

The Painful Parts

By Mike Landry

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A film still from Kent Tate's video, "Burning Farm House."

Since January, Newfoundland's Eastern Edge has been introducing video works from across Canada to the island. The once a month events shine a spotlight on a province with a guest a curator selecting works from their home province. I'll admit I was a bit out of the loop in covering this (only two evenings are left), but when I saw the announcement about Saskatchewan video works in Newfoundland I was intrigued.

The event is curated by Saskatoon-based independent curator and writer Donna Wawzonek. Titled *The Painful Parts*, the collection explores notions of trauma, anxiety, fear, love, disaster and longing. Although she wasn't looking for landscape-based works, many of the videos she received presented issues of emotionality to images of the Saskatchewan landscape.

"So many parts of [Saskatchewan] are vast, and that sense of sublime of being one small thing in this endless landscape is very isolating and can be traumatic," says Wawzonek. "This idea of being alone is very much a predominate feeling that can be brought out through images of this landscape

where it wouldn't necessarily work as well for a forest environment or mountains, there's a very particularity to that offers that investigation."

Wawzonek had been toying with the idea of curating this video-based exhibition before Eastern Edge contacted her. She had been doing other curatorial work and visiting artists' studios when she noticed anxiety was a theme many artists were confronting. One artist that stands out is Ellen Moffat, who had set up speakers in her studio to vibrate and bounce material, like peppercorns, in the cones.

"The sound combined with the vibration sounds of the objects in the cones, and with this material jumping up, it was a very anxious space. It was this really anxious experience for the viewer and I thought that was very interesting. Going back, that's what's coming through in these videos."

Three of the pieces will be screened for the first time, including Lee Henderson's "Meanwhile: the unglued image." For the piece, Henderson collaborated with a dancer (Heather Cameron) who's dressed like a war bride, writhing and stretching in a domestic environment. The footage captures the staccato movement as the lighting flashes like a strobe light.

"It's very spatial in how she's using the space and domestic tension, and then [Henderson] hyper-animates that in the way he's dealing with the material."

After years of living where her work takes her, Wawzonek can identify Saskatchewan with the feelings of trauma and helplessness presented in the works. But the works aren't individually regionally specific. The prairie just offers a specific sublime characteristic.

"One thing I tried to be careful of was not to leave a depressed tone through the whole thing. I don't want people going away with a morbid sense of what's the artists are doing here, but I think the individual works will be received really well."

The Painful Parts will screen on Sat November 22 from 8-10pm at The Room's Theatre in St. John's. The screening will feature work from Lee Henderson, Jason Nielson, Adam Budd, Linda Duvall, Troy Grons Dahl, Kent Tate, Seema Goel and Daniel Eugene.