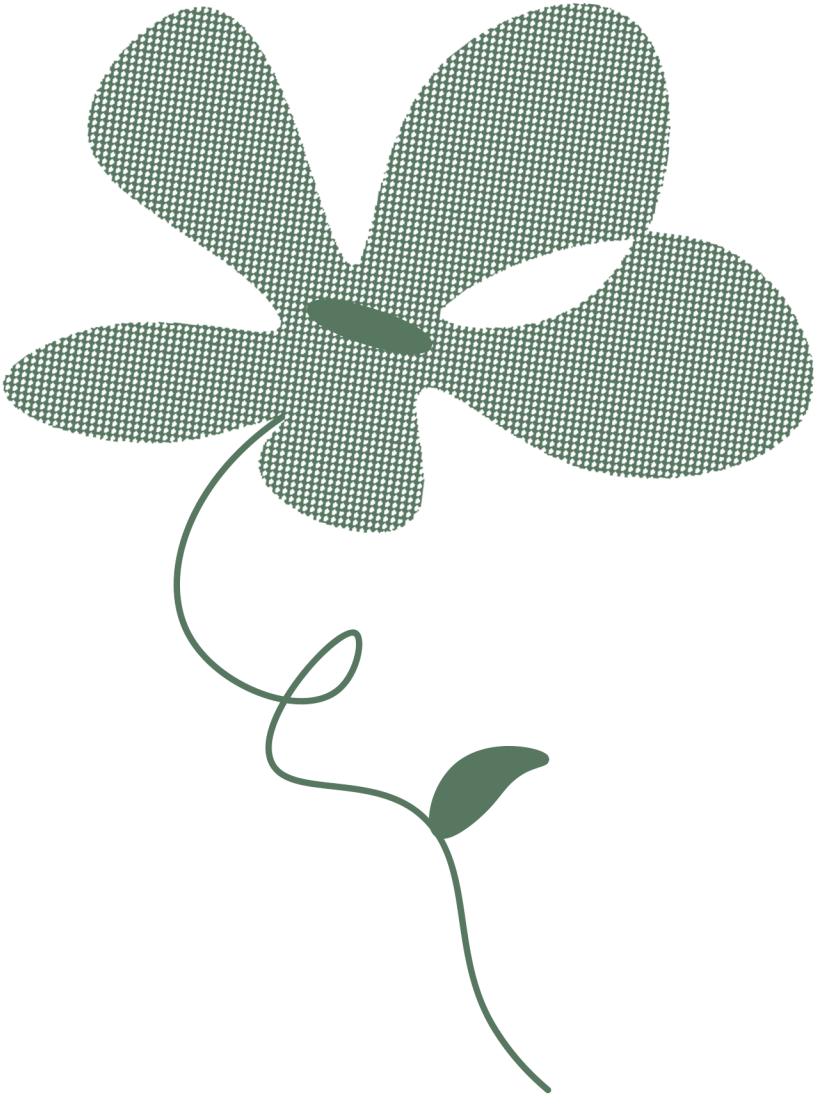


N° 2



Emerging Art Writers Program



We would like to acknowledge the land and Treaty 7 region where we reside and create. We invite our readers to take a moment to reflect on the ancestral lands you are situated on, wherever you are in the world.

This publication was designed and printed where the Bow and Elbow River meet, traditionally known by the Blackfoot name, Mohkínstsis, and often referred to as the City of Calgary, Alberta

This region is home of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. Alberta University of the Arts is located on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the First Peoples of the Treaty 7, including the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations.

As an intersectional group of Indigenous, immigrant, settler and visiting people, we are eternally grateful to those who have cared for this land in the past, present, and future.

EMERGING ART WRITERS PROGRAM

This 2021 publication marks the second edition of the *Emerging Art Writers Program (EAWP)*, a not-for-credit training opportunity offered through the Illingworth Kerr Gallery (IKG) for Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) students. The program offers students the chance to engage with instructors and professional writers, to learn about markets for writing on contemporary art, to develop their writing, and to distribute student work and ideas through publishing.

The first iteration of the program launched in September of 2019 and continued into 2020 with eight students: Carmen Belanger, Oualie Frost, Caro Gingrich, Levin Ifko, Meghan Ivany, Chantal Lafond, Raewyn Reid, and Yuii Savage and the mentors, Dr. Mark Clintberg and Nancy Tousley. A digital version of that publication is posted on the IKG website.

The mentors for this year's program were Shauna Thompson and Amy Fung, and additional workshops were led by Jaclyn Bruneau and Maya Wilson-Sanchez.

This year's edition opened with a seminar led by Dr. Clintberg titled, *Write Through This: Writing for Contemporary Art Markets*. Open to all current AUArts students, the seminar focused on freelance art writing for emerging artists and writers, and covered topics ranging from copyediting and communicating with editors to financial management and contracts. Following the seminar, students were invited to submit letters of interest and short writing samples in application for the program, and 12 students were selected to participate:

Janira Moncayo	Kristie Feener
Lauren Jacobson	Marissa Bender
Sheila Addiscott	Rachel MacKinnon
Sanaa Humayun	Elise Findlay
Natalia Ionescu	Taylor Harder
Leah Naicken	Enya-Morgan Heinrichs

Over the course of several months, the participants were trained in many skills by mentors and workshop leaders: writing exercises, peer review, editing, pitching articles to editors, and DIY publishing among other topics. Students, mentors, and workshop leaders were paid for their contributions.

Upon completion of the workshop series, each of the participants had produced a final draft of their writing to be published in this collection.

We are delighted to partner with *C Magazine* in our distribution campaign.

We hope you enjoy the results.

Dr. Mark Clintberg is an Associate Professor at AUArts where he teaches art history and research methodologies. Journals and periodicals that have published his writing include: *The Senses & Society*, *C Magazine*, *ETC.*, *BlackFlash*, *Canadian Art*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Border Crossings*, *The Phillip Review*, *Photofile*, *Arte al Dia International*, and *Art.es Magazine*.



Photo by John Gaucher.



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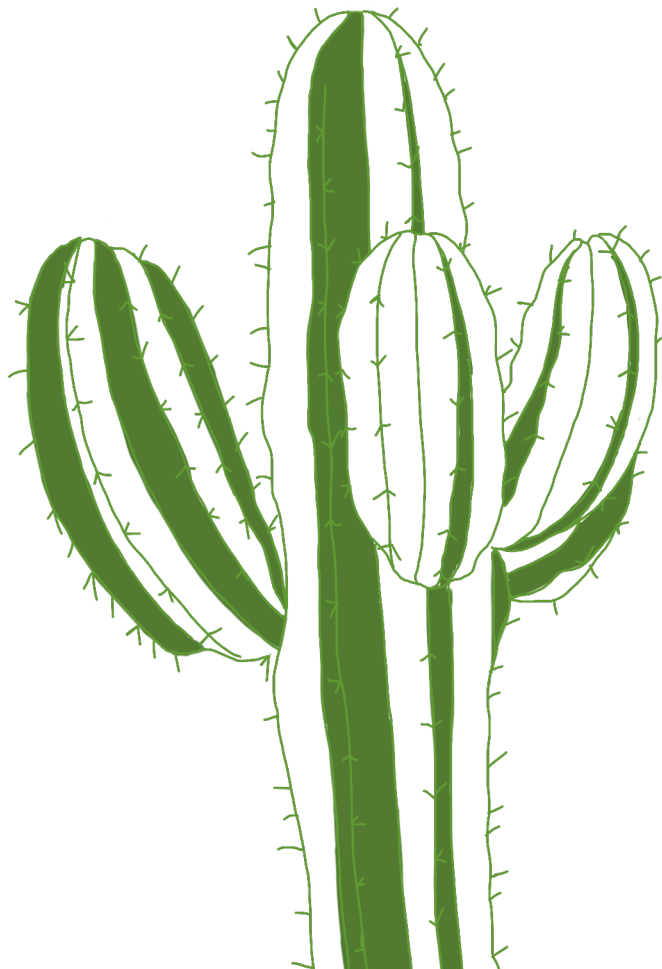
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ART CRITICISM

Mentored by Amy Fung



Amy Fung is a writer and organizer working across intersections of histories and identities. She is currently a Doctoral candidate at the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies at Carleton University and received her Masters in English and Film Studies from the University of Alberta in 2009 with a specialization in criticism, poetics, and the moving image. With almost twenty years of freelance newspaper and magazine writing experience, her texts have been commissioned and published by festivals, museums, and publications nationally and internationally. She often guest lectures and facilitates writing workshops across the country. Her first book, *Before I was a Critic, I was a Human Being* addresses Canada's mythologies of multiculturalism and settler colonialism through the lens of a national art critic (Artspeak and Book*hug 2019).



AN UNFAMILIAR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

by Janira Moncayo

Through standardization and international regulations, each airport is supposed to be the same. Baggage Drop-Off. Customs. Duty Free. Solely a place for transition between one city and the other. Yet, for me, an international student, who had never lived abroad before, the airport feels like a microcosm of the city I am entering. The large-scale sculptures of the national wildlife at baggage claim, the Rundle Stone on the accent walls in-between concourses and the Tim Horton's, a ubiquitous Canadian coffee shop, next to the airport directory are all first and lasting impressions of what a foreigner will encounter upon landing.

