

# Estuaries

**Denise Ferreira da Silva + Arjuna Neuman, Sylvia D. Hamilton, John Hammond, Oluseye, Camille Turner, Denyse Thomasos, Gary Weekes**



Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, *4 Waters—Deep Implicancy*, 2018 © Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, 2024

**Curator: Joana Joachim**

**Exhibition Guide**



Estuaries form when freshwater rivers meet the ocean and become slightly salty. The Atlantic is the saltiest of the five ocean basins. It is also the body of water across which more than 30,000 ships carried over twelve million abducted Africans into slavery through the lethal crossing known as the Middle Passage. These ships returned laden with goods produced through the forced labour of Black captives. John Owens, eponym of this gallery, was a successful shipbuilder, as was his executor, Robert Reed. Using funds from Owens' estate, Reed worked with artist John Hammond to develop a teaching collection now housed at the Owens Art Gallery. The Maritimes, like the rest of Canada, profited from shipbuilding and colonial economies linked to transatlantic slavery and trade.<sup>1</sup> The operational years of Owens' and Reed's shipbuilding ventures coincide with a rise in demand for Canadian lumber and sailing ships for the express purpose of trade in molasses, sugar, cotton, woollens, and tobacco, largely produced through the forced labour of enslaved Africans. Sackville, Saint John, and Moncton were among the key centres of shipbuilding at the time. This booming business later led to the development of processing facilities in New Brunswick. The countless shipments of products stemming from this violently extractive practice fueled and financed colonial life, expansion, and industry.

Meanwhile, Black histories in New Brunswick and elsewhere were systematically washed away. The earliest records of Black presence in New Brunswick date back to roughly 1690, when an unnamed Black man (likely enslaved) was captured and displaced to Saint John River by the French. He would later be

recaptured and displaced again to Boston by Major Benjamin Church. By the mid-1700s, a small Black population began growing across New Brunswick. It was comprised of enslaved, indentured and free(d) Black people coming from the Caribbean, the United States and other parts of Canada like Halifax. By 1824, there were Black people living in every county of New Brunswick. Black New Brunswickers faced, and continue to face, such severe, ongoing racism and discrimination that many sought safety and opportunity elsewhere. To this day, the histories and contributions of small Black communities in New Brunswick and across Canada are overlooked due to their size, their seemingly limited archival presence, and, in some cases, the common, inaccurate belief that they simply do not exist.

*Estuaries* floats in the space between these facts, musing on Black diasporic peoples' relationship to the ocean. The exhibition uses as an anchor the legacies of white settler civic leaders and entrepreneurs like John Owens, Robert Reed, and John Hammond, who, through their involvement in the connected industries of shipbuilding, trade, processing of raw materials and the funds they generated, profited from the stolen labour and disenfranchisement of Black people. This exhibition features artworks by both contemporary and historical artists, archival documents and artifacts, to contend with the tensions that arise once we allow the freshwater river of Canadian history to meet the ocean of Black Atlantic life.

—Joana Joachim, 2024

1. Slavery was legal in Canada from 1629 to 1834 and Canadian-built ships continued to be purchased and used for colonial practices until the late 1860s. Black and Indigenous people in Canada were held as indentured servants for years following the abolition of slavery and they continue to be severely economically exploited to this day.



Oluseye, *Black Ark*, 2022. © Oluseye, 2024

## Selected Bibliography and Further Reading

Conlin, Dan. "Research Note: A Slave Ship Made Captive: The Schooner *Severn*." *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1999): 203–12.

Hamilton, Sylvia D. *Tender*. Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2022.

Harris, Jennifer. "Black Life in a Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick Town." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études Canadiennes*, vol. 46, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 138–66. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.46.1.138>.

Larocque, Peter J. "Fine Intentions: An Account of the Owens Art Institution in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1884–1893." Master's thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1996.

Maynard, Robin. *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017.

"Death of Robert Reed, One of St John's Oldest and Best Known Citizens." *Daily Sun*, St. John, NB, December 19, 1893.

Rutland, Ted. *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Slave Voyages. "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Timelapse." <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#timelapse>

Spray, W. A. *The Blacks in New Brunswick*. Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1972.

"The Golden Age of Sail." Web Tour. New Brunswick Museum and Musée McCord Stewart, 2003. (Removed from Internet)

Robert Reed, Last Will and Testament, proved and filed December 22, 1894.

Vernon, Karina. *The Black Prairie Archives: An Anthology*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilford Laurier University Press, 2020.

