



Kapwani Kiwanga

*A wall is just a wall (and nothing more at all)*

3 February – 6 May 2018

As we go about our daily lives, we enter into and are confronted by spaces designed to shape and regulate our behaviour. In *A wall is just a wall (and nothing more at all)*, Kapwani Kiwanga explores disciplinary architecture by isolating structural traits and intended psychological effects of different built environments, such as prisons, hospitals, and mental health facilities. The exhibition title is drawn from the poem "Affirmation" by Assata Shakur, a civil rights revolutionary and former member of the Black Liberation Army, which calls for resistance against structures of inequity and the modes of segregation that exist all around us. The works in this exhibition highlight the potential for built environments to predict and affect human behaviour in the subtlest and most forceful of ways.

Two-toned paintings on panels of drywall reproduce institutional wall treatments which were based on the research of German architects Heino Schmieden and Julius Boethke, who, at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Tuberculosis (1905), proposed that oil-based paint should be applied to hospital walls at a height of 1.60m from the ground, in order to facilitate their cleansing and to improve hygiene conditions. Kiwanga's dichromatic choice of colour here, and throughout the exhibition, reflects her ongoing research on this and similar 19th and 20th century social hygiene movements and hospital reforms, as well as the work of highly influential colour theorist Faber Birren, whose research on the behavioural effects of colour was applied broadly across commercial and institutional environments.

In 1978, Dr. Alexander Schauss discovered that exposure to the colour Baker-Miller Pink had the purported effect of reducing aggressive behavior in test subjects by lowering their heart rate, pulse, and respiration. The colour was first used for wall paint in some prison cells at the Naval Correctional Center in Seattle with the intention of calming violent inmates. In 1979, the study was replicated at the Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose; however, after inmates were placed in the painted holding cell for several hours, they had begun to scratch the paint off their walls with their fingernails. Baker-Miller Pink soon appeared in a variety of other contexts, including in locker rooms designated for visiting teams, psychiatric facilities, and public housing wards.

Recently, fluorescent blue lights have been installed in public spaces with the goal of reducing the visibility of veins, thereby discouraging intravenous drug use. Though the intention of such design decisions may be to reform or to protect, the actual outcomes can be ambiguous or even harmful. Kiwanga exposes this ambiguity by foregrounding the formal building blocks of these mechanisms, and in so doing subjects them to our scrutiny. The immersive installation pink-blue features a space split between Baker-Miller Pink paint and blue fluorescent lighting. Through confrontation with the raw materials of these disciplinary strategies, Kiwanga invites us to think about their social implications: do blue-lit bathrooms actually prevent drug use, or do these spaces simply discourage safe injection practices? And so, the question remains: do architectural attempts to control bodies and their behaviour work to counter the problems they aim to prevent, or do they merely force their relocation?

Used for discrete observation in interrogation rooms, and also found in office buildings to protect workers from the gaze of street-level passersby, one-way mirrors facilitate shifting modes of control based on one's positionality. The window-based unidirectional gaze also appears in the architectural feature of the *jalousie*, a window treatment comprised of angled slats. Both of these technologies allow one to see out while remaining unseen, reflecting the dynamics of control and surveillance of disciplinary architecture.

A series of abstract prints on fabric are draped over rebar frames, another commonly used construction material. These images are based on desire paths – informal or spontaneous pathways shaped by individuals through the landscape (usually the shortest route from one point to another) – found in aerial images of historically significant sites across Calgary. These unsanctioned routes evoke the ways in which people bypass existing structures, carving out alternative routes within circumscribed spaces. Such small gestures of resistance remind us, as does the next line in Assata Shakur's poem, that a wall "can be broken down."