The realization I am traveling to Calgary surprisingly begins with the uneasiness at the gate of departure. Preparing travel documents, packing and even, saying goodbye to my family, all felt like fast-paced errands with an extremely distant outcome. At the gate, the magnitude of going alone to a completely unfamiliar country finally settles in. In theory, it should be simple. I should find my gate and just wait for boarding. But I always notice the staring. Somehow through their glances, they already know I am the odd one out. I take a look at my slim boots, barely equipped to handle snow, the pink pants that were too thick to pack in my suitcase, or the souvenirs my parents gifted me to always remember home. With their neutral-coloured clothing, plaid shirts and Blundstone boots, I feel stared at like I am a wild creature. In this odd moment where our gazes meet, I first learn I am not like them. I am not a local. Before we even get on the plane, I am already in a state of defense and overthinking. My vulnerability, my accent, and my skin color become heightened when I am suddenly a minority. And as I urgently search for anybody that remotely looks like me: terrified, disoriented and carrying a non-Canadian passport, the flight attendant makes the general boarding announcement.

When we touch down in Calgary, the differences I feel inside are materialized into surrounding objects. The airport infrastructure assertively introduces itself and this city as one. Plastered on the maple-leaf wallpapers, visible in the landscape paintings and symbolized in the metal moose sculpture, the airport gives me the first glimpse of the place I will be living in for the next four years of university. We are received by the “Welcome to / Bienvenue au Canada” graphics on the wall, covered in a variety of sizes of maple leaves in different tones of orange. The leaves flow with us through the long, carpeted hallways and I realize this is the first time I have ever seen them outside of the confinements of Google Images.

Walking through the international arrivals corridor, I encounter the sight of the provincial scenery through Jason Carter's paintings. The geometric shapes, thick lines and blocks of brown, blue, and green capture the nature and wildlife of Southern Alberta. The massive mountains and rivers overlap over each other in the background, as canoes invite the viewer to visit and experience these places. As I come closer to customs, the 13 canvases of the Rocky Mountains in Carter's *The Splendor of the Bow Valley* finish the announcement that I've landed in an entirely different landscape to the one I lived before. Contrasting to the people's staring, the paintings comfort and invite me to fantasize of fresh air, diverse animals and wide, vast forests.

In this limited space, Carter's paintings deservingly occupy the majority of the walls, but within the city, outside the airport's confinement, the First Nations communities remain unrecognized. How is the curation of the airport's symbols representing its diverse population and how much is it idealizing or excluding? Diversity is used to decor the walls, but limited to solely natural landscapes in varying mediums. As I look around me and the few travelers of visible darker skin lining together towards customs, I wonder how much of that diversity is used to acknowledge the land, represent the people, or to encourage our consumption. In this moment, I find myself in a dispute of unfamiliarity to this space, but questioning if the people who are meant to be comfortable here can feel alienated as well. Could Carter feel seen on these walls, but alone outside them?

As I finally make my way to the exit with suitcases full of clothing, toiletries, and conflicting feelings, *Arrivals* by Jeff de Boer, a sculpture of flying geese made of stainless steel hung on opposing walls, wishes me farewell, rather than welcoming me home. From this moment on, I am no longer in passage, I have landed, but left the home I once knew. *Arrivals* symbolizes the return of traveling Canadians and I wonder who did the artist imagine. If all Canadians were geese, in varying tones of white, brown and black feathers, returning from migration, I would be a *papagayo*, with unavoidable red, blue and yellow tones, barely surviving the cold, and classified as exotic to anybody above the Colombian border. While flying, we saw our differences at a distance and my conclusions came from deconstructing symbols, but now that we've both arrived, our differences are apparent and physical as ever. Still, as I compare myself to them, I wonder how many of the geese share my same alienation by comparing the tone variations in their monochromatic feathers, instead of visible, different culture and nationality.



Janira Moncayo is an Ecuadorian emerging artist and writer, currently based in Mohkínstsis/ Calgary. Through video and found-footage, she decolonizes the misrepresentation of racial minorities in mainstream media and advocates for the inclusion of Latin American narratives on screen. Moncayo has a BFA in Media Arts from AUArts and is the recipient of the 2021 Board of Governors Graduating Student Award. In her spare time, she loves to search for unknown, small restaurants in the city!



BODY LIKE A BACK ROAD

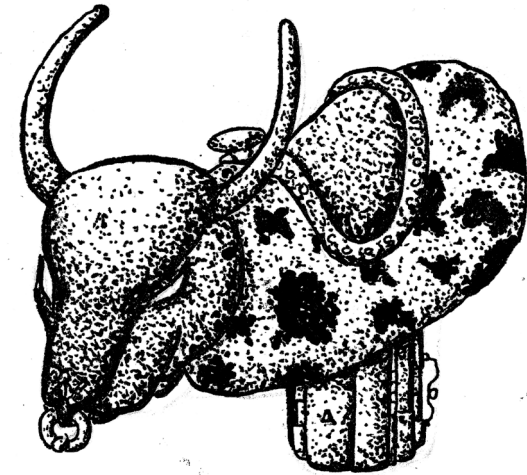
by Lauren Jacobson

Calgary, Alberta has a variety of bars which feature kitsch western items in a celebration of rodeo culture. This culture is always dormant in Calgary and flares up annually with the occurrence of the Calgary Stampede, but exists more quietly year round and thrives in our bars and casinos. Among these bars is a place on ninth avenue called Knoxville's Tavern, which my friends and I call Knox.

Knox is a strange place. It reeks of tequila and sweat. The music is a country pop fusion and it's full of people in flannels and joggers. It has expensive drinks and strong Jello shots and the floor is always sticky. Personally speaking, it's just not my cup of tea, but aside from some predatory men and harsh stares that are customary to most clubs, there's not really anything outright offensive about the space. So why, as a queer person, do I feel so unwelcome there?

The first time I went to Knox was maybe three years ago. I'm freshly eighteen. Again, I'm not super excited about the spot, because I don't like pop country music and I especially don't like dancing to it, but in Calgary, in the social circles I run in, it's kind of a ritual. I go with a few of my best friends and we stand in a long line near a greasy hot dog stand to get into the club. The bouncers scrutinize my ID, and scan it, and take my money for the cover fee and I'm finally let inside.

It's surprisingly large — it could fit maybe six hundred people. The first bar is pretty empty and the music is faint because you are so far from the dance floor. There's a patio off to the side with a serving bar and near to that, a mechanical bull. It's controlled by a man in a flannel shirt who jerks attractive girls slowly from side to side and bucks men off as fast as possible. There are at least two other bars and there's usually someone dancing on top of one. Further in the back is the DJ and dance floor, which is even more sweaty and crowded than the rest of the club. Pretty much everyone is trashed and jumping around, dancing and



Bull by Daniel Bejarano.

grinding on each other. Above all this chaos, above the vodka crans and eight dollar pints downed by drunk teenagers is a glittering, shimmering, glowing disco ball in the shape of a cowboy hat. Suddenly, I hated the place a little less.

Disco balls are super gay. They gained popularity in the '70s, with the rise of disco music, and clubs which played this music were frequented by queer people. I think the flashy showiness and glamour of disco reflected a similar desire in the queer community to be acknowledged, to be seen, and hopefully, accepted.¹ And when disco music died out, the sparkling mirror balls stayed behind, and now adorn almost every club regardless of crowd or music. The queer people, arguably, did not.

When queer people enter a space, to me, it becomes more welcoming, more inviting, and honestly, a hell of a lot more fun. But when straight people enter queer dance spaces they can end up co-opting queer space and policing sexuality, and if gay spaces encounter conflict because too many straight people come into the scene, often times it's the queer people who are pushed out. I think the tendency for straight spaces to alienate queer people still exists, whether it is intentional or not. And while I cannot imagine that Knox ever had a distinctly queer audience that was pushed out by the emergence of a straight one, I can say that I do feel strangely drawn to this place, and even somewhat

entitled to it. I think being excluded is maybe part of what makes it so enticing to me.

The exclusion of queer and other marginalized people from this space is why I am intrigued by the existence of this cowboy disco ball. Cowboy hats in Calgary are dominated by a pristine white Smithbilt hat, which gained its popularity in the late '40s and early '50s during the Calgary Stampede. “White Hatting” visitors became a tradition for the city, a way to welcome newcomers and to demonstrate good faith and hospitality. It is even sometimes accompanied by a “heart warmin’, hand shakin’, foot stompin’” greeting, which, no matter how cheesy or forced, is well mannered and, in my opinion, pretty damn adorable. And although in some scenarios the cowboy hat could be seen as a symbol for Calgary in its problematic settler heritage or abundant conservative ideology, I think that the hat is generally worn in good faith. After all, aren’t cowboys usually portrayed as super badass people who often live on the margins of society? And in that case, doesn’t that make cowboys kind of queer too?

Western culture and queer culture are truly not as distant as people think. In my experience, both are preoccupied with dancing and ornate costumes. Both celebrate otherness. Both exist in Calgary. And in Knoxville’s Tavern, the cowboy hat disco ball shows physically our city’s potential to marry these two identities that have been rather arbitrarily separated from each other.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 Johnston-Ramirez, Manya. “Disco and Gay Culture in the 1970s.” *Project SAFE*, 16 Dec. 2020.



