



Lauren Burns-Coady
Centre of Pressure
May 31–July 26, 2025

Centre of Pressure, 2025

high-density expanded polystyrene (EPS), giclée and laser printed photographic composites,
aircraft cable
190 × 101 × 30 cm / 74.8 × 39.8 × 11.8 in

Centre of Pressure is a sculpture based on Michael Snow's *Flight Stop* which synthesized two- and three-dimensional proportions from all 60 geese in the original installation into a single, abstract, imprecise, composite. This project is grounded in my long-term proximity to the geese by virtue of being at the mall a lot as both a passive cohabitant/shopper/loiterer and as an active observer/researcher/admirer. Frozen in flight in the glass atrium, the *Flight Stop* geese are always lit by a combination of natural and artificial light—seen often contre-jour and literally suspended within the visual noise of the mall: signage, flashing digital billboards, passersby, exposed elevator shafts. They aren't especially detailed up close, but they register as real (istic).

I love them.

I named the work after the aerodynamic principle of the "center of pressure," which I saw in Leonardo da Vinci's writings on bird flight—studies that proved to be indispensable to modern aviation. The concept appears in his *Codex on the Flight of Birds*, written in 1505. The center of pressure is the point on a wing where all lift forces are concentrated; it shifts with the angle of attack, affecting stability and control in flight.

The surface treatment was developed through repeated site visits and digital photography taken from public vantage points. These images were composited and applied to an EPS structure using an impressionistic découpage method. I followed the same general method Snow used to apply photographs to sculptural form as a "skin", but adapted it to suit the present context. In *Flight Stop*, the source images were photographs of a goose. On one account it was a dead goose Snow found in Toronto, another says it was a taxidermy specimen from the Royal Ontario Museum. Probably both. I photographed Snow's geese, already stylized. As usual, I was thinking about the relations between mimetic and methectic modes; what is copying, what is participating, what is more or less real, and the various methods by which that ontological ordering is enforced and why.

In 1982, Michael Snow sued the Eaton Centre for violating his moral rights after red ribbons were tied around the necks of the *Flight Stop* geese. The argument was that the ribbons transformed them from autonomous figures in flight into festive decoration, degrading their meaning and implying they were ornamental rather than sculptural. The court ruled in Snow's favour, setting a Canadian precedent for the legal enforcement of artistic intent. It remains one of the only sculptural works in the country whose ontology has been formally adjudicated. I have received several comments alluding to the idea that I should have asked permission from Snow's estate to make this sculpture, despite the fact that this project is on a totally different register than the legal dispute over *Flight Stop*.

The EPS was salvaged from a shipping depot at Toronto Pearson International Airport. Malls and airports: circulation of people and stuff. Eaton Centre is connected to the subway too. The goose is suspended from a horizontal cross-formation of aircraft cable, modeled on *Flight Stop's* rigging system, with vertical aircraft cables connected to the body and wings that allow for little shifts in position. It flies south, catching up to Snow's geese who are about one mile south east of the gallery and oriented toward the southern border—the U.S.—where the "snow bird" is under threat. Since the "51st state" and tariff fiasco began, our shared border, which typically represented geographic and commercial camaraderie, free trade, and open tourism, now evokes toxic nationalism, destabilized economic interdependence, invasion anxiety, and geopolitical clusterfuckery.



Centre of Pressure Part I, 2025

Single-channel video starring Bri Christie and Jacob Jiayi Zhang, runtime 4m30s

Filmed in 2025 using Canon PowerShots from the early 2010s, *Centre of Pressure Part I* restages a YouTube video called "Is Eaton Center Mall in Toronto Great or Terrible for Pickup?" in which a man with the username PickUpAlpha who calls himself Mike attempts to practice his "day game", (a systematized, studied, and practiced seduction routine) on women in Toronto Eaton Centre.

The film opens with Bri entering the Eaton Centre. A text overlay styled after a gaze calibration interface appears on screen, with each word centered and the first letter in red. The text quotes an excerpt from a late-1970's Toronto Sun article about the mall shortly after its opening: "Whether you're a serious shopper, a browser, a bargain-hunter, or merely one who likes to gaze at pretty sights, the new Eaton Centre has something for you. If you're looking for a five-foot-two brunette, or a six-foot blonde, you can't go wrong there. For the new giant climate-controlled city-within-a-city may be the largest single hangout for beautiful women this side of the beach at Rio de Janeiro. The place is lousy with them. They're hanging over the railings in the multi-levelled mall, sitting at the fountain, sipping coffee in the cafes. And they're strolling. Always strolling. The stream seems endless."

Later, as Bri sips coffee beside the fountain, surveilled from above, on screen text with the same styling comes from an early-2010's Toronto Life article about pickup artists in Toronto Eaton Centre quoting an online post from an influential member of the pickup community: "Since there are so many women in the Eaton Centre you can easily warm up and get yourself into state within 20 minutes. Eaton Centre is therefore a great first stop on your day game itinerary. [sic] Do a few approaches there and you move to other venues which may have less women but better logistics (girls who are stationary)."

The restaged interaction between Bri and Jacob was filmed on-site in the Eaton Centre, including around Michael Snow's *Flight Stop*. Bri and Jacob, of *Bonny Poon Conditions* Artist Liaison, and Operations Officer, respectively practiced with a transcript of PickUpAlpha's video. Jacob wears a chest-mounted body cam throughout, visible when he appears on screen. In the original video, the camera is concealed but referenced:

BRI: I, I thought it was some group or something, cause like, I met a guy here. And over there.

JACOB: Was he Asian?

Bri: Yeah.

JACOB: Did he have a camera?

BRI: Huh?

JACOB: Did he look like me? I'm way better looking than that guy. Did you give him your number? Did you give him—did you give him your number?

Bri's "Petrol" T-shirt signals the extractive logic of everything going on, insidious tactics hide in plain sight. Civil public comportment, panoptical dynamics. She just wants to get back to her lunch break.

The migratory patterns of Canada geese are passed down, taught/learned, reinforced not innate (entirely). Despite a new generational composition, flocks of geese will land in more or less the same spots every year. We keep coming back to the same place.

The title, *Centre of Pressure*, comes from the aerodynamic principle of the same name. The centre of pressure is the point on a wing where all lift forces are concentrated; it shifts with the angle of attack, affecting stability and control in flight.

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