Mediated Memory brings together the work of 10 Canadian artists whose practice examines the role of memories and dreams in contemporary society. Using range of approaches, the artists foreground the role of mediation in the experience of remembrance as a cultural phenomenon. The selected artists explore facets of their personal and social experiences and identities in artworks that foreground the material and cultural processes which shape how those memories and dreams are available to them and how they can be shared with others. In this exploration, the artists reveal what Marshall McLuhan suggested in his prescient analysis of the role of technology in shaping culture: “The Medium is the Message.”

*In an age of multiple and massive innovations, obsolescence becomes the major obsession.*

Marshal McLuhan, "Innovation is obsolete", Evergreen review, Volume 15, Issues 86-94, Grove Press, 1971, p. 64

Foregrounding analogue photography’s obsolescence in the digital age, Sara Angelucci’s works explore the medium’s ability to hold memories that can no longer be decoded through her manipulation of orphaned photographs. In **Aviary** found images of anonymous individuals and groups have been severed from their original social context, in which they acted as repositories of personal and family memory, and now exist as traces of forgotten life-worlds. In her manipulated photographs, Angelucci digitally overlays scans of the original portraits with images of extinct birds. She combines personal, cultural, and ecological loss to create strange images that attempt to revive the memories embedded in the photographs while remaining aware that they, like the birds depicted, are irretrievably lost. By enlarging the images from the handheld carte-de-visite size popular in the 19th century as a visual calling card – used to assert the sitter’s belonging in civil society – Angelucci creates funerary portraits that mourn the loss of memory. Her video projection **The Anonymous Chorus** animates an anonymous American family photograph. Following the rhythms of Charles Ives’ choral work, Angelucci momentarily re-invigorates the individuals depicted in the group portrait. Her animation subtly speaks to the nature of attention and its role in memory. How the focus on the parts can change our relation to the whole.

*All media work us over completely. They are so persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some human faculty- psychic or physical.*   
Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is The Massage, p 26

Gord Peteran's sculptures probe the boundaries of objects to test the limits of the human. His three works in the exhibition make use of the memories embodied in cultural forms through the manipulation of discarded objects. **Duchess** combines a dressmaker’s Judy (the adjustable woman’s torso used to make clothing) with a found table sown into a pink blanket. His simple yet evocative combination reactivates the figure’s relationship to cultural memory. The seams of the fabric become scars with the long tails of the threads functioning as hair. **Mantable**, part of Peteran’s ongoing series of demilune tables, is a wooden assemblage that has been covered in white, roughly stitched leather. It makes visible and literal the implied human body in every piece of furniture by evoking the human body through the sculpted feet and hands of the table’s legs. Its stunted fourth limb hovers, curled up beneath it, between arm and phallus – referencing the body but refusing to resolve. **Articulated Form** reveals the persistence of our cultural memories. The piece is composed of a disassembled traditional American rocking chair that has been threaded through with string and hung on a stand beneath a brass halo. The suspended Halo evokes spiritual values while the chair, removed from use, becomes an object lesson. No longer an instrument for sitting and thinking, through Peteran’s intervention the chair invites us to understand the deeply embodied nature of the material memory invested in cultural forms

*The artist is the person who invents the means to bridge between biological inheritance and the environments created by technological innovation.*Marshall McLuhan, Laws of Media, p 98

Pierre Dorion’s paintings take up questions raised by contemporary imaging technologies through his practice of depicting snapshots taken of small architectural details he encounters in galleries and museums. Hovering at the edge of abstraction, the images in the exhibition are figurative representations of complex spaces that have been composed by the flattening effect of being captured photographically. **Dusk II**  subtly captures the edge of a window frame and the sky outside and hovers between deep space and absolute flatness. The five panels of **Sans titre (DB)** create a complex rhythm that echoes the details of architectural mouldings without ever letting the viewer fully locate themselves and resolve their relation to the space depicted.The odd compositions only make sense in light of the camera’s carving up of space into discrete units. By focusing on architectural moments that would normally remain unperceived the paintings make visible both the structuring effects of imaging technologies and the extent to which these structures have become part of cultural vocabulary.

*A new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them.*

Marshal McLuhan, Essential McLuhan, page 278.

Angela Grossmann takes up the question of orphaned photography but she responds differently to the abandoned images than Angelucci does. In her works, Grossmann intervenes materially in the found photographs embracing their history as objects. This violent intervention speaks to the relationship between personal and cultural memory. The photos which have been severed from their context in personal lived memory are reinserted into larger cultural narratives by Grossmann through collage and paint. In **Outside** **/ Inside** Grossmann reconfigures the images to speak to cultural tropes – large scale cultural phantasies or dreams about the role of women and through her manipulation of the images and her painted engagements with them re-imagines them. She takes the loss of individual memory as the opportunity to speak directly to cultural memory. **Stiltwalker** combines found photographs in ways which are both visually pleasing and disturbing; the dream logic of the image invites us to make a whole from parts that continually threaten to fall apart. The smaller works from her Models of Resistance series: **Ginger**, **Lace-ups**, and **Stairs**, manipulate found images to highlight the tensions between the depiction of anonymous, North American women and the cultural phantasies which shape how they are perceived.   
  
