



Mentees and mentors in the 2022/23 Foundation Mentorship Program, getting down to work, September 2022

The extremes of weather we experience here on the Prairies seem impossible: over the course of the year the temperature swings 80 degrees, completely transforming our landscape, our habits, even our now-cocooned bodies. Meteorological winter begins on December 1, but in Winnipeg we have felt it in our bones for weeks. Each day we are more aware of the retreat of the sun, leading to the shortest day, December 21, and the start of astronomical winter.

What does this cold, dark season mean to artists? The art world has always wondered why such idiosyncratic, leading-edge visual art comes from Winnipeg. Is it being located in what the rest of Canada characterizes as “the middle of nowhere”? Does our geography provide a *tabula rasa*—a blank slate—on which we can inscribe our unique visions, free from external influences? Or is it simply the weather?

The Winnipeg winter is a time to get things done. It is not a season of going with the flow. There is a purposefulness to all activities, from getting around to getting dressed. Defying the weather, we gather for house parties,

attend lectures and workshops, and head to the studio. The demands of our climate create focus.

To borrow an expression from musicians, many of us use the winter months to woodshed. In musical slang, this means more than simply practising in isolation (i.e., in a woodshed), but rather digging deeply into technique, learning the mechanics of one's craft and developing a deep, almost second-nature facility with it. In other words, doing the difficult, repetitive work required to push our practices forward.

In Anglo-Saxon cultures of the Early Middle Ages, years were counted by the winters. For example, a person could be described as 45 winters old. Despite the seeming stasis of nature in colder months, winter marked time and growth.

We hope that for you, this winter of 2022/23 is likewise filled with growth. We hope that you are able to use this time for what nurtures and sustains you, and that in these short days and dark, quiet nights, your art will burn brightly.

– Shawna Dempsey and Dana Kletke

All are welcome to attend these free noon-hour lectures on art, art theory and criticism

held on the first Friday of each month. Come to MAWA or watch online on Zoom (watch your "Coming Up at MAWA" emails or check the MAWA website for a link). Online broadcasts will feature ASL translation. Within a couple of weeks, the First Friday Lectures will be posted with captioning and ASL at mawa.ca/videos/lectures.



Access and Inclusivity

BY NIKKI BRASSEUR

Friday | Dec 2, 2022 | 12 - 1 pm | at MAWA (followed by holiday party!) and online

The way galleries traditionally exhibit visual art is grounded in a system of exclusion. To move beyond ableist conventions, there must be alternatives. In this lecture, Nikki Brasseur discusses her disability, practice, and how accessible options for inclusion can be employed by artists and art spaces. These methods were utilized during her practicum with Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba working on *Crip Strength*, the exhibition up at MAWA in November and early December.

Nikki Brasseur (she/her) is an artist from Winnipeg, Manitoba in Treaty 1 territory. Her mixed media sculpture, installation and audio recordings speak to her lived experience with physical and cognitive disabilities. For her undergrad thesis, she focussed on the lack of accessibility in institutions and art spaces. By pursuing a Masters in Cultural Studies and Curatorial Practices, she hopes to advocate for the access and inclusion of artists and patrons in disabled and othered communities.

Nikki Brasseur,
*the burden is heavy,
unsoiled is the veil* (detail),
wrought iron bed,
wire, plaster,
instant coffee,
fabric, thread,
2021



