

**THE CULTURAL TRANSFERS WORKSHOP SERIES**  
Wednesday, February 26, 2014 from 4:00 – 5:30  
Carleton University Art Gallery, St. Patricks Building

**Stacy Ernst (Cultural Mediations PhD Candidate)**

**Shifting Epistemology and Going Beyond the Grid: a de-colonial gesture**

Anishnaabe artist Carl Beam (1943 – 2005) believed that Western lives were restricted by what he called the “scientific information grid.” That is, knowledge created out of the impulse to measure, chart, dissect, organize, and categorize. In his opinion this type of knowledge not only restricted, but also subjugated individuals. Throughout his career, Beam created trenchant non-linear artworks that made visual the possibility of going beyond this grid and, by extension, the systems of oppression it created. This paper will critically examine two of Beam’s Columbus works, *The North American Iceberg* (1985) and *Sauvage* (1988). Like many of his works, these oscillate between putting forth an Aboriginal epistemology and exposing the gaps in Euro-American knowledge created by an over-reliance on scientific information. By bringing together seemingly conflicted visual signifiers culled from national and international archives and combining them with those from his personal archive, these works interrogate the colonial narrative of North America and the nationalisms that arose out of it. In this way, Beam used hybridity as a de-colonial strategy to disturb and subvert the oppression that Western scientific thinking imposed. Consequently, Beam not only challenged the perceived authority of scientific knowledge as a viable epistemology, but his works rewrote the history of the nation from its margins, thereby revealing the violence and exclusions of its founding.

**Nathan Flis (SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, SSAC)**

**Creatures of the New World: Revealing the Old World Sources for the Totem Animals in John Verelst’s Four Indian Kings (1710)**

*The Four Indian Kings* (Library and Archives Canada) is a group of portraits commissioned by Queen Anne to commemorate the 1710 visit to London of four Iroquois leaders who were international ambassadors for their respective clans. By identifying 'Old World' sources for the totem animals accompanying the Iroquois leaders in their portraits, my paper questions the authenticity of other aspects of these pictures, while at the same time revealing their cross-cultural-hybridity (i.e. as objects imbued with both European and Indigenous qualities). Ruth Philips recently suggested that the "clumsiness" of the animal renderings in the portraits may reflect the fact that they are loosely based on totem signatures of the clans represented, and that the inclusion of the animals in the portraits was, in the first place, at the request of the sitters (*Museum Pieces*, 2011, p. 241). The identification of European sources for the animals only partly negates this claim, as the inclusion of the animals may still have been at the request of the sitters. However, the format of the four portraits also links them to popular 16th- and 17th-century sets of engravings depicting the four 'continents', prints that usually juxtaposed a female allegorical figure with an exotic animal identifying that part of the world. Delving into the detail of these portraits throws into relief the differences between the early modern European perception of animals as mere adornments (i.e. as merely copy-able, reproducible objects), and the Indigenous perspective, that is, one of veneration and spiritual identification with the animal. Attending to the animals in the *Four Indian Kings* thus reveals an important and fascinating episode of cross-cultural negotiation concerning historical perceptions of ethnography and nature.