Photo by Medina Kalac.

Lauren Jacobson is a queer Jewish artist living and creating in Mohkínstsis, colonially known as Calgary.



AGE DISCRIMINATION IN THE ART WORLD

...IN THE GALLERY, IN THE STUDIO, AND IN THE CLASSROOM

by Sheila Addiscott

In her book, *The Coming of Age*, Simone de Beauvoir writes:

Ageing is not a “sudden event”, but a gradual process and as a form of metamorphosis it fundamentally changes one’s way of being in the world. Second, while aging has an effect on one’s way of life, this does not mean that it shapes the person in their entirety.

Entrenched in our society is this idea that innovation, new ideas, and the emotion and creativity needed for artistic success can only come with youth. In the art world, you see it everywhere, in particularly in the call for “emerging artists”. The common perception is you cannot emerge as an artist at any age other than a youthful one, whatever that means.

Paradoxically, according to Beauvoir, age cannot be experienced by the aged subject itself but only through the perception of others. This is how the art world fails older artists, by simply perceiving them as old. If you are older and appear to be an object of knowledge and experience, and can offer “wisdom”, you have value. However, if you are just older and still growing, evolving, and becoming, especially as an artist, you are not seen in the same light as younger students who are pursuing and exhibiting those same qualities.

Ageism in the art world reflects the deeper problematic biases in our society. The Sobey Art Award, one of Canada’s most prestigious prizes recently announced their annual competition is now open to emerging Canadian artists of all ages, following only three years after the United Kingdom’s Turner Prize lifted its age cap of 50 years. This could be viewed as good news, but it is 2021 after all. Just because the contemporary art world is slowly coming to terms with



Bound, 2021, photograph, Sheila Addiscott.

its age discrimination problem, it doesn’t mean that the problem of ageism is solved.

I have sat in art school classrooms and listened to professors use discriminatory ageist language, seemingly unaware of the effect their words are having on the participants. In one online meeting, a mixed age group of students listened to the professors introduce themselves. The professors talked about their work and about how tired they were because they are over the age of 40, and how they just couldn’t work the way they could when they were young. Following that introduction, the next professor continued by stating they were also tired and getting older. Following that, one of the older students, much older than the professors, seemed to feel obliged to start their introduction with, “Well I am also of advanced years....”

By the time it was my turn to introduce myself, I was already feeling unwelcome, irrelevant, and unwilling to share anything with this group. My age does not define me. It doesn’t slow me down. It doesn’t make

my thinking old-fashioned or irrelevant, it doesn't mean that I am not contemporary. I spoke reluctantly, inwardly frustrated, because I knew I was already reduced to their stereotypes of what I could and could not be. In my introduction I did not mention my age, because let me be clear, my age does not limit my art.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines discrimination as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, gender identity, or sexual preference. While discussion about oppression on the basis of race, gender identity, or sexual preference is discussed openly in art school classrooms, in studios, and galleries, discussions about ageism are silent.

Over our entire lives, we are internalizing all of the ageist language, passive aggressive statements, and stereotypes we hear every day. We then go on to perpetuate these stereotypes, not just against others, but especially against ourselves. *Wow you don't look 50*, translates to *You look great for an old person*. Or we tell ourselves, *I'm so old*, whenever we feel tired, which has little to do with age. We grow up in a youth-obsessed culture where being called "old" is regularly used as an insult. Media and society create and perpetuate these ageist stereotypes, but it is our own absorption and acceptance of these stereotypes that create this cycle of harm.

There is this assumption that with the physical decline of the body, there will be a corresponding mental decline. Even though every person ages differently, there is a strong fear in our youth-based society that with mental decline there is a lack of interest in life, and a lack of ability to engage in contemporary issues and thoughts. This is a false belief. If you consider a stereotype of a person in their 90s with many infirmities, their experiences, their day-to-day life, is still relevant and contemporary. If they are an artist and have an art practice that is adapted to their life, it is no less contemporary or irrelevant for being adaptive.

For myself, the older I get the more I am aware of what I do not know about the world. If anything, the passing of time has created an even

more urgent quest to learn, to create, and to continue to evolve an artistic practice. I am aware that no matter what I create, the moment it is finished it is obsolete. My understanding of being contemporary is to simply go on and create the next art piece on and on until I come to the end of my life and can create no more, having completed my metamorphosis.

We need to stop being afraid of aging. Framing age as either young or old in positive and negative terms. Ageism has no place in our university classrooms. We need to learn to embrace intergenerational learning to keep all artists and their art contemporary. For that to happen, we can begin by eliminating ageist language in the classroom so that everyone feels that they belong there.



Sheila Addiscott (she/her) is a writer and artist living in Calgary. Being mixed race, she feels an affinity with the peppermint plant, a natural hybrid (*Mentha* and *piperita*), that can grow almost anywhere. It is also very good for you. In her essay, "Coloured", part of *The Black Prairie Archives* anthology, she says, "I am comfortable in my own skin". She likes to listen to the texture, weight, and colour of materials and allow them to inspire her art. In a world that she feels is increasingly narrowing in perspective she tries to create art that pushes boundaries, stripping away labels to allow images and words to live and speak authentically.

FRIENDSHIP, ART, AND THE WHITENESS OF IT ALL

by Sanaa Humayun

Today I had a hard day. I had a difficult conversation with a family member last night. I've been thinking through disappointment and why we ask to be seen by people who aren't ready or able to. I talked to Kiona Ligtoet, my friend and collaborator, and she immediately came to bat for me, ready with validation and understanding so unfamiliar to me that I burst into tears when reading her messages. That's what our friendship is, at its heart. It's sharing in anger, frustration, laughter, and it is helping each other through the small, hard moments that weigh on us. That's who Kiona is, a person who loves deeply and selectively. She creates an unapologetically loving space in her friendships and her art—there's no room for anger, or the racism she faces regularly as a Cree/Métis artist in a predominantly white art community. That weight is heavy enough already, and these spaces are where she can love with abandon. If you are in her trusted circle, you are lucky. She has the ability to see the best in people.

Kiona is a painter and printmaker I met in Amiskwacîwâskahikan (so-called Edmonton). We became fast friends in the summer of 2020. Our conversations dissolved into unapologetic gossip and this is how I realized the microaggressions I'd experienced in the art world weren't unique to me. Our friendship was built on unconditional trust and support, and the ability to find humour in the whiteness of it all. This friendship has developed into a professional partnership as well in the creation of a peer mentorship group for early-career BIPOC artists called Making Space. It's more work than I ever could have imagined. It's also the best work I've ever done. Creating and caretaking this space comes with a difficult set of politics to navigate in a predominantly white art world that is seemingly both thrilled with its creation and threatened by it. Kiona is determined while also being empathetic, and working with her reminds me consistently of how important it is to dismantle

colonial ideas of competition by working and building together.

I admired Kiona as an artist before I met her. Her body of work is an ongoing archive of her family and her history. Much of it takes place on her Moshom's farm, where she grew up. Because the Michel First Nation are enfranchised, their rights, including Kiona's Moshom's rights, to their land and legal status were taken away. Her Moshom caretakes the scrip land her family received for enfranchisement, and two generations have now grown up on that scrip land. This is a small plot of land west of Edmonton, assigned to her family in return for giving up their treaty rights. In 1958, when the Michel First Nation was enfranchised, they were given 100 square kilometers of land in exchange for giving up the treaty benefits they were owed. Since then, many have sold or lost the land, due to lack of resources and supports. Kiona's Moshom is the only one left, and the land he caretakes is the last of what the Michel First Nation was assigned. Due to intergenerational trauma and a disruption to knowledge sharing, no one has been able to learn how to caretake that land, so its future isn't known. Her work is so important because it's her way of remembering this place that's incredibly important to her, but that she may not have access to forever. This body of work isn't just an archive, it's an ongoing love letter to the places and people who are most important to her. That sweet, soft love and grief is so clear in her work, and when I see her pieces, I fall in love too. I feel like I get to share in this brief, special moment in time, and be a part of something she holds so dear.

The moments she depicts in her work are tender and quiet. *Should've Let You Teach Me to Drive* shows her Moshom driving, with a plant honouring her recently passed cousin in the passenger seat. The space is raw and undefined—the focus draws my eye to her Moshom's face and hands. The careful expression on his face feels reverent. I get lost in the faintly defined brambles in the driver's side window. *You'll Always Know* plays with space and text, choosing what to define and what to leave vague. There's a mystery here, as she lays in the grass with her cousin on her Moshom's farm. It makes me want to be a part of this conversation, to know what's going on in this moment beyond what she has defined for the audience.

Her pieces can't be consumed in one big gulp. Instead, I have to take tiny bites. There's so much depth to the detail, so much emotion in the small moments. If you try to consume it quickly you'll miss the heart of it.

Kiona's art is careful and well considered, like she is. Her patience is what I admire most. Where I leap into decisions, Kiona is careful, hesitant, and takes time to think things through. The balance we strike means that I can nudge her when she's afraid to leap, and she can hold me when I'm on the verge of recklessness. As I'm navigating a formal education that has caused one trauma upon another, including professors who think the N-word is still a debate, who build assignments fetishizing dehumanization, classes that are endlessly, exhaustingly white, from the educators to the content, Kiona has been a support through it all and offered words of caution, helping me navigate through while still keeping myself whole. In turn, I see her, and want more people to see who I see.