Artist Talks

BY ALEXIS DIRKS AND SUZIE SMITH

Friday | Jan 6, 2023 | 12 - 1 pm | at MAWA and online

*Presented in partnership with
Platform Centre for Photographic + Digital Arts*

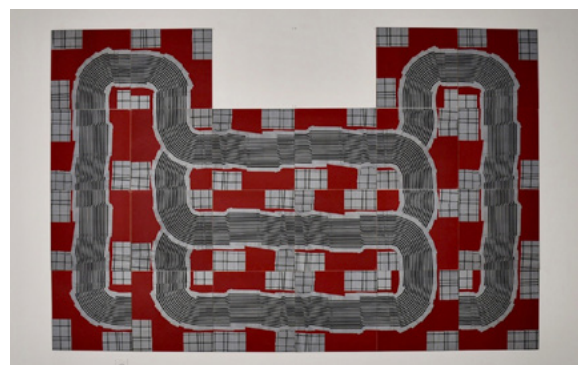
Artists Dirks and Smith will reflect on their works exhibited in *I saw the way you speak*, a group exhibition at Platform, January 6 – February 11, 2023 (see page 9 for details). How is voice made visual?

Alexis Dirks is an image-based artist working in Winnipeg. Her work looks at how imagery found across history books, fashion editorials and local landscapes can be collaged in new arrangements to acquire new contextual and narrative readings when their arrangements are flattened across the photographic plane.

Suzie Smith works with printmaking and design that expands into sculpture, installation and moving image. Her work often incorporates the deconstruction and transformation of objects and materials to create new or multiple meanings. Smith creates systems and structures for her process that act as a tool to build, take apart and push against.



Alexis Dirks, *Two Forms Revised*, digital collage, 2022



Suzie Smith, *Work in Progress*, Stop-motion animation, 2022



Pregnancy and Birth in Art

BY KELLY KLICK

Friday | Feb 3, 2023 | 12 - 1 pm
at MAWA and online

The pregnant human form in art is historically uncommon and controversial, the depiction of pregnant or birthing bodies created by women artists even more so. In this lecture, Kelly Klick will explore how and why pregnancy has been

artistically represented throughout the eras, highlighting the few female artists who dared to depict the gravid state and its curious absence throughout much of art history. Klick will also dip into debates that one might have overheard in the art world hundreds of years ago or just last week.

Kelly Klick is an emerging artist living in Pinawa, Manitoba. Intimately knowledgeable about pregnant bodies, fetuses and newborns, Klick uses her experience as a midwife to inform her painting, sculpture and assemblages. She is currently working on a series entitled *Mother Tree*, which explores the connection between humans and trees through pregnancy.



Leonardo da Vinci, *Untitled* (the fetus in womb sketches), red chalk, pen, ink and wash on paper, 30 x 22 cm, 1519



Feminist Figure Drawing is fun! October 2022

Feminist Figure Drawing

Tuesdays | Jan 31 and Feb 28, 2023

7 - 9:30 pm at MAWA

Free for MAWA members; others \$10

All women and gender minority artists welcome

Do you miss drawing live models? Want to practise drawing the human body but need the time and space? MAWA offers figure drawing with live models in a feminist environment. No need to register, just show up. Doors open at 6:30 pm to give you time to set up. The model begins at 7 pm for quick gesture drawings, followed by longer poses. Participants are asked to bring their own materials. Drawing boards are provided.

ARTIST BOOT CAMPS | PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CREATIVE MANITOBA

All are welcome to attend these free online workshops, designed to help you advance your art career. To receive a link, email training@creativemanitoba.ca or watch the MAWA website and emails for information on how to tune in to the Zoom livestream. Within a couple of weeks of broadcast, the workshops will be available with captioning at mawa.ca/videos/professional-advice.



Artist Residencies

WITH GRACE HAN

Thursday | Dec 8, 2022 | 7 - 9 pm | online

Artist residencies offer the opportunity for exchange, focussed work and relationship building with international peers in an informal manner that is unique. This workshop provides information on different residency models. How do you figure out if a particular residency is right for you? What questions should you ask a residency centre? How should you structure your time while you are there? Han has participated in short-term and long-term residencies, located amidst nature and the big city. She will offer tips on applying for residencies and securing arts council funding, and share her experience on what to expect before, during and after the programs.

