

### **Crossing Bloodlines in the Dark**

This photo-based installation explores themes of class, migration, displacement, land, lineage and resilience as they apply to the Italian-Canadian diaspora. Juxtaposing historical images documenting the expropriation of the Goose Village in Montreal, a predominantly Italian and Irish working class ghetto; images of heirloom peonies that have survived 4 generations of displacement; and a family photo of ancestors who remained in Italy, this work symbolizing the journey from homeland to new home, the separation of family lineages through migration, and the resilience of surviving in a place where Italians were considered expendable and undesirable aside from their value as inexpensive sources of labour. This work is timely as it follows an official apology by the Canadian government towards the Italian-Canadian community for internment camps during World War II. As the Italian diaspora witnessed the devastating impact of the pandemic in Italy, this time is a ripe opportunity to uncover and reclaim the lost and silenced stories of Italian-Canadians, and re-examine them with a new understanding and recognition of the oppression, violence and uprooting that has shaped Italian-Canadian heritage and identity. Italian-Canadians have since made an indelible mark in Canadian culture. This is part of our story.

### **Bio**

**Maria-Hélène Pacelli** (she, they) is a multidisciplinary feminist artist of Italian and French-Canadian descent living as a settler and diaspora on traditional Algonquin Anishinabe/Mohawk territory.

Maria-Hélène completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photography) at Concordia University (2006). Her work as an artist has been intertwined with a long-standing fascination with the intersections between art and social justice. Being involved with the Québec student movement (2005), working with street-based theatre collective Théâtre UTIL (2007), feminist artist-run centre Galerie La Centrale-Powerhouse (2006) and founding artist collective MOBIL (2006-2008), Maria-Hélène examined the relationship between art and activism through artistic practice and research at the graduate level, focusing on feminist political theatre. After completing a Master's in Feminist and Gender Studies (formerly Women's Studies) at the University of Ottawa (2012), Maria-Hélène released an independent album, *Stories the Land Will Tell* (2016), and produced an original play, *Ultraviolet Life* at the Ottawa Fringe Festival (2018). Maria-Hélène completed an Artist Residency with the School of Photographic Arts Ottawa (SPAO) in 2021 and continues to explore socio-political issues through artistic practice.