Should've Let You Teach Me to Drive, 2021.
Image courtesy of the artist.

The Michel First Nation has been fighting to re-gain their rights for many years. If you resonate with Kiona's work and wonder what you can do to support them through their involuntary enfranchisement, consider e-transferring maurencallihoo@gmail.com, with the note "legal fees".



You'll Always Know, 2020.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Sanaa Humayun (she/her) is an emerging visual artist, curator, organizer and writer. She is a co-organizer of Making Space — a peer mentorship group for emerging visual artists that decenters whiteness. Her art explores themes surrounding her right to take up space without facing violence, and a tender exploration of her childhood and familial relationships. She is passionate about being an advocate and fostering community, through means of art, conversation, and an unapologetic love of gossip. She is a Scorpio with a chip on her shoulder, and a deep love for her friends.



IMMIGRANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADIAN ART AND EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION

by Natalia Ionescu

Paraskeva Clark immigrated to Canada in 1931 during a period of economic devastation. The Depression along with growing international tensions with the rise of fascism across Europe became increasingly difficult to ignore even in Canada. In this context, conversations surrounding the role of the artist in society emerged with many figures participating in the public forum, notably by the Russian emigree artist. Among figures like Bertram Brooker and Elizabeth Wyn Wood who shared anti-leftist sentiments and defended the “centrality of landscape in English-Canadian art” (Carney 105), Clark staunchly advocated for the artist to create politically engaged work, which for her, was rooted to social issues related to class.

Clark was engaged in social activism, supporting the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, established by her contemporary, Dr. Norman Bethune, following the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Her 1937 still life watercolour painting, *Presents from Madrid*, comprises a number of mementos sent to her by Bethune during the war, and is the first politically-engaged work Clark exhibited (Boyanoski 32). The diagonals of this zig-zag composition contribute to a dynamic feel, and upon further inspection, the viewer is invited to discover that these are not your average souvenirs. Alongside the cap and sheet music is an issue of *Nova Iberia*, an anti-fascist Spanish publication, and a scarf representing the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, a Spanish confederation of labour unions.

Clark’s choice to elevate the viewpoint — a recurring technique in her still life paintings — was likely influenced by her training in Russia under Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, allowing the objects to occupy more space vertically and introducing a flat quality to the image, further amplified

by the text. The flatness and strong diagonals of the image become reminiscent of the aesthetic qualities of Constructivist approaches to Soviet political posters Clark had encountered in Russian art magazines (64). Clark’s painting embodies the shift towards modernist representation and further introduces unique stylistic choices informed by her experiences outside of Canada, such as replacing anticipated domestic objects of still life of fruits and furniture with objects that reflect an honest struggle in the fight for democracy.

A more recent example of a politically engaged artist is Jamelie Hassan, a contemporary Canadian artist of Lebanese descent. In over four decades of art making, Hassan has explored political subjects through the lens of personal experience. She often examines politics in the Middle East and its effects, which have impacted her family directly. Growing up in London, Ontario around the Oneida community, Hassan shares the challenges her family faced when immigrating to Canada. She has written in detail about the research that led to the discovery of letters denying her relatives entry into Canada on the basis of racial categories, a policy that was used in Canada until 1962.

Hassan’s 1980 watercolour still life, *For My Father, Alex*, features one of these rejection letters, placed atop a novel by Iranian writer Nahid Rachlin. The novel details the story of an Iranian woman, educated and well-established in America, returning to her home country to visit her family and rediscovering her culture. This novel in proximity with the letter suggests the complex immigrant experience of being accepted into Western culture while maintaining a connection to their background. The inclusion of the novel may also serve to parallel Hassan’s own experience of growing up in Canada but later attending the Lebanese Academy of Fine Art in Beirut (148). The remaining elements, including the pomegranate and grapes — both of which are fruits native to Western Asia — and the patterned fabrics, one of which is decorated with Arabic script, unify the composition and contribute to the communication of a distinct identity. Domestic objects traditionally depicted in still life, such as fruit, carry an extra layer of meaning when considering their origin. Much like Clark used a still life composition to explore contemporary social issues, Hassan

further evolves this approach by exploring the complexities of her and her family’s identity in relation to their experience as immigrants. Again, this historically popular genre of painting is reinterpreted through layers of meaning that highlight a diverse perspective, informed by Hassan’s personal experiences.

While Hassan explores topics relating to her own identity and experience as a Canadian of Lebanese descent, she has not forgotten to make an effort to partake in reconciliation with Indigenous communities. She writes about the journey of Arab immigrants like her grandfather who likely came in close proximity with Indigenous communities, and how these early Arab immigrants did not share the powers of the British Crown. They were also shaped by the destructive force of colonialism, often fleeing from military occupation and threats of war violence (140). “Diaspora and migration in Canada cannot be understood without speaking of Aboriginal people and their vital role and relationship to immigrant populations”, Hassan writes, before pointing out that accounts of the relationship between non-European immigrants and Aboriginal people in Canada have been severely underrepresented in Canadian history.

The focus on Eurocentricity that lingers in our culture today, established through institutional efforts like the Canadian Immigration Act of 1910 and the deliberate marginalization of non-white Canadians through discriminatory policies, needs to be critiqued, and we can do so by examining our own art histories. Immigrant artists of diverse backgrounds and experiences, including migrants, refugees, and people whose movements were both free and unfree have important stories to share about life in Canada, while ideally including meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities.



Jamelie Hassan,
For My Father, Alex, 1980.
Watercolour over graphite on paper,
35.8 x 49.9 cm.
McIntosh Gallery Collection,
Western University.
Purchase, McIntosh Estate Fund, 1981.

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Natalia Ionescu (she/her) is an emerging illustrator and writer. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Design and is a Student Ambassador at Alberta University of the Arts. With a focus on communication design and visual development, Natalia’s illustrations explore a variety of stories, characters, and environments through a distinctly cute and playful visual approach. Having immigrated from Romania, the Mirabelle plum blossom represents a tree species found throughout her hometown, Suceava. Through both her writing and illustrations, Natalia hopes to continue highlighting the stories and voices of women from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

HOW ART SCHOOL REINFORCES EUROCENTRIC IDEALS IN ART

by Leah Naicken

When thinking about the art school experience, a person who has never attended such an institution might expect this to be the epicentre of radical thought. A place that encourages their students to think critically about the intersections of race, gender, age, sexuality, class, and culture through the expression of their chosen artistic medium. However, this perception is the furthest thing from the truth. Art school values a very narrow world view, and I was shocked to learn this firsthand.

I began my artistic journey in the Fall of 2019, my first semester at the Alberta University of the Arts. My troubles really began during my two mandatory first year Art History classes. The topics that were covered in these classes were heavily biased towards the appreciation and understanding of European artistic practices. In our textbook for the class, *The Visual Arts: A History* by Hugh Honour and John Fleming, all of the non-European topics from North America, South America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, were excluded from our syllabi by the instructor.

Everything we learned was rooted in Greco-Roman, and predominantly Christian artistic lineages. The only section that deviated from this standard was the section on Islamic art, but the instructor had the audacity to pre-ambule the lectures by saying that “the goal of learning this topic is not meant to convert students to Islam,” but to understand how Islamic architecture, examples pulled only from the Spanish context, I might add, informed Gothic Architecture and Christian Illuminated manuscripts. This type of forewarning was never given to the Christian content.

I understand that university curriculums have certain outcomes they have to achieve but excluding artistic perspectives from Indigenous peoples as well as those from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America,

the Middle East, and Oceania, tell the students from the start of their art education that only European art histories matter. Focusing predominantly on Western European art as exceptional and important, this pedagogical strategy narrows what students may see as significant in their own artistic practices.

When I raised concerns about the exclusion of diverse artistic histories, I was brushed aside by my art history professor, who said that there was “not enough time,” and there were “budgetary restrictions for these types of courses at the school” and that there “has not been much interest from students in these other topics.” Another instructor, who was teaching a drawing class, was even more brazen when students critiqued the lack of diverse perspectives in the class by pronouncing “the contributions of these groups are not as important as Western ones.”

In the few classes where I have had a visible racial minority as the instructor, the burden on them to ensure discussions about cultural and racial diversity remain civil and safe for all students to engage in was hugely unequal to the work of white instructors, who often dismiss these concerns when they arise. Domestic and International Students from racial minorities, like myself, have to fight through being outnumbered to have our voices heard, since there is usually so few minorities within the classroom. The feelings of being alone in advocating for our own cultural identities and representation becomes amplified and is really uncomfortable.

Topics on past and ongoing cultural appropriation of non-western art and artifacts have been a real sore spot for white students in many of the classes I have taken thus far; their feelings of entitlement to art that is not theirs to use is frustrating, especially when they do not want to critically engage with the cultures that created them. We gloss over the fact that so much non-western art has inspired many European artists and art movements, like how Congolese Masks inspired the Cubists, or how Japanese Ukiyo-e inspired Art Nouveau and the Impressionists. These are significant and important artistic contributions, and the artists and people of these cultures are obscured to amplify their white artistic appropriators.