At electric speed, all forms are pushed to the limits of their potential.  
Marshall McLuhan, Laws of Media, p 109

Douglas Coupland's works are about mediation and about the changes in memories and dreams brought about by the emergence of the internet. His works are reflections on the possibility of memory in contemporary society. His painting **Magic Hour**, explores the collapse of spatial and temporal differences in the circulation of bodies and objects around the world. Referencing the Pop Art work of Lichtenstein, the ubiquitous an banal machine readable codes of air travel, and industrial printing techniques, the work speaks to the flattening of sensation brought about by these changes. In his stacking sculptures, (**A Meditation on Plastic** and **Stacking Studies**) Coupland embraces banal objects as part of his engagement with everyday life in the context of technological change. He manipulates bottle caps – removed from their original context – into sculptural objects intended for meditating on contemporary society. His globe sculptures place the desire to map and know the world in tension with our capacity to deface and destroy it thereby suggesting an existential limit to our technological dreams of mastery. The poured paint represents the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a gyre of manmade chemical debris in the northern Pacific. The bright colours of the **Optimism** works speak to the possibility of a successful resolution while the dark paint of the **Pessimism** sculpture suggests a less satisfactory outcome.

*Literacy, in translating man out of the closed world of tribal depth and resonance, gave man an eye for an ear and ushered him into a visual open world of specialized and divided consciousness.*

Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy,

Carol Wainio's work revisits cultural forms to comment on the importance of childhood memories to understanding contemporary situations but also to access the space of dream-logic in which images are read though condensation and displacement rather than literally. **One Evening** takes up the changing experience of temporality and the loss of an earlier immediacy of cyclical time. The painted statements woven through the depicted forest, layer multiple narratives in the image refusing to settle on a single point of view. The scattered footwear in **Puss in the Subcontinent** re-positions Charles Perrault’s mythic figure of the trickster cat to take up the politics of global agribusiness. Wainio’s complex image incorporates earlier representations of the tale as paintings with her landscape yet the overall composition flickers between resolving into a single scene and breaking down into a series of symbols that refuse to cohere. The large frames that prop up the painted paintings don’t function to hold the picture together but instead disrupt the logic of its space.

*Artists in various fields are always the first to discover how to enable one medium or to release the power of another.*

Marshal McLuhan, Essential McLuhan, page 278.

Wally Dion’s **Thunderbird** presents traditional First Nations iconography using the components of contemporary digital technology. The large scale relief sculpture has been assembled from the circuit boards that underlie our digital age. While the sculpture enables us to focus on the normally invisible technological infrastructure of our devices, its striving towards monumentality works against contemporary technology’s drive towards miniaturization and invisibility. In this work, the Thunderbird, a complex mythic figure of North America’s traditional peoples, seamlessly inhabits our contemporary age. A large, powerful bird the Thunderbird is a spiritual personification of natural energies; in many tellings, its wingclaps cause thunder and its eyes shoot lighting. Dion’s work treats the traditional memory as a contemporary icon. As a being of energy Thunderbird’s emergence from the surface of the work speaks to the reopening of the possibilities of seeing the world as a sacred and interconnected space brought about by networked realities.

*All media exists to invest our lives with artificial perception and arbitrary values.*

Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (p. 199)

Max Streicher’s inflatable sculpture **Dream of Guernica** presents a tableaux consisting of two horses, two riders, and a bull that pays homage to Picasso’s anti-war painting. In doing so, Streicher references the legacy of equestrian monuments in ways that both take up and take on that monumental history’s celebration of power. The awe-inspiring effect of the large scale of the work is undercut by its translucency and buoyancy. The composition follows a surrealistic dream logic that works against the straightforward invocation of memory the equestrian monument normally presupposes. In place of Picasso’s nightmare vision its softened edges and offer instead a space for reflecting on the borders between memories and dreams.

*In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action.*

Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (p. 4)

Yam Lau’s video **Between the Past and the Present: Lived Moments in Beijing** examines the tensions between representation and reality through its investigation of the dream world of the traditional Chinese literati scholar. By mapping out the space of the scholar’s studio, Lau creates an imaginary place for his own practice which opens the possibility of escaping his current constraints. The cultural memory of the studio acts as the source materials for the artist’s dream while remaining in tension with the artist’s lived experience of the actuality of Beijing.

*There is no connection between the elements in an electric world, which is equivalent to being surrounded by the human unconscious.*

Marshall McLuhan, The Book of Probes: Marshall McLuhan (2011) p. 260

Ed Pien’s **Spectral Drawings** is an installation piece built up out of a series of drawings in white ink on black paper. The ghostly figures float and dissolve into the ground of the paper which slowly erases itself from the viewer’s perception. Produced using random effects which Pien then builds into figures, the overall effect is dreamlike in its access to the artist’s unconscious processes. The sometimes violent and visceral interactions of the figures suggest an ecosystem of cultural traces in which forms live, breed, and die; yet remain eternal.

*Language does for intelligence what the wheel does for the feet and the body. It enables them to move from thing to thing with greater ease and speed and ever less involvement.*

Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (p. 113)

By referencing past artworks and exploring cultural references and forms the artists explore the ways in which memories and dreams become embedded in objects and how those memories can become lost, recovered, distorted, and revived. The selected works play off each other, the different strategies at play in their works revealing different aspects of the complex and subtle roles that mediation plays in remembrance. Taken together, their work reflects on how our current environment shapes our ability to remember and to reshape those memories into dreams.