Immersion has become a ubiquitous element of contemporary art practice and museum display, with interactive projections, expanded digital screens, surround sound environments, virtual overlays and haptic surfaces increasingly employed to heighten audience engagement. Immersive technologies create the idea of a “seamless” work of art by embedding users within the exhibit text and facilitating the user’s tactile and embodied encounters with art and history. Contextualizing the uses of immersive technologies in exhibits and installations in Canada alongside the development of technological nationalism during the mid-twentieth century, this talk investigates immersion not just in terms of its aesthetic and affective qualities but also as a social and political technology rooted in settler colonial histories. It also proposes that immersion can and should be reconceptualized through Indigenous and decolonial thought and practice.

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