Eurocentricity and whiteness is also upheld through the drawing practices we are taught, as the Grecian ideal beauty standard is used as the main template for study. This is very common not only in art class, but in art books, and art educational videos. This model, however, does not easily or accurately map onto non-western features and phenotypes. In fact, we are not taught how to draw people of different races accurately at all, nor is it ever addressed as a skill student should learn. As a result, many students resort to only ever drawing people or characters with European phenotypes. Life models that are hired for students to draw from in person, in the precious few hours that we get of this type of training, are also predominantly white.

There is some encouragement for students to consider the broader social, political and cultural contexts of the world around them, particularly through talks from non-white artists, as well as through the Lodgepole Centre, a gathering space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can come together. However, these are extra-curricular activities. The onus is on the students to engage with and participate with these opportunities. The goals of inclusion and the breadth of perspective sought by these programs are undermined by the mandatory classes we have to take that uphold and maintain Eurocentric perspectives and whiteness in their content.

The grievances I have experienced are not exclusive to my art school. These are foundational problems in the way art education is taught in the West. The messages that are being sent to students during their formative years falsely reinforces European artistic superiority above all other practices and undermines the rich and vibrant artistic histories from the rest of the world. An artistic practice is not developed in a vacuum, and art schools have a moral and ethical responsibility to critically engage their students with a diverse range of people, perspectives, and cultures. For an artist, understanding the significance of art and people from cultures outside their own, not only helps their artistic practice, but as citizens who are engaged and considerate of the world around them.



Divya Mehra,
Currently Fashionable, 2017/2009.
Acrylic vinyl and acrylic latex deep base paint, dimensions variable.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Leah Naicken (she/her) is a Guyanese-Canadian artist born and raised in Amiskwacîwâskahikan, colonially known as Edmonton, Alberta. She is pursuing her second degree in Design at the Alberta University of the Arts in Illustration and Character Design, after completing her first bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Alberta in 2018. She seeks to combine her knowledge in both fields to create works that are politically engaged and socially aware through meaningful depictions of underrepresented people and perspectives in media, art, and culture.





CURATORIAL

Mentored by Shauna Thompson



Shauna Thompson is currently Curator at Esker Foundation, Calgary. Prior to joining Esker, Thompson was the Curatorial Assistant at the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre. She has also worked with the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery and YYZ Artists' Outlet, both in Toronto, as well as the Art Gallery of Mississauga. She is a co-founding member of the Calgary Public Art Alliance, a coalition of artists, curators, critics, arts professionals, and students who actively champion the existence of a thriving civic Public Art Program in Calgary.



THE MORTAL PAINTER

Kristie Feener Interviews Edward Povey

Edward Povey is a British figurative painter. He grew up with an abusive father which led him to find solace in writing and painting.¹ An enduring part of his practice, Edward keeps a “process diary”² where he tracks ideas, processes, drawings, and resolutions for issues that arise in his work. He shared with me that his work begins with writing, which leads to drawings and then to paintings.³

Edward painstakingly renders objects for his paintings that create “an emotional charge from my past so it invests the painting with a reason to exist.”⁴ For instance, he uses family photos that he makes copies of, ages and then incorporates into his paintings, because they “align[s] with my interest in human mortality and life experience.”⁵

While studying Edward’s work I became curious about recurring objects in his paintings and the symbolism behind them. This interview was conducted over email in May 2021.

KF: You’ve said you were fascinated by complex emotions. How do you know when you have captured a “complicated emotion”?

EP: I first heard the concept of “complicated emotions” in art from the Minimalist Catherine Lee in San Antonio, Texas many years ago. I see both the human experience and the moment to moment continuum of human life as being a layered complex of emotions.

I’m interested in the fact that every human being carries the experience of their birth and childhood, every love and loss gained along the way, and the ever-looming anticipation of death, at all times. With that in mind, in 2012 I turned away from making specific emotions and narrative paintings, in favour of “liminal figures” on the threshold of many emotions simultaneously.

KF: Is there symbolic meaning in the spoons, cups, saucers, glasses, and oranges you have in so many of your paintings?

EP: There is a symbolic meaning, in a sense, to literally every item, pattern, figure and pose in my paintings, and the symbols range between fairly literal (like when I place a specific Picasso or Balthus painting into my designs in the form of a creased print pinned to a wall) on the one hand, and extremely convoluted and buried symbols, on the other. But the meaning is often “emotional” rather than factual, because my objects are chosen for their appropriate emotional charge, rather than because I am attempting to convey a specific and literal meaning.

As it happens, I grew up in the spartan household of a British merchant seaman, and a houseproud mother. My father had made an upholstered bench beside the kitchen table, and from my seat there I looked across an ironed tablecloth and an array of cups and saucers, spoons and glasses. On that bench I was threatened with injury and death by my father, in detailed terms, and so the images were imprinted on my psyche and have found their way into my paintings.

KF: I’m also curious about the painting *Sink*, which depicts a sink full of oranges, a shaving cup, brush, and soap bar. The juxtaposition of the items in and on the sink and with the table in the foreground of the same space feels unnatural and yet very planned. Could you tell me a bit about this piece?

EP: You might say that *Sink* was “emotionally composed”. The actual perspective is deeply flattened and impossible in realistic terms, but I believe I wanted two opposing qualities in the painting: a sexual intimacy with the choice of such very personal items like a razor which is used to slide across human skin; a shaving brush and spilled tea which was previously drunk with the lips; soap, used to lather and clean bodies; and the screwed-up personal letter lately read with curious eyes. The other quality is metaphorical, using a sink filled absurdly with oranges, and the strange, possibly listening pose of the figure.



Edward Povey,
Sink, 2020.
Oil on linen, 79 x 79 in.
All rights reserved © 2021 Edward Povey.

KF: You tend to place glasses and cups and saucers in precarious places, such as hovering near the edges of surfaces. Is this done to create tension in your piece, or do you have a different thought process for this?

EP: The teetering crockery has two sources, I think. The presence of crockery on my childhood kitchen table was infused with tension from my experiences with my rageful father; but from my current paintings that precariousness is appropriate, because I see life as delicately balanced, and for all its beauty, in a constant state of risk.

I have no interest in duplicating external reality like a photo realist. Reality does not need my contribution, and my paintings are about an internal reality.

KF: I heard you speak to Abi Joy Samuel in an interview from February 2021, about drawing in areas of your canvases to speed up your productivity. I wondered if perhaps the unpainted parts represented fragmentation or an emphasis on something emotional or subconsciously missing or incomplete?

EP: It is true that I am currently increasing my productivity, partly because like riding a bicycle, the speed of productivity keeps the flow of creativity and process upright. My interest in fragmenting my canvases into painted areas and drawn areas came in 2018, long before my current concern for productivity, and its motivation was to honestly show the infrastructure of the painting. To confess its workings, whilst having it look unfinished, incomplete, and unprepared exactly like every imperfect human life.

When a new concept brings helpful symbolism to an art work, and also satisfies a strategic goal, it's useful!

FOOTNOTES

- 1 <https://edwardpovey.com/manifesto>
- 2 From interview correspondence via email with Edward.
- 3 From interview correspondence via email with Edward.
- 4 Edward Povey in an interview with Abi Joy Samuel, February 24, 2021 on Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLrWRPbAtj/>
- 5 From interview correspondence via email with Edward.



Kristie Feener is a painting major in her second year at Alberta University of the Arts. She loves to read, hike, camp and spend time with her husband.

TRAUMA HAS A FACE: THE ART OF LEVI-LESLIE MARTIN

by Marissa Bender

Two variations of the same photograph are placed side-by-side: both present the figure of an infant with her eyes closed. The world around her is gone, consumed by a void that embraces her small frame. A thick layer of paint, white in the left image and black on the right, functions as the void. At first glance, the young girl is at peace. She appears to be clothed in soft fabric and her face bears no emotion as she sleeps. The photograph with white paint is reminiscent of an early morning—perhaps moments before the girl must rise—while the black one is more suggestive of a deep slumber in the middle of the night. In both images, the negative space interrupts the sleepy atmosphere and inserts itself into the child. Her silhouette is distorted and rendered jagged in its grasp. This disruption of the peace allows for another, more sinister, interpretation. Perhaps, the child isn't sleeping at all.

The image of this girl is part of *Rest?* (2020), and is also one of hundreds of photographs Levi-Leslie Martin, a student in her final year at Alberta University of the Arts, has collected over the years. She takes some of these from her personal family archive, while others are sourced from such places as garage sales, parenting books, and medical textbooks. Every photograph shares the same subject: a young girl. These girls are mysterious and unidentified; it is impossible for viewers to tell which images depict the artist herself, and which are found images. In this way, the photographs come to represent not only Martin, but potentially any young girl.