Grace Han is a ceramic artist originally trained in Seoul, South Korea. She received her BFA from Dankook University, where she specialized in traditional Korean Ceramic techniques and skills, and her MFA from the University of Manitoba. Since then, she has been continuing her career as a ceramic artist in Canada, her second home.



Grantwriting: Proposals

Wednesday | Jan 18, 2023 | 7 - 9 pm | online

and

Grantwriting: Résumés and Budgets

WITH SARAH CRAWLEY

Wednesday | Jan 25, 2023 | 7 - 9 pm | online

Writing about your work is part of your job as an artist, and grantwriting in particular can open up transformative support for your practice. A clear, compelling proposal, well-organized résumé and realistic budget are essential for a successful application. How you present your work to a selection committee is key to whether you receive funding or not. Join in either or both of these workshops to learn how to put your best foot forward and increase your chances of receiving a grant to support making your work.

Sarah Crawley works with ideas generated from lived experience using different photographic technologies and materials. Her recent investigations examine the impact vulnerability and personal loss have on identity. Crawley has received many arts grants over the years. She has exhibited across Canada as well as internationally, and her work is held in public collections. She is the Community Programming Coordinator at Martha Street Studio.

Cross-Cultural Beading Circle

WITH NIAMH DOOLEY

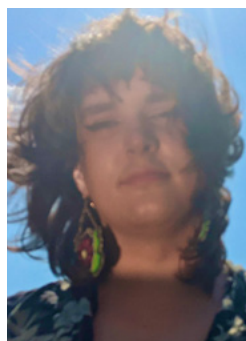
Mondays | 6 - 8 pm | at MAWA and online

Free! All welcome

Do you like gathering in person to bead? If so come to MAWA on the Monday evenings listed below. Do you prefer to gather virtually? Join the circle via Zoom. Everyone is invited to learn and/or work independently in a welcoming atmosphere. No experience necessary. Novice and experienced beaders of all cultures, ages and genders are welcome.

Some sessions are unstructured and provide an opportunity to work on our own projects, together. Most feature a guest beader, who will share their history with beading and their techniques. When there is a guest, a kit of free materials (incl. beads, thread, cloth and leather) will be available for you at MAWA. If you are joining in via Zoom, you can pick it up in advance, or it can be delivered to you in Winnipeg.

Each instructor will offer their workshop twice, to create opportunity for more participants (do not enroll in both sessions of the same workshop). Spaces are limited. To register, go to mawa.ca/groups/cross-cultural-beading-group and if you find you cannot attend, cancel so folks on the waiting list can participate.



Dec 5 & 19, 2022:

Off-Loom Bead Weaving with Vi Houssin

Vi Houssin (they/them) is a non-binary beader and drag performer. Their work explores the parameters of both mediums and seeks to connect two of their core personal identities as a Métis Citizen and a queer person.



Jan 16 & 23, 2023:

Flat Stitch Blueberry Pins with Zoe Stevens

Zoe Stevens is a Red River Métis woman living on Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg. She just graduated from law school and will get called to the bar in June. She is inspired by both traditional and modern Métis beadwork. You can find her work at [@beadsbyzo](https://www.instagram.com/beadsbyzo) on Instagram.



Feb 6 & 13, 2023:

Daisy Wreath Earrings with Daphne Daniels

Daphne Daniels is an Anishinaabe and Cree woman who has been beading since 2019. She works as a gardener during the spring and summer, and during the winter she sells beaded gifts.





Elvira Finnigan illustrates that the dress code is anything goes at MAWA fundraising suppers!

Bringing the Community Together

Do you remember the days of yore, pre-pandemic, when the MAWA community would gather for eating, drinking, dancing, toasting the past and celebrating the future? We are going to begin again, remaining ever-mindful of Covid infection rates.

As you can see on the next page, we hope to hold the Over the Top Art Auction in the spring of 2023, complete with live bidding and cupcakes. And that's not all!