- Nabila Abdel Nabi, Assistant Curator, The Power Plant

NORTH



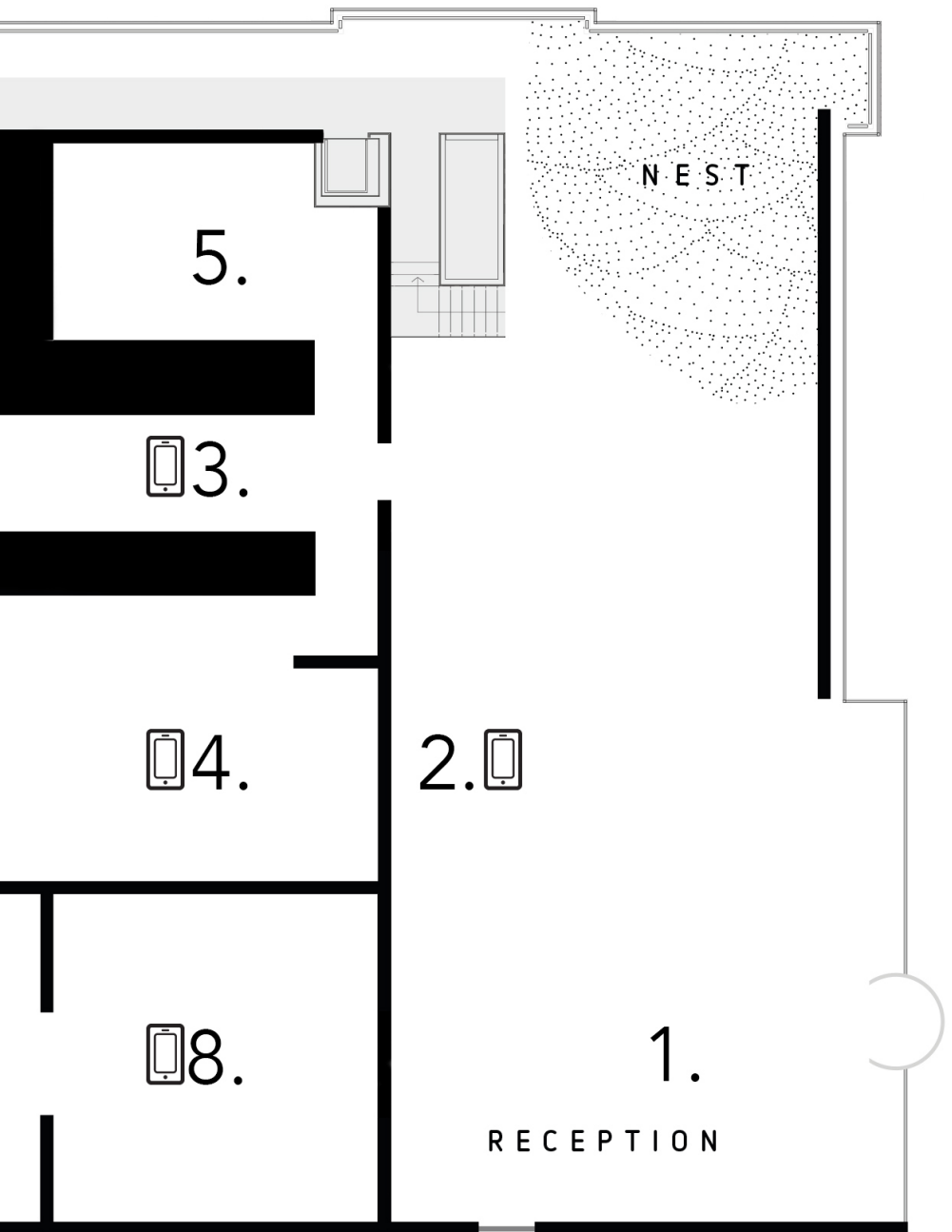
EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP

DOWNLOAD FOR FREE  
FROM THE APP STORE  
OR GOOGLE PLAY

 6.

 7.

SOUTH



5.

NEST

3.

4.

2.

8.

1.

RECEPTION

## 1.

### **500 ft** 2017

Two-channel audio installation

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin

*500 ft* is a two-channel audio work that is audible throughout the gallery space. A disembodied voice narrates some of the ways in which the architectural strategies found in the exhibition have been employed over history to dictate human behaviour. For example, the usage of the Baker-Miller Pink in various correctional facilities following Alexander Schauss' hypothesis that the pink colour had the effect of slowing down heart rate and respiration, or the suggestion by German architects Heino Schmieden and Julius Boethke that oil-based paint should be applied to walls at a height of 1.60m from the ground in order to facilitate improved hygiene conditions. 500 feet was also specified as the minimum distance between Indigenous and European areas in colonial settings during the International Conference on Colonial urbanism held in Paris in 1931.<sup>1</sup>

The design-based interventions described by Kiwanga are fragments of the research conducted in support of her artistic practice, continuing her archaeological approach which highlights the incompleteness of knowledge and the fragmentation of information as a way to deconstruct historical narratives and inherited power structures.

