BLAKE FITZPATRICK AND VID INGELEVICS CONSIDER THE NATURE OF COMMEMORATION IN NEW EXHIBITION AT PREFIX

(Toronto) – Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present The Labour of Commemoration, a solo exhibition by Toronto artist duo Blake Fitzpatrick and Vid Ingelevics, curated by Jayne Wilkinson. Presenting the world premiere of a major video installation, along with a selection of related works, the exhibition represents the culmination of more than a decade of research into the history of the post-1989 Berlin Wall.

An opening reception will be held on Thursday, October 5, 2017 from 7 to 10 PM at Prefix, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The artists and curator will be present. An artists’ walk through will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at 2 PM at Prefix. The exhibition continues until November 25. The gallery is open to the public from Wednesday to Saturday, 12 to 5 PM, and by appointment. Admission is free.

Completed in 1961, the Berlin Wall stood for twenty-eight years until its fall in 1989. Interestingly, the same amount of time has elapsed since its demolition and the present day. This means that, going forward, the number of years since its demolition will surpass the number of years that it was in existence. Likewise, there are now commemorative pieces of the wall that have stood outside of Berlin for the same amount of time that they were inside. With this in mind, The Labour of Commemoration explores the ritualistic nature of commemoration as it relates to the tensions between history and memory through its close attention to the memorial activity focused on the Berlin Wall, both in Berlin and in North America.

The key work in the exhibition is a three-channel video installation that documents the official celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, held in 2014 in Berlin. Simultaneously projected onto three adjacent walls, the video installation compresses the construction and dismantling of the infrastructure for the event, which took place over the course of fourteen days, into forty-six minutes. The left projection captures the eight days leading up to the event, as the city is
gradually taken over by preparatory activities. In the central projection, the focus is on the memorial day itself, from early morning to late evening, as large crowds occupy the streets. The right projection shows the swift dismantling of the celebratory structures, as the city returns to its normal day-to-day activity.

The exhibition also includes a set of twelve 3D-printed replicas of a single fragment of the wall. Reproduced in various sizes, the replicas were generated from a souvenir "original," which was gleaned from the artists' own collection of memorabilia. Surprisingly, the cost to produce the copies was greater than the actual market value of the object itself, which, in turn, can easily be faked through more economical means. Thus, as the copy is more valuable than the original, the souvenir market—which typically accompanies most commemorative events—is turned on its head.

Also featured in the exhibition is a limited-edition artists' book that tracks the movement of a set of six two-ton slabs of the wall. Acquired by a young entrepreneur as an investment, the pieces travelled extensively, finally landing in a vacant lot in Truro, Nova Scotia. Featuring texts and photos from local press, along with interviews with local citizens, the artists' book details the controversy that surrounded the presence of the slabs in the community. Ultimately, the slabs were relocated to an agricultural college campus some ten kilometres away.

The final element of the exhibition is a group of photographs and a video that reference the end point of the border wall between the United States and Mexico at San Diego/Tijuana. The video records an interview with a man from the Mexican side who relays a story of a commemorative obelisk that disappeared from the American side. Originally conceived as a symbol of Mexican and American friendship, the missing pillar is now a marker of desecration and commemorative failure.

Accompanying the exhibition is a curatorial essay by Jayne Wilkinson that situates the artists' work within its historical, social and political context. Produced as a two-page monograph, it is available, in print and digital formats, for free to the public.

A companion exhibition, The Mobile Ruin, is concurrently being presented by the artists from September 23 to December 24, 2017, at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. For more information, please visit www.harbourfrontcentre.com/visualarts/2017/the-mobile-ruin/

About the artists
Blake Fitzpatrick and Vid Ingelevics have worked as a collaborative artist duo since 2003.

Blake Fitzpatrick holds the position of professor and chair in the School of Image Arts, Ryerson University. A Toronto-based photographer, curator and writer, his research interests include the photographic representation of the nuclear era, visual responses to contemporary militarism and the post-Cold War history, memory and mobility of the Berlin Wall. He is a member of the Critical Topography Research Group at Trent University and the Atomic Photographers Guild, an international group of photographers dedicated to making visible all aspects of the nuclear era. He has exhibited his work in solo and group exhibitions in Canada, the United States and Europe, including exhibitions at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin and, with the Atomic Photographers Guild, in Australia, Switzerland and the United States. His curatorial projects examine the work of contemporary artists who respond to war and social conflict and include War at a Distance (co-curated with Roger Simon and Karyn Sandoles), Disaster Topographics and The Atomic Photographers Guild: Visibility and Invisibility in the Nuclear Era. In 2013, he co-curated an exhibition of the work of Arthur Goss, Toronto’s first official photographer, for the Ryerson Image Centre. His writing and artwork have appeared in the journals Public, Topia, History of Photography and Fuse Magazine, and in the anthologies The Cultural Work of the Photograph in Canada and Camera Atomica.
Vid Ingelevics is a Toronto-based artist, writer, and independent curator. Often working with photography and video in an installation format, he has produced projects that range from explorations of personal or institutional memory and the impact of forced displacement to making visible the previously absent histories of urban sites. Ingelevics’ artwork has been shown in solo and group exhibitions across Canada, the United States and Europe, at institutions including the Photographers’ Gallery (London), Sprengel Museum (Hanover), Fotomuseum Winterthur and the Nederlands Fotomuseum (Rotterdam). His writing has appeared in numerous art publications, including Canadian Art, C Magazine and Prefix Photo. Ingelevics is currently an associate professor at Ryerson University, where he teaches undergraduate courses in photography and graduate courses in the Photography Preservation and Collections Management and Documentary Media programmes.

About the curator

Jayne Wilkinson is a Toronto-based writer, editor and curator. She holds an MA in Art History and Critical Theory from the University of British Columbia (Vancouver). Her curatorial projects focus on contemporary art and photo-based practices, with specific attention to issues of surveillance, security and representation. Her critical writing has been published in C Magazine, Prefix Photo and Inuit Art Quarterly, among others. She is currently assistant curator at the Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Mississauga.

About Prefix

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts through exhibitions, publications, public programmes and related activities.

Acknowledgements

For their support of The Labour of Commemoration, Prefix gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Toronto, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Photo: Blake Fitzpatrick and Vid Ingelevics, video still from The Labour of Commemoration, 2017. Courtesy the artists.

For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artists or curator, please contact the Gallery Manager at 416-591-0357 or info@prefix.ca.