The MAWA Board is hard at work formulating a Valentine's dinner in collaboration with MAWA's friends at the Tallest Poppy Restaurant. Treat yourself to a delicious meal, celebrating your love for MAWA. Stay tuned for details.

Legacy Fund

September was Legacy Fund Month at MAWA. Thanks to everyone who contributed! Your generosity added \$2,055 toward funding the Foundation Mentorship Program in perpetuity... an exciting and ambitious goal! Already, thanks to your support, the fund has grown from less than \$500 thirteen years ago to almost \$200,000 today.

The donations from donors will be partially matched by the Winnipeg Foundation and then partially matched again by Canadian Heritage... a snowball effect! Together, we make more feminist visual arts programming possible.

thank you to our recent donors:

Anonymous
Roselyn Advincula
Tricia E. Brock
Carol Budnick
Teresa Burrows
Yvette Cenerini
Connie Chappel
Dena Decter
Shawna Dempsey
Helene Dyck
Monique Fillion

Andrée Forest
Diana Frid
Callen Froese
Morene Gabriel
Leona Herzog
Lucy Howe
Clare Lawlor in memory
of Lillian Firner
Colleen Leduc
Jodi Layne
Monica Lowe

Sarah McKiel
Allison Moore
Christina Long
Laura Mackenzie
Verna McLean
Linda Moir in honour
of Megan Vun Wong
Dan Phelps
Marcella Poirier
Mary Reid in memory
of Megan Vun Wong

Sheila Soulsby
Reva Stone
Leesa Streifler
Ellen Thomas
Sheri Turner
Dulya Uhanovitage
Ann Weir
Iris Yudai
Cheryl Zubrack



Over the Top Art Auction and (hopefully) Cupcake Party

Opening party and bidding | Friday | April 14, 2023 | 6 - 10 pm | **Free!**

Bidding | Saturday | April 15, 2023 | 12 - 5 pm | **Free!**

Cupcake party and final bidding | Sunday | April 16, 2023 | 1 - 5 pm

\$10 in advance, \$12 at the door; first art auction lot closes at 3 pm

We hope to bring the cupcakes back! For the first time in years, MAWA aficionados will be able to gather in person for a sugar-fuelled weekend of art, bidding, raffle prizes and more. Want to get involved? MAWA is looking for art donors, cupcake bakers, raffle prize donors and sponsors: essential ingredients for making this event a success. Over the Top has raised as much as 12% of MAWA's annual budget... that's a lot of great visual art education programming!

I'm not a MAWA member. Can I still donate artwork?

Yes, MAWA welcomes donations of one piece of art from artists of all genders, members and non-members alike. Works in all media are accepted. We regret that we cannot accept children's work, but kids are more than welcome to munch on the cupcakes on the day of the auction, and we always have at least one fantastic kids' raffle basket.

How can I donate art?

If you want to donate artwork, please email Alison at info@mawa.ca. Thank you so much! We couldn't do this fundraiser without our valued artist donors.

Do I have to submit anything with my artwork?

Please fill out a MAWA artist contract and submit it with your artwork. This allows us to keep track of your work, hang or install it according to your instructions and title it properly. You can fill out a contract at MAWA when you drop off your art or you can download a contract from mawa.ca/events/over-the-top-art-auction. Each art donor will receive a free ticket to the event (the ticket has no cash value).

Is there a minimum bid?

Each artist will be able to set a minimum bid on their work at a level they are comfortable with, from \$50 up. We want to ensure that each artwork is auctioned for an appropriate value. Wondering how to set your opening bid? Ask yourself at what price you would rather have your work back than see it go for less.

Can I donate the proceeds?

Artists can choose how much of the sale of their artwork they want to donate to MAWA: 100%, 75% or 50%. MAWA is grateful to everyone who has donated over the years. You have made so much possible!

Will I receive a tax receipt?

Artists will receive a charitable tax receipt for the percentage of the sale that they choose to donate to MAWA.

Where and when can I drop off my work?