The presence of the recurring figure of the young girl is Martin's way of injecting her lived experiences with trauma into her art in a way that does not make her specific struggles visible. It is not easy to confront one's trauma nor to witness the traumatic experiences of others. As such, it is important to Martin that she develops her work



Levi-Leslie Martin,
Untitled Rest 1 (White) and *Untitled Rest 2 (Black)*, May 2020.
Watercolour paper, ink, latex house paint, 5.5 x 6 in.
Image courtesy of the artist.
Rest? 2020 exhibition at the Coven Gallery.

carefully in a way that produces intentional feelings of unease and discomfort without creating work that is confrontational towards viewers or explicitly shows traumatic experiences. This is in opposition to many of her artistic influences, like Tracy Emin. “[Emin’s work is] so confrontational. Very in your face,” says Martin. “[Through her work Emin is saying:] I experience this trauma, and this is how it affects me.” In Tracy Emin’s first exhibition, *My Major Retrospective 1982-1992*, she presented a series of personal items that represented traumatic moments in her life¹. Each object revealed specific instances of suffering Emin had endured as far back as her childhood. She laid out diaries, letters, destroyed paintings, and the newspaper article that detailed a car crash that resulted in the death of her uncle. In contrast, by focusing on the young girl and not the trauma itself, Martin is able to balance feelings of comfort and discomfort within the work and connect with viewers without calling to mind any trauma they might carry. This consideration is embedded into her process. While sourcing and selecting images, if Martin uncovers photographs that cause her emotional distress, she discards them. Knowing how an image affects her helps Martin recognize which photographs have the potential to trigger others. Her art is not meant to be confrontational, but rather a medium to engage with trauma from a safe distance.

After going through a hefty pile of potential photographs and finding the right fit for her project, Martin begins experimenting. She doesn't fully plan out her marks beforehand. Instead, she lets her prior experiences and present feelings guide her into developing layers on top of the photographs. In previous works, Martin experimented with negative space by blocking out the photograph's background with paint, but recently this has shifted as she experiments with brushstrokes and lines of paint that drip over and across her subjects. The presence of paint stresses the image and physically marks the girls. In her 2021 work, *Mirror Stage 1973*, the image of a baby girl with her eyes closed is mirrored, but the marks around her are not. The baby on the left is more adversely affected by the black paint, as a cloud of brushstrokes extends from the top left corner and hovers over her. This gives the impression that, while people may go through similar experiences, no two individuals are affected the same way.

Currently, Martin's experimentation has led her to work with close-up images of the parts of the body that are affected by trauma. Teeth, specifically, have become a favourite subject as they connect to the potential anxiety sparked by trauma and the act of teeth grinding that can occur as a result. In *Untitled* (2021), the photograph Martin has chosen is a close-up of human teeth. Like the figures of the young girls in *Rest?*, this photograph is marked with paint that bleeds down the image and curls around the teeth and gums in jagged lines that jut off the page. With this new direction, Martin engages with trauma in its aftermath, where it is less understood or considered. These new works bring attention to the ways in which trauma stays with an individual long after traumatic events have taken place.

Throughout her practice, Martin makes visible dark and troubling feelings, but contains this danger to the canvas where the pain cannot harm viewers. She does this by bringing attention to the relationships people can have with trauma instead of putting traumatic experiences on display. As a result, it does not matter if a person understands or relates to the same struggles as Martin. Her works allow anyone, traumatized or not, to better understand trauma and its lasting effects on those afflicted.



Levi-Leeslie Martin,
Untitled, March 2021.
Latex house paint, marker, high gloss poster, 41 x 33 in.
Image courtesy of the artist.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 Fanthome, Christine. "Articulating Authenticity Through Artifice: The Contemporary Relevance of Tracey Emin's Confessional Art." *Social Semiotics*, vol. 18, no. 2, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008, pp. 223-36.

In 2021, **Marissa Bender** graduated from Alberta University of the Arts, where she studied graphic design and animation. In her spare time, she enjoys drawing, collecting books to fill her shelves, and writing creative fiction. She jumps at any opportunity to combine art and the written word, whether this means writing about art or working with typography in her designs. Every project is driven by her curiosity to learn new skills or discover more about the world around her.



TOPOGRAPHICAL PRINTMAKING

by Rachel MacKinnon

James Boychuk-Hunter is a practicing printmaker and sessional instructor at the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) in the print media department. He can often be found poring over various lithography stones and etching plates in the basement print studio of AUArts. From March 14 to April 25, 2020, Boychuk-Hunter held a solo exhibition at the Society of Northern Alberta Print Artists (SNAP) in Edmonton, titled *Horizon Line / Base Line*. The exhibition was comprised of both print and sculptural work. The intaglio prints, primarily printed in earth tones, draw parallels to the natural environment and the similarities between letterforms from the Latin alphabet and the natural landscape. By establishing connections between the natural environment and western writing systems, Boychuk-Hunter examines the influence that the landscape has on human invention. His current body of work is a continuation of the work shown at SNAP *Horizon Line / Base Line*. I met with Boychuk-Hunter to discuss his influences and current projects.

In the print studio at AUArts, several steel plates are stacked flat on top of each other in the sunlit back corner. Each plate is approximately 18" x 24", scored with inch wide, rough to the touch tally marks eaten about a quarter inch into the steel from layers of corrosion with nitric acid baths — a standard in intaglio processes. Nearby, a small maquette suggests what the final piece will look like: laid passively together, the smaller plates form a zig-zag pattern. Read horizontally, they recall the form of a mountain range, and vertically they evoke a lightning strike. Two thick pieces of felt, which may have served as a press blanket in the past, are placed lengthwise between the steel plates. The piece as a whole is reminiscent of layers of stratification, such as those that can be seen in the hoodoos in Drumheller. Indeed, Boychuk-Hunter's current focus is inspired by his interest in geology and the act of "paying attention to the land". In the vein of paying attention, Boychuk-Hunter works intuitively and responsively to the materiality of his processes,



James Boychuk-Hunter,
Maquette for Larger Piece.
Etched steel, felt, 5 x 18 x 6 in.
Image courtesy of the artist.

whether he is working with steel, litho stone, or copper plates. He resists the tendency to illustrate theory and instead invites viewers to read his work in many ways, like layers of sedimentary rock or soil.

During artist interviews, there is a tendency for conversation to go on tangents about content that the artist doesn't necessarily attribute as inspiration; however, consumed content may still find its way into the work. One of the things that Boychuk-Hunter and I spoke about was his appreciation for post-apocalyptic films, such as *Stalker* (1979), and *Mad Max* (1981). Of these films, he noted that, "Landscape and ecology have been more influential than the stories." In post-apocalyptic movies, there is almost always a remnant of a once-great society that became unstable and eventually tore apart, which then allowed wilderness to overrun the built environments. In these narratives, humanity no longer controls the wild, but is subject to it. In *Stalker*, especially, the landscape holds a sentient presence. The concept of a sentient landscape connects to Boychuk-Hunter's notion of "paying attention to the land", where if we watch and listen to environmental clues, we can gather information from the land as a primary resource, instead of researching it from a dark room on a laptop.

Boychuk-Hunter attributes influence to Robert Smithson’s, “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” (1967). Smithson’s sculpturally based, self-defined “Earthworks” directly interact with the land and nature, and like Boychuk-Hunter, he was inspired by how man-made industrial objects connect to their immediate environment. While Smithson was travelling through Passaic, he viewed construction ruins as if they were ancient monuments. Smithson noted that while walking through the industrial ruins, he felt as though “[he] was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank” (Smithson 72). This “continuous blank” that Smithson references can also be seen in Boychuk-Hunter’s patinaed plates: the meaning of the work is not explicitly stated, rather, as Boychuk-Hunter describes, the work is an “exploration of notions and impressions about the world through a kind of open-ended iconography.” The patinaed plates that Boychuk-Hunter created for his maquette also read like Smithson’s metaphorical film; our eyes trace the grooves of the plate as a mountain climber explores a cliff face.

During Smithson’s journey through Passaic, the ruins that he visited were not art installations, but construction leftovers that he instated meaning upon. In a similar vein, Boychuk-Hunter’s steel intaglio plates, which would have been tucked away after being printed, are given new life and insight through a fresh sculptural arrangement and consideration alongside his print works. The remanent material of printmaking gains new meaning through the act of being seen and recontextualized.

WORK CITED

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James Boychuk-Hunter,
Corresponding Waves.
Etched steel, screen printed paper, steel bar, 5 x 60 x 8 in.
Image courtesy of SNAP.



Rachel MacKinnon is a designer, illustrator, and printmaker currently studying at AUArts. She collects many plants and can often be found outside on her bike or sitting in nature with her nose in a book. Rachel draws influence from graphic shapes and patterns in nature and makes art to have fun. Her cat, Buster, supervises her while she works from home.

UNBOUNDED

by Elise Findlay

A town in a national park is at its core a contradiction, and Banff as Canada's oldest national park and world-famous small town is no exception. Having grown up here these contradictions are felt in many ways, but they only become apparent when I stop to contemplate the tensions and the strangeness of this place. You may think of snow-capped mountains and the Banff Springs Hotel, you may even think of the arts and Banff Centre, but few of us contemplate how strange it is to cordon off a special place for appreciating nature, as though it is something separate from us, something othered. And yet, for the approximately four million yearly visitors¹ to the park this “wilderness” is mostly viewed as an unapproachable horizon — seen from within the town's boundaries, the highway viewpoints, and the must-see spots. The otherness remains and the active boundary creation that defines what is wilderness appears natural; invisible and unquestioned along with the colonial history and the project of nation building these boundaries and the national parks are a part of. The parks system, though ostensibly set up to protect, also creates a false sense that “true nature” exists only in specified spots, on a grand scale rather than everywhere on a smaller scale.