---

1 Krystyna Clara Von Henneberg, "The Construction of Fascist Libya: Modern Colonial Architecture and Urban Planning in Italian North Africa, 1922-1943" (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1996), 221.

2. (left to right)

**Linear Painting #6: Birren Yellow-Grey (RR Donnelley & Sons Chicago, Illinois)** 2017

**Linear Painting #9: Alberta Hospital (Ponoka, Alberta)** 2018

**Linear Painting #4: Weyburn Mental Hospital (Weyburn, Saskatchewan)** 2017

**Linear Painting #10: Michener Centre (Red Deer, Alberta)** 2018

**Linear Painting #8: Alberta Hospital (Ponoka, Alberta)** 2018

**Linear Painting #7: Elbow Park School (Calgary, Alberta)** 2018

**Linear Painting #2: Birren Peach-Terracotta (RR Donnelley & Sons Chicago, Illinois)** 2017

Paint on drywall sheet

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin

The *Linear Painting* series is an example of the way that Kiwanga synthesizes research into her artistic practice by adopting a minimalist formal language to communicate her findings in subtle and evocative ways. This series of two-toned paintings on panels of drywall reflects an ongoing study of the design of disciplinary architecture (that is, spatial interventions that are meant to regulate or influence human behaviour through psychological or physiological control) and institutional spaces, including schools, prisons, hospitals, offices, and mental health facilities.

In the late-19th to early-20th century, interest in scientific methods and techniques to improve health care, control disease, and promote social and physical wellness surged with the rise of social and mental hygiene movements and hospital reforms. One aspect of these Progressive Era developments was the idea that colour could serve a functional or therapeutic purpose in hospitals and other institutional contexts.

In 1905, at the 5th International Congress on Tuberculosis, German architects Heino Schmieden and Julius Boethke proposed a standard that oil-based paint should be applied to hospital walls at a height of 1.60m (approximately 63") from the ground, in order to facilitate their cleansing and to improve hygiene conditions. A little less than a decade later, in 1914, the idea of colour therapy entered hospital culture through figures like architect William Ludlow, who believed that the presence of certain colours reminiscent of the natural world (soft greens, pale blues, and sunshine yellow, for example) would help convalescents find psychological rest and contentment.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> David Pantalony, "The colour of medicine," *CMAJ/JAMC* 181.6/7 (2009): 402-403.

Beginning in the 1920s, the highly influential work of colour theorist Faber Birren—an “industrial colour consultant” who counted Monsanto, General Electric, Disney, and the U.S. Military among his clients—entered into commercial and institutional environments. Birren developed a theory that was intended to influence and control conditions of work, learning, safety, productivity, surveillance, healing, and care, which focused intensely on the behavioural effects of colour.<sup>3</sup>

In light of these histories, the linear partitioning of these paintings, as well as the black line that splits the gallery, are suggestive of a sense of division; not only of the separation of visual space, but also the hierarchical divide between ideas of cleanliness and uncleanliness, wellness and un-wellness, controller and controlled.

For the exhibition here at Esker Foundation, in addition to works derived from archives in Saskatchewan and the United States, Kiwanga created four new paintings drawn from archival documents of provincial institutions such as the Alberta Hospital, Ponoka (Alberta’s first, and arguably most infamous, psychiatric facility); and the Michener Centre, Red Deer (now defunct, it was previously known as the Provincial Training School, at which point it was a notorious site for the province’s eugenics program, where many patients were forcibly sterilized.)



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #2**

---

<sup>3</sup> UChicago Arts, *Kapwani Kiwanga: The sum and its parts* | UChicago Arts | The University of Chicago. Accessed 30 January 2018. <https://arts.uchicago.edu/kapwani-kiwanga-sum-and-its-parts>.



### 3.

#### *pink-blue* 2017

Baker-Miller Pink paint, fluorescent lights, vinyl Marley

Commissioned by The Power Plant, Toronto, 2017

Courtesy of Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin and Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

The immersive installation, *pink-blue*, references Kiwanga's interest in disciplinary architecture with an intense focus on two specific colours: one part of the hallway is painted Baker-Miller pink and illuminated with white fluorescent light, while the other part is painted white and is illuminated with blue fluorescent light.

