

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *PROJECTS: GABRIELLE L'HIRONDELLE HILL*, THE ARTIST'S FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION IN THE UNITED STATES

NEW YORK, February 11, 2020 [Updated on September 30, 2020]—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Projects: Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition in the United States. On view in the Museum's street-level galleries from April 25 through August 15, 2021, the exhibition also celebrates the 50th anniversary of MoMA's Elaine Dannheisser Projects Series. Hill, a Métis artist and writer, has assembled multiple works in which her use of tobacco as a key material alludes to the plant's complex Indigenous and colonial histories. The exhibition features sculptures and drawings, including several new works, constructed primarily from tobacco along with other sourced and found materials collected from her Vancouver neighborhood. *Projects: Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill* is organized by Lucy Gallun, Associate Curator, Department of Photography.

Prior to colonization, tobacco was among the most widely traded materials in the Americas. Later, tobacco became the first currency in the colonies of North America, before the dollars in use today. English settlers established a system in which promissory notes representing amounts of tobacco—"Tobacco Notes"—could be used to purchase goods, as well as to leverage wages, taxes, and fines. Today, "the Indigenous economic life of tobacco continues, despite colonialism, criminalization, and the imposition of capitalism," Hill observes, "it's evidence that our economic systems survive and continue to offer an alternative."

Occupying the gallery's central tables will be Hill's ground-tobacco-stuffed sculptures—the largest and newest of which approximates the size of the artist's own body. Some of these rabbits and hybrid human figures will stand proudly or playfully, while others languidly recline. Borrowing their proportions from the dimensions of the current US dollar bill, five flags will hang high on the gallery walls. Three flags are sewn directly from gradually disintegrating tobacco leaves, while the other two are constructed through a labor-intensive process in which Hill coats paper in homemade tobacco-infused Crisco oil and applied pigments, which must dry over several months, after which additional materials are sewn or glued to the surface.

Made through the same process as her tobacco-oil-soaked flags, Hill's *Spells* take the form of small, delicate, richly colored drawings adorned with charms, wildflowers, beer tabs, and other collected ephemera. These spells, some of which have been made for Hill's friends, represent the power of reciprocity, interdependence, and dispersal, attributes also central in a gift economy. Hill's use of tobacco as material at once critiques settler colonial economic systems and celebrates the Indigenous history of the gift economy, in which tobacco remains a key component.

ARTIST BIO

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill (b. 1979, Comox, BC, Canada) is a Métis artist and writer who lives and works on the unceded lands of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Hill's interdisciplinary artwork—encompassing sculpture, installation, video, and photography, among other mediums—uses found materials to probe concepts of land, property, and economy. Her work has been exhibited extensively in Canada, where she is represented by Cooper Cole (Toronto) and Unit 17 (Vancouver). Hill is a member of BUSH gallery, an Indigenous artist collective. Her writing has also been published widely, and she is co-editor of the anthology *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of*

Reconciliation (2015). She holds an MFA from California College of the Arts and a BFA and BA from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.

SPONSORSHIP:

The Elaine Dannheisser Projects Series is made possible in part by the Elaine Dannheisser Foundation and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art.

MoMA ONLINE COURSE:

**Art Talks: Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill
Tuesday, June 15, 3:30–4:30 p.m. EST
Recommended for families with kids ages seven to 14**

Come along for a virtual studio visit with artist and writer Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill. Discover how Hill collects and combines natural and found materials, and how the history of the materials she weaves, ties, and binds inspire her sculptures, collages, and installations. Families will have the opportunity to ask the artist questions during a Q&A session.

This session will be held online through Zoom, a free video-conferencing software. Participants should have access to a computer, smart phone, or tablet with a camera and Internet access. Participants may also dial in using a phone line. For more information, please visit moma.org/calendar/events/6963.

Register for the session [online](#).



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