Julya Hajnoczky's exhibition, presented at the Whyte Museum in Banff as part of the Exposure Photography Festival, gives the smaller scale, the “minutia of nature,”² presence. Her work examines the minuscule by enlarging tiny found flora and fauna to create wondrous places that float in the void and suggest the larger landscape where the items are found. Hajnoczky's process of scanning the natural materials on a portable flatbed scanner produces a rich matt background against which the clarity and depth of field within the arranged items gives weight and scale to that which is overlooked. They reveal that the natural is all around us, alive and decaying, and leave you with the impression that this is a place you have been before — they are strange but familiar.



Julya Hajnoczky,
Escobaria vivipara, 2020.
Archival pigment print, 54 x 36 in.
Image courtesy of
Christine Klassen Gallery, Calgary.

Hajnoczky collects common rather than endangered plants, and cautious of ethical collection practices, and limitations in protected areas, some of her more recent scans are produced on-site or in her “Alfresco Science Machine,”³ a mobile studio that allows for on-location imaging. Working directly in the landscapes creates moments of serendipity, and because Hajnoczky's scans can require up to twenty minutes to complete, the result is an image of a living period of time in place, less still life and more subtle life, where a stowaway bug drops, or a mushroom exhales at just the right moment to introduce movement and chance. In *Escobaria vivipara* the hot prairie wind sent flower petals and dust floating across the image; in parallel, the printed work moves slightly as you walk past it in the Whyte Museum's main exhibition space. The print's human scale and response to movement makes it seem quietly alive. It asks you to tread lightly as you closely examine the natural which would normally be below our notice.

It is strange to find yourself indoors to appreciate the natural world, to examine nature inside a museum in a national park, rather than in its woods and marshes. Yet, as Hajnoczky wants us to question the complexities of the relationships between humans and the natural world, the exhibition's location is fitting. Through her "intimate portraits of ecosystems"⁴ she wants us to stop and look closely at the world around us, to recognize and value the tiny as well as the large and to see how they are intertwined, how they require balance, and how they are impacted by human behaviour.

While Hajnoczky struggles in her practice with the conflicting desires of conservation and collection,⁵ the positioning of this exhibition in Banff also speaks to larger conversations around preservation and protection, and to the historical depictions of the Canadian wilderness. Hajnoczky's focus on the small manifestations of life questions the grand images of the 'vast wilderness' we associate with nature and places such as Banff. As a result, we must also question the assumptions that come with historical glorifications of the "wilderness," that somehow this space, a wilderness as defined by the national parks system, is special and preserved while other land and places are not deserving of protection but are ownable resources to be used. Furthermore, part of Hajnoczky's practice questions historical Western scientific approaches to generating and transmitting knowledge about the natural world by imbuing the clinical gaze with tenderness, wonder, and curiosity.⁶ Changing how we view the natural in this way can also challenge the societal values and assumptions that have guided scientific research⁷ and approaches to preservation and conservation.

Seeing the value in all manifestation of nature, including ourselves, asks us to recontextualize our role in these intricate ecosystems and to break with a fragmented approach which divides the natural versus the unnatural and creates boundaries that define places like national parks. And while such places afford protection within, they also define an area that is without. Perhaps by breaking boundaries we can expand the protection and value shown to the natural and through Julya Hajnoczky's "wonder, interest, and respectful stewardship"⁸ see the intricacies of ecosystems and our role as humans within them.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Learn About Banff." Town of Banff Site. <https://banff.ca/252/Learn-About-Banff>, accessed March 2021.
- 2 "Virtual Opening: Julya Hajnoczky." January 22, 2021, Duration 53:35, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>.
- 3 "Artist Biography: July Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 2021, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>, accessed March 2021.
- 4 "Artist Biography: July Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 2021, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>, accessed March 2021.
- 5 "Virtual Opening: Julya Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 22, 2021, Video, Duration 53:35, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>.
- 6 "Artist Statement: July Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 2021, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>, accessed March 2021.
- 7 "Virtual Opening: Julya Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 22, 2021, Video, Duration 53:35, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>.
- 8 "Artist Statement: July Hajnoczky." Whyte Museum Site: Julya Hajnoczky Online Exhibition, January 2021, <https://www.explore.whyte.org/julyahajnoczky>, accessed March 2021.

Elise Findlay is a visual artist based in Banff, Alberta. Having grown up in the mountains she has developed a deep love of her home landscape which is a vital inspiration for both her art and life. Her practice explores the complexities of place and how humans experience the natural world. Currently in her third year at AUArts, Elise is a lifelong learner with a Red Seal in cabinetmaking and a bachelor's degree from Dalhousie University. After she has finished her undergrad at AUArts Elise plans to pursue a masters as well as to establish her studio in Banff.



MARY EVANS TALKS WITH SPIRITS

by Taylor Harder

Mary Evans talks with spirits. Mary Evans works collaboratively with spirits, and maybe Extraterrestrials. Mary Evans' oeuvre spans film, painting, sculpture, and tarot (more than one). Evans' work challenges both the filmmaker as auteur, and the magician as a single individual commanding heaven and earth to do her bidding. For Evans, art and magic are collaborative events.

Evans' 2020 film *Ostara* is a synthpop dream, for the first minute or so. Evoking Mort Garson's *Mother Earth's Plantasia*. Pastel backdrops and vibrantly painted sculptures transverse the desert landscape. The camera traces over Solange, Evans' collaborator, lying on a kind of altar on the Desert ground of Joshua Tree, California. She is dressed in white costume and blue vinyl gloves with long red fingernails. Her face is heavy with blush. Among the *Ostara* offerings are also bananas, flowers, breasted ceramic vessels, roses of many colours, and ice chips.

There are painted spell jars, with icons of eyes, hearts, flowers, and highways. Solange appears only interested in a single white egg, clutched in their long fingernails. Perhaps she is contemplating *pysanky*, as coloured pools of liquid are among the offerings. As the music slows and becomes eerily mistuned, she cracks the egg onto the desert ground.

Mary Evans is from Tennessee, and grew up Episcopalian and Baptist. She is currently taking a Master's degree at the University of Oregon. She is a witch and has illustrated a number of tarot and oracle decks, which go under the project name *Spirit Speak Tarot*. She generously mailed me a copy of her Apparition tarot deck.



Mary Evans,
Ostara, 2020.
Digital video.
Image credit:
Penelope Valentine,
<http://penelopevalentine.art/>
Image courtesy of Mary Evans.

Automatic drawing is a big part of how she generates imagery. For Evans, artmaking is a dialogue between herself and her spirit guides. This process doesn't involve *Golden Dawn*-style ritual magic,¹ either. Evans isn't invoking angels in the mirror à la *John Dee* and *Edward Kelley*.² The kinds of practices that require working knowledge of Hebrew or Greek, dozens of books, or engraved copper plates. A subject which fascinates me, but is often clouded in a culture that is elitist, misogynist, and racist. In our talks, we dubbed this culture "bro-esoterica". Evans takes a different attitude towards magic: "One thing that I have always worked against in magic is a set of rules or regulations that imitate our human sciences. Even though that may be helpful to some, I don't think magic subscribes to that. I think it is much more fluid."

I should qualify this kind of statement by saying that I also practice ceremonial magic. In western esotericism, there is often a strong emphasis on the perfection of one's individual ego (to use psychoanalytic terms) or Will (to use Thelemic terms). The body of the (usually male) magician is identified with the body of (male-coded) godhead. This identification allows the magician to command angels and demons, at least that's the idea.

As soft synth pop plays, Evans, wearing the same fingernailed gloves, pulls Solange from under a black cover. They are standing together, glove to glove, against the horizon of the desert. Here they are dressed in black, mid length hair set in fingerwaves

caked with gold glitter. Harsh electronic static creates tension between the two figures, punctuating their slow embrace. These moments, unlike the dreamy first tableau, evoke Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising*. Like Isis veiled giving the sign of Typhon,³ gestures which form part of my morning *Resh Vel Helios* prayer routine. Here, Evans and Solange inhabit a Gemini-like godform, against the desert, like the gods in Anger's film.

The tense droning of the score increases the tension as we are shown images of the landscape intermingled with handmade poppets. In the next tableau, Solange is seated at a small table, upon which are two poppets and a breasted vessel. Behind Solange are four of Evans' paintings, behind those are the horizon. The final image is filmed with a handheld camera, where Evans and Solange, dressed in purple gossamer, engage in a kind of baptism.

For *Golden Dawn* influenced schools of thought, within Thelema is situated, the highest goal is the achievement of Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian angel. Although this concept is nuanced, it might be compared to conversing with one's higher self, or spirit guides. In these schools of thought, intense rituals of purification are performed in order to access this being. The supreme self is accessed only through strict rituals of purification and perfection.

This stands in contrast to the kind of access Mary Evans has with her spirits, which present spirit guides, ETs, and unnamed others are ever-present, accessible, potent, potential collaborators. Her work is not asking us to justify magic through obscure philosophies or ascetic practices. Extraterrestrials, she posits, may represent a kind of intertemporal humanity. I think this relates to her works' invocation of the mirrored and numinous is an invitation for empathy. The alien and spirit-other is a site for reverence towards past and future unseen labour. This unknowable labour, her practice acknowledges, always proceeds our creative actions.