In the late 1960s, after a series of experiments to study the psychological and physiological responses to the colour pink, Dr. Alexander Schauss, director of the American Institute for Biosocial Research, discovered that exposure to a specific shade, Baker-Miller Pink, had the effect of reducing aggressive behaviour in test subjects by lowering their heart rate, pulse, and respiration. The colour was first used as wall paint in some prison cells at the Naval Correctional Center in Seattle with the intention of calming violent inmates. In 1978, the facility reported that only 15 minutes of exposure to the colour was necessary to reduce aggressive behaviour. In 1979, the study was replicated at the Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose; however, after inmates were placed in the painted holding cell for several hours, they had begun to scratch the paint off the walls with their fingernails. Ultimately, despite a small decrease in the incident rate for the first month of the Baker-Miller Pink experiment, over a longer period of time, the incident rate increased and even peaked compared to pre-pink months.<sup>4</sup> Baker-Miller Pink soon appeared in a variety of other contexts, including in locker rooms designated for visiting teams, psychiatric facilities, and public housing estates.

Recently, fluorescent blue lights have been installed in public spaces such as washrooms with the goal of reducing the visibility of veins to deter intravenous drug use. Though the intention may be to reduce harm or increase public health and safety, the actual outcomes of this intervention into public space can be ambiguous, or even harmful. Studies have shown that, overall, the presence of blue lighting is not

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Pellegrini, Alexander G. Schauss, and Michael E. Miller, "Room Color and Aggression in A Criminal Detention Holding Cell: A Test of the 'Tranquilizing Pink' Hypothesis," *Orthomolecular Psychiatry*. Volume 10, Number 3, 1981. pp. 174-181.

effective in preventing intravenous drug use, rather, it makes using in these environments more difficult and hazardous by increasing risky injecting practices, such as injecting by touch rather than sight, injecting into the groin or neck, and increasing the chance of injecting into an artery rather than a vein.<sup>5</sup>

By immersing us within the mechanisms of these disciplinary strategies, Kiwanga invites us to think about their social implications: do architectural attempts to solve social problems work toward the public good as supposedly intended, or are these intercessions more invested in social division and the control of bodies?



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #3**

---

5 Stephen Parkin and Ross Coomber. "Fluorescent blue lights, injecting drug use and related health risk in public conveniences: Findings from a qualitative study of micro-injecting environments." *Health & Place*. Volume 16, Issue 4, July 2010, pp. 629-637.

#### 4.

##### *A Primer* 2017

HD video, colour, silent, 7:40 mins

Co-produced by The Power Plant, Toronto and the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago

Courtesy of Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin and Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

The silent film *A Primer* pans across a tripartite structure which has been painted in reference to a number of colour-based design innovations: spinach green and warm white, a reference to the introduction of green into hospital settings which physically improved surgical procedures and psychologically invoked nature's healing powers; white Ripolin, the first commercially available brand of enamel paint which figured prominently in architect Le Corbusier's argument against ornamentation; and Baker-Miller pink, which was believed to calm aggressive inmates in prisons in the late 1970s.

In 1914, at St. Luke's Hospital in San Francisco, Dr. Harry Sherman, finding traditional whites too jarringly bright and contrasting to properly see detail during surgery, had the lower portion of his operating room walls coloured spinach green, which better allowed him to focus on his surgical procedures. Green, being the complement of blood red, allowed his eyes to see the details and textures of wounds more precisely.

In *The Decorative Art of Today*, architect Le Corbusier outlined his argument against colour and superfluous ornamentation, advocating that these things be covered up or replaced with a coat of white Ripolin, an act of architectural hygiene for the modern age; that whiteness is equated with cleanliness, rationality, purity. And with that architectural hygiene follows a personal, social hygiene: "Then comes inner cleanliness, for the course adopted leads to refusal to allow anything which is not correct, authorised, intended, desired, thought-out: no action before thought."