We will be accepting artwork at MAWA, 611 Main St, from Wednesday - Friday March 15 - April 5 from 10 am to 6 pm.

Are there evening and weekend drop-off dates?

Yes! We will also be open and accepting artwork donations: Saturday, April 1, noon - 4 pm or Monday, April 3, 6 - 8 pm

What if I miss these dates?

If we do not receive your artwork by April 5, we may not be able to include your work in the auction. If none of these times work for you, contact MAWA's office in advance at 204-949-9490 to make an appointment.

Can I contribute to raffle baskets?

We are also asking our members to collect new retail items for our raffle baskets. Please, no corporate swag! A charitable tax receipt will be issued to the individuals or businesses for the retail value of the donation of products (as per Canadian tax law, charitable tax receipts cannot be issued for services or gift certificates). If you or someone you know has something to contribute, please email info@mawa.ca with "raffle donation" in the subject line.

Can I bake cupcakes?

MAWA bakers contribute 84 dozen sugar-bombs that make the event such a success! If you would like to make cupcakes, please email mawacupcakes@gmail.com. You'll get a free ticket and will be entered into our cupcake bakers' draw. Plus there will be a prize for the most creatively decorated cupcake!

Where can I buy tickets?

Advance tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased online at mawa.ca or in person at MAWA, 611 Main St, Wednesday to Friday. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door for \$12, but attendance numbers will be capped, so buy now to avoid disappointment! Tickets provide entry to Over the Top on Sunday, April 16.

Can I bid on artwork if I can't attend on Sunday?

Everyone is welcome to come see the art on Friday, April 14 and Saturday, April 15 for free, but you need to buy a ticket to bid on artworks. Bids placed on Friday and Saturday are secured with a credit card. On Friday and Saturday, you will also be able to buy advance raffle tickets and if you win, we will call you. You can send a proxy bidder to the event on Sunday, or we can provide one for you.

Crip Strength: Art + Body+ Mind

Wednesday - Friday | Nov 4 - Dec 2, 2022

10 am - 4 pm | at MAWA

Presented in partnership with

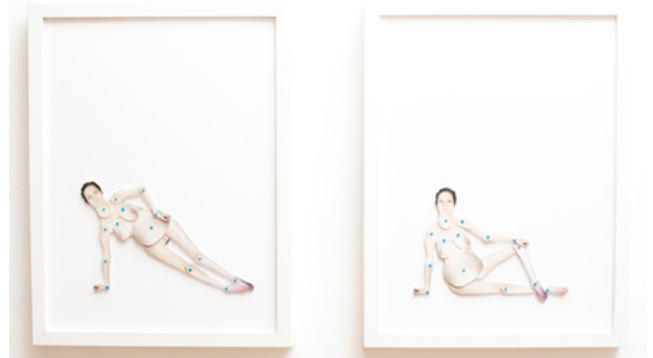
Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba

This juried exhibition explores the concept of what is “normal” when it comes to disability. It features artwork from local artists Susan Aydan Abbott, Yvette Cenerini, Meagan Hoskins, Sacha Kopelow, Marie LeBlanc, Candace Lispischak, Ryan Smoluk and Carla Sierra Suarez, who identify as Deaf, Mad and/or disabled, and reflects the lived experiences of the artists in an ableist world.

These artists have much to share and teach the larger art community about access, creative problem solving and adaptation: concepts which have long been necessary for Deaf and/or disabled artists and have become even more relevant to the larger society during a pandemic that has required self-isolation.



