, beer can tab, wildflower, thread, 12.7 x 19 x 17.9cm



Gift, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, fabric flower, wildflower, tinfoil, safety pin, thread, 15.2 x 16.5 x 15.2cm

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Exchange, 2019, pantyhose, tobacco, cigarettes, thread, tobacco flowers, aluminum can tabs, spider charm, found metal hair clip, 43.9 x 51.3 x 79.7cm