In addition to the partial wall structure, the film features a number of objects: a tropical house plant, an oscillating fan, and a wooden blind. While each of these objects is reminiscent of commonplace corporate or institutional decoration, they are also evocative of a much darker history of racial and social hygiene and segregation. The fan and the tropical plant, for example, reference a Victorian-era obsession with

cleanliness and air circulation, obsessions which were transferred to colonized settings and used to bolster the racialized narratives the informed the colonial project. *A Primer* compels gallery-goers to high-tune their senses and observe the structural conditions of their environment. Colour and design are never truly neutral.



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #4**

## **5. Film Series**

Building on concepts explored in *A wall is just a wall (and nothing more at all)*, Kapwani Kiwanga has curated a program of three videos to accompany the exhibition: Anri Sala's *Dammi i Colori*, Gordon Matta-Clark's *City Slivers*, and John Smith's *Hackney Marshes – November 4, 1977*. Each video will be featured in our mezzanine gallery for the duration of a month. The screening program provides an opportunity to delve into some of the ideas and perspectives that informed *A wall is just a wall (and nothing more at all)*, and to consider different artistic perspectives on our collective and divergent experiences of architecture, design, and urban planning.

2 February—4 March

***Dammi i Colori***

Anri Sala, 2003, 16 mins, colour, stereo sound

Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Hauser & Wirth; Johnen Galerie, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

*Dammi i Colori* features Albania's capital city, Tirana, three years after a program of urban transformation was initiated to paint its buildings in a range of vivid colours. Scenes of the colourful city filmed by Sala are presented with a voice-over in which the painter Edi Rama, the city's then-mayor and leader of the project, explains the transformation process. Rama states that he wanted to transform Tirana from "a city where you are doomed to live by fate into a city where you choose to live."

**Anri Sala Biography:**

Anri Sala was born in 1974 in Tirana. He received his BA in Painting and Sculpture from the National Academy of Arts Tirana, studied Video at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and completed post-graduate studies in film directing at Le Fresnoy Studio national des arts contemporains in Tourcoing. The artist currently lives and works in Berlin.

Sala has received the Vincent Award (2014); the 10th Benesse Prize (2013); the Absolut Art Award (2011); and the Young Artist Prize at the Venice Biennale (2001). He has taken part in many group exhibitions and biennials, including the 12th Havana Biennial (2015); the Sharjah Biennial 11 (2013); the 9th Gwangju Biennale (2012); dOCUMENTA (13) (2012); the 29th São Paulo Biennial (2010); the 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007); and the 4th Berlin Biennale (2006).

In 2013, Anri Sala represented France in the 55th Venice Biennale with his exhibition *Ravel Ravel Unravel*.

6 March—8 April

***City Slivers***

Gordon Matta-Clark, 1976, 15 mins, colour, silent, Super 8mm film on video

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Matta-Clark's *City Slivers* is an ode to New York City's landscape. Using photograph mattes to partially cover the camera lens, Matta-Clark fragmented the film frame into narrow vertical strips that offer glimpses of urban life and captures the syncopated rhythm and texture of the city. The film features scenes such as aerial views of taxi-filled avenues, the Empire State Building presiding over the Manhattan skyline, and people moving through revolving doors, with many of the viewpoints contrasting the static presence of the buildings and architectural structures against the ceaseless flow of traffic and pedestrians.

**Gordon Matta-Clark Biography:**

Gordon Matta-Clark was born in New York in 1943 and died in 1978. He studied French literature at the Sorbonne, Paris and Architecture at Cornell University, Ithaca. From the early 1970s, as a founding member of the artist-run Food Restaurant in New York's SoHo neighborhood, Matta-Clark participated in numerous group exhibitions and projects. His work was presented in documenta 5, Kassel; and at exhibitions in Sao Paolo, Berlin, Zurich, and in the 9th Biennale de Paris. Major projects by Matta-Clark were staged in Aachen, Paris, and Antwerp.

Following his death, major retrospective exhibitions have been organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; and IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez, Valencia, among others. In 2007, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, honored him with a retrospective entitled *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure*.

10 April–6 May

***Hackney Marshes - November 4th 1977***

John Smith, 1978, 15 mins, colour, silent, Original format: 16mm film  
Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London

An improvisation recorded over the course of one day, starting at dawn and finishing after dusk. The film was edited in camera and shot from one camera position in the middle of one of the 112 football pitches that cover Hackney Marsh, a location chosen because of the similarities between the surrounding buildings and objects (identical blocks of flats, goalposts etc.) By cutting between precisely matched framings of similar objects, illusions of movement were produced, disrupting representational readings of the landscape. Unforeseen events occurring in the vicinity were also recorded, determining to some extent the subsequent filming. Through selection of shots and changes in cutting pace and speed of camera movement, the film fluctuates between record and abstraction.