Winks, Robin W. *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

Wright, Esther Clark. *Saint John Ships and Their Builders*. Wolfville, Nova Scotia: 1976, 50–56.



## Videos

Total running time: 40:27 min

### Sylvia D. Hamilton

*Waters of the Diaspora*, 2014

video, 4:08 min.

Courtesy of Maroon Films Inc.

Written, filmed and produced by Sylvia D. Hamilton

Narrator: Sylvia D. Hamilton

Editor: Paul Robinson

Production Company: Maroon Films Inc., 2024

This film is a short lyrical meditation and imagining of the enduring legacy of the transatlantic slave trade in African people. Water was central to that trade. It was the means used to ship human beings—treated as cargo/free labour—to the New World to create wealth. A poetic text on screen overlays a montage of moving images of water and waves. A soundscape of a griot's voice and mournful echoes of distant keening and the scritch of a ship's tackle conveys present to past, and a return to present. This reflective film lays bare the lingering emotional impact of the willful theft and ill-treatment of African people.



Sylvia D. Hamilton, *Waters of the Diaspora*, 2014, video still.  
© Maroon Films Inc., 2024

### Camille Turner

*Afronautic Research Lab: Newfoundland*, 2019

video, 6:19 min

Filmed and edited by Brian Ricks

Courtesy of the Artist

This video explores the silenced history of nineteen slave ships constructed in eighteenth-century Newfoundland. The video is part of a larger, ongoing social practice project through which visitors encounter suppressed archival documents providing evidence of colonial Canada's links to and participation in the transatlantic trade in African people and its ongoing legacies of anti-Blackness and Black resistance.



Camille Turner, *Afronautic Research Lab: Newfoundland*, 2019,  
video still. © Camille Turner, 2024

### Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman

*4 Waters—Deep Implicancy*, 2018

video, 30:00 min

Courtesy of the Artists

Directors: Arjuna Neuman, Denise Ferreira da Silva

Editing: Arjuna Neuman, Mariam Mekiwi

Music: Cobi Van Tonder, Arjuna Neuman

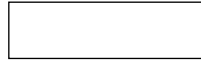
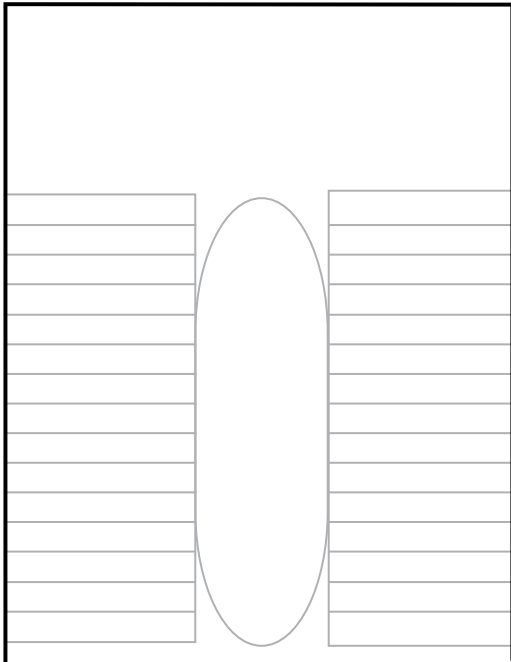
Sound: Gabor Rippli, Katharina Weinstock

Producers: Arjuna Neuman, Denise Ferreira da Silva

This immersive film considers urgent global issues including migration, displacement, legacies of colonialism and ecological devastation, and asks what is possible if ethical thinking is stripped of value? Presenting a reimagined cosmos—an alternative to the violent, segregated world we have inherited—the film seeks a primordial moment of entanglement prior to the separation of matter evolving into the planet we know, a time the artists describe as "Deep Implicancy."



Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, *4 Waters—Deep Implicancy*, 2018, video still. © Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, 2024



Videos

1

2

3

7

6

5

4

## 1. Gary Weekes

*Sails from Beachcomber*

Left to right

*MOLLY 230, 2024*

*TWO BROTHERS 300, 2024*

*SWIFT 280, 2024*

*FLY 220, 2024*

*BALTIMORE 280, 2024*

*SYLVIA 250, 2024*

*SYBELLA 180, 2024*

*ANTILOPE 230, 2024,*

*JUNO 250, 2024*

*PLANTER 470, 2024*

photographic prints on signature cotton, canvas, aluminum, grommets, medium-density fiberboard (MDF)

