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Thank you to: everyone at the New Gallery who worked to bring us here and to Tim and Jessica for smoothing out crimps during the actual installation of **WHAT WE TAKE WITH US**. Special thanks to Tomas Jonsson, Kathryn Blair and John Snow House Director, Shara Rosko.

For any artist, starting a new year, exhibiting an artwork is the best possible scenario. The chance to visit Calgary is amazing. It puts me on the spot, to not only say what I have been doing, but also to evaluate what I have done since leaving the city in 2008.

The chance to show this work in Calgary seems so appropriate as Daniel and I continue to think of Calgary as our second home. But more than that, the initial planning for the installation began in Calgary, early in 2007 while applying to the University of Sydney to carry out the residency. Another version of the installation was shown - for one day only, in January 2011 at the Galerie E Dans L'A, in Moncton, New Brunswick where we currently live. So presenting at The New Gallery completes a cycle of intentions embodied in this work.

Sometimes it seems as if living is about managing points - not the points that have synched with all monetary transactions – but those emergency points that drive us from event to event. **WHAT WE TAKE WITH US** wants to step back from the edge to place value.

When I first entered the art world, deconstruction was big. Anecdotes were frowned upon. In the classroom and gallery, if storytelling was an employed methodology, it was required to appear only in the most pure, most elemental of symbols. And yet the idea that everything moves in circles – and that there is nothing new under the sun was also

brought forward. We are fortunate to live and work in a time period when visual and audio collage, in all of its forms has place – and that the specific arrangement of elements, with emphasis on time and space are valued. Since access to digital tools became both available and affordable to artists and consumers, it facilitated possibilities for creation, communication and for description. As we are well aware, these same tools are utilized in the constant bombardment of marketing. That presents a complication of finding meaning in creation that dwells within or moves beyond product placement. In the immersive environment, we are challenged to captivate imagination, or to lay out elements that offer / share inner experience.

This project was based upon travel, personal exploration of specific geographies but also upon meeting people, chance conversations, and interviews. In the making of the videos and the creation of a format, it was important for each of us to move past the first level of the experience, to allow events to distil over time through memory and impact. Through the process of building something in time based art; having a cut and paste-able timeline similar to our own ideas of memory and its very complicated architecture, is modern magic. If memory is a string of events (pearls) stretched out over time, then creating videos or any artwork can be a way of re-stringing the whole poetry of it.

It would seem that an artwork should always exist between reality and dream / influences and changes that become absorbed. The video loops projected onto the walls of the gallery, and the soundtracks carried by the corresponding left or right headphones work to create an immersive environment for contemplation. Those soundtracks, texts and visuals are meant to flow and to interact as the projections loop. The 'open sound' heard upon entering the space creates another element closer to actual experience of travel and interaction with others. One of the topics that came up in the interviews is reconciling the feelings of attachment you feel for a place when you are now there, and how it reverses when you go back and leave the second home.

To speak more generally of my practice, basically, I do 2 things: I create from within, working through thought process and visceral reality; and I ask (interview) others about what they do. In that, the best that I hope for is to bring out other voices, and to create a dialogue. 2011 was a busy and productive year – something I always strive for, unusual in the mix, was the gift of reaction to some projects. In particular, I presented videos in 3 European capitals: DOWNUNDER was curated into the She Devil Exhibition at the MACRO – Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome, Italy. The She Devil screenings ran from June 25, 2011 – January 8, 2012 in the MACRO's V-Tunnel. On November 4 & 5, I presented The Renovation, at the Ruins in 20th Century Art and Literature Conference at the Senate House in London, England. My 2011 video Paper Moon, Cardboard Sky¹, was screened at the 24th Instants Video at the gallery Le 104, Paris, France.

Those 3 presentations rose were facilitated through Internet connections. What we have seen demonstrated so well with the Internet is that individuals and communities are no longer only linked to geography or birthright, or even common history. A sense of belonging can rise from topical common interests and affinities. The reasons for some of those connections might appear obvious by magnitude, and some, although seemingly banal, might 'hold more water' than detected in the real time of the moment.

As important as visual and sound cues are into positing the space of habitation, writing has become very important for me. Sometimes, it is in a manner of connecting events and thoughts in as orderly a form as an essay. And sometimes it is in arranging those same events and thoughts into poetry using visuals, sound and texts. **What We Take With Us** takes that form; aiming to float and ground in the memory of connections over time.

¹ Also screened in 2011 as part of OIL, EMMEDIA, Calgary, AB July 12, and at the OK.Quoi?!, Contemporary Arts Festival, Sackville, NB July 28.

Audience / participants should be and are – everywhere. Everyone has a voice and wants to be heard. Maybe taking part in what happens in an art gallery creates a necessary pause; that kind of pause that can help us step outside of the daily rush and routine. A new starting point can arrive unexpectedly. Recognizing it can become a refreshing experience, like celebrating the beginning of a new year.

In 2012 Valerie LeBlanc will be starting a PhD in the Visual Arts at the University of Sydney in Australia.