**John Smith Biography:**

John Smith was born in Walthamstow, London in 1952 and studied film at the Royal College of Art in the mid 1970s. Inspired in his formative years by conceptual art and structural film, but also fascinated by the immersive power of narrative and the spoken word, he has developed an extensive body of work that subverts the perceived boundaries between documentary and fiction, representation and abstraction. Often rooted in everyday life, his meticulously crafted films playfully explore and expose the language of cinema.

Since 1972 Smith has made over fifty film, video, and installation works that have been shown in independent cinemas, art galleries and on television around the world and awarded prizes at many international film festivals. He received a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists in 2011, and in 2013 he was the winner of Film London's Jarman Award.

6. (sculptural works: north to south)

**Écorché: Alberta Hospital (Ponoka, Alberta)** 2018

**Écorché: Colonel Belcher Hospital – Ward base (Calgary, Alberta)** 2018

**Écorché: Ponoka Municipal Hospital (Ponoka, Alberta)** 2018

**Écorché: Colonel Belcher Hospital – Corridor base (Calgary, Alberta)** 2018

Mixed media

Commissioned by Esker Foundation, Calgary, 2018

(archival photographs: north to south)

**South Plant, R.R Donnelly & Sons** ca. 1946-1950

R.R. Donnelly & Sons Company Archive, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

**Surgical Clinic of Dr. Gosset, view towards a staircase** 1933

Archives de l'Assistance Publique Hôpitaux de Paris

**Richmond Hill Public School** 1955

Panda Associates fonds, Canadian Architectural Archives, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary

**Slough Estates Toronto** 1948

Panda Associates fonds, Canadian Architectural Archives, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary

In art historical parlance, an *écorché*—which translates to “flayed” or “skinned”—is an anatomical model with the skin removed, exposing the superficial musculature for study or accurate reproduction by artists or anatomists. Instead of anatomical models, the four *écorchés* in this gallery are replica cross-sections of three no longer operational Alberta hospitals: the Colonel Belcher Hospital, a former veteran’s hospital that was located on 4th Street SW; the Ponoka Municipal Hospital, Ponoka’s former general hospital that was demolished in 2017; and the Alberta Hospital in Ponoka, a now empty building that was once Alberta’s largest psychiatric institution. Kiwanga has exposed the structural components of these buildings for study or consideration and in doing so has situated the building as its own form of archive, foregrounding bygone building materials or techniques and the aesthetic tendencies of twentieth century institutions in Alberta.

The beige and green walls in this gallery allude to the increasing popularity of colour in hospitals throughout the twentieth century. In 1914, Dr. Harry Sherman, a surgeon based at St. Luke’s Hospital in San Francisco, concluded that a spinach green operating theatre reduced eyestrain during surgery, the logic being that green was the complimentary colour to hemoglobin red, or the colour of human blood



and tissue. Spinach green paint was applied to the lower six feet of the walls of an operating room at St Luke's, above which Sherman specified a "bright buff" paint application. He wrote that this colour combination "imitates fairly well the optical environment out in the fields or among low bushes, where the ground of the surroundings, to above the level of the eyes, is green, and the sky overhead is full of white daylight."<sup>6</sup> Sherman published his theory in the *California State Journal of Medicine*, catalyzing a trend that would spread to other hospitals in the ensuing decades.<sup>7</sup> Similar colours also appeared hospital settings for therapeutic purposes. Green, which colour theorist Faber Birren suggested was "symbolic of nature, balance, normality,"<sup>8</sup> would become particularly pervasive across hospital interiors and medical paraphernalia throughout the mid- to late-twentieth century.

The two-toned paint treatment is echoed in the folded photographs placed along the gallery walls. Kiwanga has selected archival photos that feature the two-toned wall treatment seen in this gallery and in the *Linear Paintings* and has folded them against the wall at the dado line—or the line at which the two paint colours meet—an active gesture that indicates critical engagement with the archival materials and research that inform many of the works in the exhibition.