Horizontal works 61 x 48.3 cm (24" x 19")

Vertical works 58.4 x 71.1 cm (23" x 28")

Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery On Queen, Fredericton, NB

## 2. Oluseye

*Black Ark, 2022*

polished aluminum, burnt wood, sterilized soil  
365.8 x 304.8 x 128.9 cm (12' x 10' x 6')

Courtesy of the Artist

## 3. Oluseye

*Eminado, ongoing since 2018*

found objects, cowrie shells, rubber, leather, hair  
dimensions variable

Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto, ON

## 4. Denyse Thomasos

Untitled, c. late 1980s

charcoal on paper

151.1 x 209.5 cm (59.5" x 82.5")

Courtesy of The Estate of Denyse Thomasos, The Luciano Family and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, ON

## 5. Denyse Thomasos

Untitled, c. late 1980s

charcoal on paper

149.9 x 190.5 cm (59" x 75")

Courtesy of The Estate of Denyse Thomasos, The Luciano Family, and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, ON

## 6. Denyse Thomasos

Untitled, c. late 1980s

charcoal on paper

152.4 x 182.2 (60" x 71.75")

Courtesy of The Estate of Denyse Thomasos, The Luciano Family, and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, ON

## 7. John Hammond

*Harbour Scene, 1895*

oil on canvas

Gift of the artist, Collection of the Owens Art Gallery



## Display Case

### 1. John Hammond R.C.A. retrospective exhibition catalogue, 1967

one volume of textual records and graphic materials  
Owens Art Gallery fonds ref. no. 8546/A/1/7

Collection of Mount Allison University Archives

### 2. Tom Power

Replica of *Liverpool Packet (ex-Severn)*, 2013

plank on frame construction and acrylic paint  
50.8 x 35.5 x 8.9 cm (20" x 14" x 3.5")

Nova Scotia Museum, Marine History Collection, M2013.24.1.w.

*This model depicts Liverpool Packet, a schooner that was originally built in Baltimore as a slave ship called Severn. After being captured in 1811, Severn was sold at auction before being repurposed as a privateer during the War of 1812.*

### 3. John Hammond's Diary, 1866-1867, 1904-1906

one volume of textual records

John Hammond fonds ref. No. 2004.12/2/2

Collection of Mount Allison University Archives

Oel gegnoaatelneg Ola espiginamatimgeodgoom Mount Allision, na eteg magamigeo taan menaag Migemag igenemoetotigosep. Taan teleiatolting ag taan tel egpemitetemeg taan teloigoltieg ola magemigeo na eloitemasigsep Oigatigen Saageoei 1725eg glapis 1752eg. Na ogtjit ola oigatigen, amotj getjitasig ag emset oen na teleiatoltigo egstigee neoteetjoltigo Ag amotjpa gepmitetemoog ola magemigeo.

We would like to acknowledge that Mount Allison University is located within the traditional territory of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq. Our relationship and our privilege to live on this territory was agreed upon in the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1725 to 1752. Because of this treaty relationship, it is to be acknowledged that we are all Treaty People and have a responsibility to respect this territory.

---

This exhibition was presented at the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, from 5 October to 15 December 2024. It was made possible thanks to funding from the Canada Council for the Arts and the New Brunswick Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. It received special support from the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Halifax), the Centre for Canadian Studies (Mount Allison University), the Department of English (Mount Allison University), and the Faculty of Fine Arts (Concordia University).

Joana Joachim wishes to personally acknowledge and thank the following individuals: Sylvia D. Hamilton, Camille Turner, Gary Weekes, Oluseye, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Arjuna Neuman, Shelli Cassidy-McIntosh, Moëv Kurdy, Shirley Pearman, David Mawhinney, Aquiles Coelho Silva, Yasmine Sefraoui, Pixel Heller, David Woods, Thandiwe McCarthy, Pamela Edmunds, Denise Ryner, Emily Falvey, Jane Tisdale, Roxie Ibbitson, Lucy MacDonald, Rachel Thornton, Amber Laurie, and David Diviney.

Curator: Joana Joachim  
Translator: Colette Tougas  
Designer: Tara K. Wells  
Printed at Mount Allison Univeristy

© Owens Art Gallery, the artists, and the author, 2024.  
Printed in Canada. All rights reserved.

Owens Art Gallery  
Mount Allison University  
61 York Street  
Sackville, NB  
E4L 1E1

[www.owensartgallery.com](http://www.owensartgallery.com)

**Owens** Art Gallery  
Mount Allison University

