

## Compound Theory 2a

*2015, Colour, Stereo Audio, 2:29 minutes, 1280x720 HD*

*A brief proposal of other-creaturally perceptions of time and space as translated through technology into the human sensorium.*

Terry Billings is fascinated by research challenging human centered biases about animal cognition and communication. She highlights recent studies into the breadth of language skills of creatures such as Prairie Dogs. Bird species have un-nerving capacities to acquire extensive functioning vocabularies of human words, while humans have had less success, in Western cultures, in learning bird. Communication between marine mammals is clearly far more complex than signaling danger or the location of food. Pigeons can distinguish, apparently, between the works of art by different artists.

Billings' work over several decades has explored how the so-called natural order in this region persists in relation to the impact of human settlement. She has un-wound wasps nests, projected animals onto the buildings they have been displaced by, and assembled sand-hill crane feathers to cascade down gallery walls. Always lyrical, her work is also decentering, reminding us of the experience and challenges facing creatures we have forgotten or romanticized. This video installation stakes a new trajectory in this ongoing process of identification with our non-human neighbours.

We are conditioned by TV and film to assuming that video or film images we see can document the experience of other humans. In *Compound Theory 2a* Billings challenges us to extend this convention through an approximation of the experience of a non-human life form. Something of a convention of nature documentaries, this not without precedent, but the installation format and the relative absence of narrative engages the viewer in powerful ways. Using a camera mounted on quadcopter, a small-scale multirotor helicopter operated by remote control, Billings has simulated the flight of an insect through pasture north of Edam SK. The resulting image is fractured by something akin to the hexagonal faceting of an insect's eye.

Too often we move through nature in the isolation of a motor vehicle or along a constructed path through parkland or in the conventionalized and highly mannered outdoors of public space. Raising more questions than its scope can answer, *Compound Theory 2a* nonetheless challenges us to consider the perspectives of a different kind of body, of different modes of vision, and how variant means of moving through space and time might effect non-human consciousness, experience and perception. This work does anticipate a deepening engagement with the biological other from which we are so dangerously estranged.

-Bruce Russell

*The artist gratefully acknowledges support of the Saskatchewan Arts Board in the creation of this work.*