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #6**

---

6 Harry M. Sherman, "The Green Operating Room at St. Luke's Hospital," *California State Journal of Medicine* 12.5 (1914): 182.

7 David Pantalony, "The colour of medicine," *CMAJ/JAMC* 181.6/7 (2009): 402-403.

8 Faber Birren, *Colour & Human Response* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 122.

7. (clockwise from left)

***Desire Paths: SW Calgary*** 2018

***Desire Paths: 17th Ave SE*** 2018

***Desire Paths: Alyth Railyard*** 2018

***Desire Paths: Calgary Municipal Airport*** 2018

***Desire Paths: Eau Claire Lumber Mill*** 2018

Printed cotton fabric and steel mesh

The prints in this gallery are derived from aerial photographs of Calgary that feature visible desire lines. Known by many names including donkey paths, social trails, or pirate paths, desire lines are informal pathways created where pedestrian traffic has repeatedly deviated from formal walkways, or where pedestrians have carved paths where no paved sidewalks exist. These paths can be read as subtle acts of disobedience, or as signifiers of the flaws or oversights in a community's design.<sup>9</sup>

The black desire lines serve as abstracted snapshots of different areas of Calgary captured at various moments in its history. One print is derived from a 1924 photograph of what is now known as Prince's Island Park, when it was still the Eau Claire Lumber Mill, while another captures the Alyth Rail Yard in 1952—which is still a working rail yard, visible from the gallery.

Supporting the prints are sheets of steel mesh—material intended to reinforce concrete for usage in buildings, bridges, or other infrastructure. The organic quality of the meandering black desire lines and the draped cotton is set in relief against the rigidity of the gridded mesh and its evocation of the Cartesian plane and the grid-based city planning that has marked a significant portion of Calgary's development. This juxtaposition can be read as a visual manifestation of the possibility of subversion of or resistance from circumscribed places and structures, and of the agency that we exercise in our everyday lives.



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #7**

---

<sup>9</sup> Robert Moor, "Tracing (and Erasing) New York's Lines of Desire," *The New Yorker*, 20 February 2017.

## 8.

### ***Jalousie* 2018**

Steel tubing, mirrorpane, and silicone

Commissioned by Esker Foundation, Calgary, 2018

Courtesy of Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin; Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris;

Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

*Jalousie* is a sculptural folding screen comprised of steel tubing and one-way mirror, or glass that is designed to appear reflective on one side and transparent on the other. While Kiwanga's chosen materials evoke a contemporary setting, with one-way mirror appearing frequently as a surveillance mechanism in airports or interrogation rooms, *Jalousie*'s form references the visual vocabulary of colonial architecture and design.

Typically a *jalousie* is a slatted shutter or blind that appears frequently in tropical settings. Its adjustable louvers allow for one to peer out without being seen, while also creating shade and facilitating the circulation of cool air—a central concern of proponents of the public hygiene movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Subjective concepts of Victorian-era 'hygiene' were mobilized by European colonists as a means of enforcing hegemonic colonial rule, and of justifying racial segregation and the surveillance of racialized bodies.<sup>10</sup>

Kiwanga's gesture towards the intersection of public 'hygiene' practices and the colonial project demonstrates that the mechanisms of surveillance, discipline, and social management explored in *jalousie* and elsewhere in the exhibition are not applied or monitored equitably. Many of the ideas in this exhibition allude to these systemic power disparities, or to Simone Brown's assertion that "...rather than seeing surveillance as something inaugurated by new technologies...to see it as ongoing is to insist that we factor in how racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain and intersecting surveillances of our present order."<sup>11</sup>

*Jalousie*'s central position within the gallery space allows viewers to occupy either side of this power dynamic—the observer, or the observed—depending on which side of the sculpture one is standing. This flexibility of position prompts us to consider our relationship to or complicity with the power structures that underlie these mechanisms of social control.



**EXPLORE MORE  
WITH THE ESKER APP  
AUDIO TRACK #8**

10 Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Nationalism, Colonialism, and Public Health* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-4.

11 Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 8-9.



4th floor, 1011 - 9 Ave S.E.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2G 0H7, Canada  
[www.eskerfoundation.com](http://www.eskerfoundation.com)