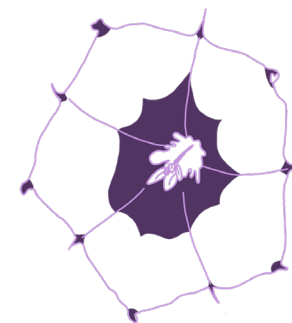
Mary Evans' work can be found @[m.a.r.y.e.v.a.n.s](https://www.instagram.com/m.a.r.y.e.v.a.n.s) on Instagram.



Mary Evans, *Ostara*, 2020. Digital video. Image credit: Penelope Valentine, <http://penelopevalentine.art/> Image courtesy of Mary Evans.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Referring to the occult order the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, active during the 19th and 20th centuries. Their rituals were complex, often performed at specific times of day according to astrological calculations and included passages in Hebrew and Greek.
- 2 The astronomer of Queen Elizabeth I, and his working partner, an English Medium, respectively. Dee would perform ritual magic to invoke spirits into a painted mirror, and Kelley would receive visions of angels.
- 3 [13:03] of *Lucifer Rising*.



Taylor Harder is an emerging artist & writer based in Mohkíntsis, Treaty 7. They are of mixed Métis-Mennonite background, tracing their roots to the communities of La Crête and Saint Boniface. Their work considers occulture as a means to disrupt the role of scientific materialism in colonial narratives. Their desire is to reveal the hidden spiritual ideologies and implications of resource extraction. For Harder, secret epistemologies and queer modalities are pathways to embodying marginalized experiences. Their art practice traverses printmaking and fibre, claiming traditional arts such as quilting and embroidery.

They are currently completing their BFA from AUArts with a major in Drawing. Their work has been featured during *Sled Island* (2019) and *Femme Wave* (2020) festivals.

FULL CIRCLE

by Enya-Morgan Heinrichs

May 14, 2021

Ma chère amie Louise,

Thank you for the plethora of information you left for us regarding your life in New York and for the copies of your artwork from that time. I have received your artwork from the series *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*, but I must disclose that the reception was with a heavy heart. I gently welcome the openness and vulnerability you showed us through your work, but I am confronted by the pain your environment has caused you to feel. I applaud you for discovering paper as your friend and a place of healing, but I dislike those that had caused you to need to turn to an inanimate object as your support. I accept your feelings and emotions as valid, but I reject those that dismissed and ridiculed them over and over again. I rejoiced when I observed the growth in your artwork and creative expression but detest those that suffocated your growth and starved you from affection and love. I enjoyed experiencing your artwork in a safe environment where a woman artist is accepted and honoured, but I loathe those that prevented you from doing so for such a long time. I love your tenacity and perseverance that sustained you through life in those dark times, but I hate those that inflicted those dark wounds in you and left you with nothing else but to employ survival tactics.

I was deeply moved by your artwork and I share your feelings of despair, isolation, and abuse. I find a lot of parallels between your life and mine and this makes me question whether society has advanced or changed at all in the decades that separate us. I wish I could tell you that things are different now and that you would be accepted. That you would not be abused, and you would be safe



Louise Bourgeois,
He Disappeared into Complete Silence: Plate 11 (Spider), edition 19/30, 1947/2005.
Engraving & drypoint with selective wiping, 10 1/16 x 6 11/16 in.
Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer.
© The Easton Foundation/VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SOCAN, Montreal (2021).

and free to be yourself. That since you passed on, others have shed the darkness they carry and that you are safe to do so as well. But I cannot! I wish and wished that we can and could.

I hope the place you reside now is not crowding and limiting you the way you felt in New York. That the sky and heavens provide enough light to brighten your beautiful soul. I wish that the cool and gentle breeze offers the comfort and shelter you have never felt before. I long to see the colours of your face after being washed by divine love and healing green light; but I am not sure I will.

The spider, a symbol of protection, creativity, and illusion; your creation. I see you weaving a wall in between us — are you weaving

your web around yourself as protection or around me to capture me as prey? I am not sure; the web is vibrating, creating dizziness and illusory images. I respect the weariness and caution towards me, a stranger that knows little about you and your life. Ergo, you know nothing about me and my intentions. But I invite you to take my hand and climb out of the darkness — the light is waiting for you. It has been waiting for you for a long time, a very long time. I do not have an answer for the things that happened to you, but I do have a solution. I do not have an excuse for the people that hurt you, but I do have a response. I do not have a way to hug you, but I do have a way to express my compassion and extend my love to you.

The walls are closing in on me; I can't stay here any longer. The environment is becoming threatening again. Did I get too close? Did I overstay my welcome? I guess I was never welcome. I know that not many people have been here in this tiny New York apartment, and the ones that made it did not make it out alive. I see the skeletons around me, but the sight does not frighten me; I persist. Forgiving does not mean forgetting. Letting go does not mean it never happened. I can hear angels and I see your wings emerging; you are very close ma chère. You no longer need the ladder to climb to the ceiling; the window is open, you can fly away. Reach new heights that you never reached before, feel new depths that you never felt before. Is it not beautiful?

I can finally see the light brighten your beautiful soul. I can see the cool and gentle breeze provide you with comfort and shelter. I can see the colours of your face being washed with rainbow love and healing light. I am content.

My time is up and I must go now. But the memory of this sight will never leave. This is not goodbye, but a farewell for now ma chère.

With great love,

Your stranger friend Enya-Morgan



Enya-Morgan Heinrichs,
And so Did the Spider Finally Gained Her Wings, 2021.
Pen and ink, print, fiber, and collage, 8.5 x 11 in.

Enya-Morgan Heinrichs is an interdisciplinary artist that immigrated from Cyprus 10 years ago and currently resides in Calgary, AB on Treaty 7 territory. She is currently pursuing a BFA at AUArts with a strong focus in print media, fibre and art history. In the last year, her art practice shifted from painting and drawing to collage, mixed media, fibre and printmaking while exploring themes of the subconscious, symbolism, philosophy, and feminist artistic practices of past and present. In her artworks she combines traditional techniques and contemporary concepts to communicate complex ideas and visions that she receives through her subconscious.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Thank you so much to Amy Fung for sharing her knowledge, experience, and for helping us give voice to our thoughts. But above all, for providing words and ideas I didn’t know I needed to hear. I now tell everyone, ‘You need to read Amy Fung!’”

“The Whyte Museum and Anne Ewen for access to the exhibition, resources, and for always being there to chat about art. Julya Hajnoczky for taking the time to discuss your practice and the joys that come from slow hiking.”

“Thank you to Amy Fung for her experience, guidance, and support. Thank you to Luvneet Rana and the team at the McIntosh Gallery, as well as Jamelie Hassan for their generosity and encouragement.”

“Edward Povey for making time to be interviewed by me. It was a pleasure to learn about your work. I wish that I had an unlimited word count to allow for all information you provided. Thank you for your patience and thoughtful responses.”

“Levi-Leslie Martin for the opportunity to interview you and write about your practice. I feel incredibly lucky to have gotten to know you and your art better. Thank you for your abundant support and enthusiasm.”

“James Boychuk-Hunter for taking the time to have a conversation with me about your practice and allowing me to view and explore your in-progress work. I look forward to seeing your future projects and exhibitions.”

“Thank you to the Emerging Art Writers Program Team, Amy Fung, Divya Mehra, my fellow writers in the Art Criticism cohort, my friends Navneet & Srosh, most importantly, thank you so much to my Mom and Dad for supporting me in all that I do.”

“Kiona Ligtoet — thank you for your endless time, patience, and friendship.”

“Thank you to: Mentors Shauna Thompson, Amy Fung, and Dr. Mark Clintberg, and everyone involved in the EAWP 2. The Esker Foundation and specifically Jill Henderson. Lousie Bourgeois. My late father, who was my primary secret fund for art supplies and books. My husband Tim, my current secret fund.”

“Thank you to Jackson, Nicole, Daniel, Medina, Becca, and my parents, whose support for my first published work will shape my writing in the future. Thank you to Mark Clintberg and to Amy Fung for their feedback and for their integrity.

For Charlie & Matteo!”

The IKG would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our Mentors, Amy Fung and Shauna Thompson whose expertise in art writing and criticism provided ample opportunity for growth and discussion as they worked with the participants to develop their texts for this publication; Dr. Mark Clintberg for his leadership and guidance throughout this program; Robyn Mah, for their thoughtful approach in creating a design reflective of the program itself; and Ben Yuan whose design and layout expertise made this publication a reality.

Thank you to Kate Monro, Jaclyn Bruneau, and Maya Wilson-Sanchez for their partnership and support through *C Magazine*.

Finally, we want to thank each and every one of the twelve writers for their inspiring commitment to this project and their ongoing support for one another.

The Illingworth Kerr Gallery acknowledges the support of Calgary Arts Development.

— Cassandra Paul, Exhibitions and Programs Coordinator

Published by the Illingworth Kerr Gallery (IKG),
Alberta University of the Arts
1407 14 Ave NW Calgary, Canada T2N 4R3

auarts.ca/ikg
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Print version printed in Calgary, Canada by Kallen Printing
Distributed in Canada by *C Magazine*

ISBN: 978-1-895086-56-0

Design and illustrations by:
Robyn Mah, Public Programming and Outreach Assistant, IKG;
Ben Yuan, EAWP Student Designer

Exhibitions and Programs Coordinator, IKG: Cassandra Paul

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