Ryan Smoluk, *Hello Hello*, paper, acrylic, plaster, gesso, pastel and modelling gel, 24"x30", 2012



Yvette Cenerini (with the assistance of Erin Josephson-Laidlaw, Erika Lincoln and Diana Thorneycroft), *Articulated Paper Doll (poses 1 to 6)*, digital prints on cardstock and embroidery thread on mat board, 12"x16", 2022

Maada'ookii/To Share

BY THE MÎCÊT TIPISKÂWI-PÎSIMAK (MANY MOONS) COLLECTIVE

Opening: Friday | Jan 6, 2023 | 5 - 7:30 pm | at MAWA

Wednesday - Friday | Jan 6 - 27, 2023 | 10 am - 4 pm | at MAWA

Presented in partnership with Manitoba Arts Network and the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba

Maada'ookii: s/he distributes something, distributes gifts, shares something with others.

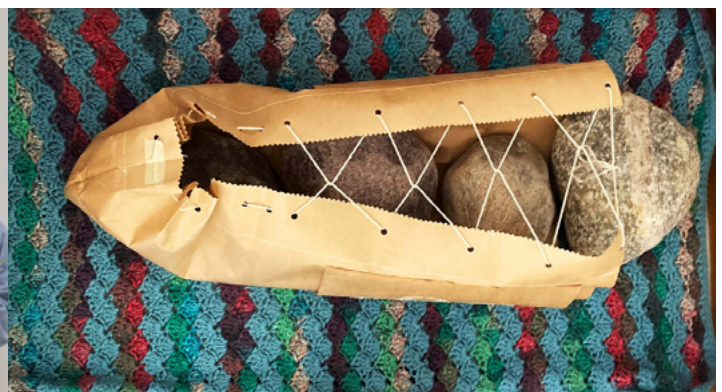
One of the values within Indigenous ways of knowing is sharing and reciprocity, which resulted in the name for this exhibition. These recent artworks by Kristy Janvier, Annie Courchene, Frances Cooper and Tess Houston are the result of the ongoing relationships and dialogue built

through the Indigenous Rural Arts Mentorship Program 2021/22 led by mentor Lita Fontaine, whose work is also featured.

Maada'ookii: an oral tradition that in the past and in the present creates a sense of belonging and relationship to one another.



Artists (left to right) Frances Cooper, Kristy Janvier, Lita Fontaine and Annie Courchene at the opening of their exhibition at the AGSM in Brandon, September 2022



Kristy Janvier, *The Weight We Carry* (detail), mixed media, 2022

I saw the way you speak

Opening: Friday | Jan 6, 2023 | 6 - 9 pm | at Platform, 100 Arthur St.

Wednesday - Saturday | Jan 7 - Feb 11, 2023 | 11 am - 4 pm

Presented in partnership with Platform Centre for Photographic + Digital Arts

This group exhibition explores the practices of four artists who use patterns as a language. It includes works by Alexis Dirks, Katherine Frazer, Caroline Monnet and Suzie Smith, and is curated by Tayler Buss and Meganelizabeth Diamond.

Unearthing

Opening: Friday | Jan 13, 2023 | 7 - 9 pm | at aceartinc., 206 Princess St.

Tuesday - Saturday | Jan 14 - 27, 2023 | 11 am - 5 pm

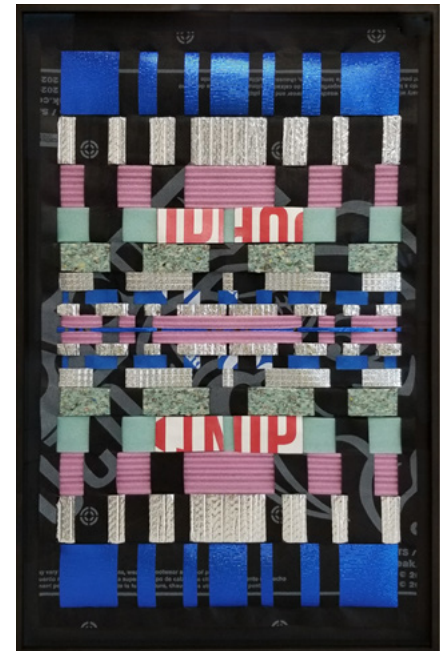
Presented in partnership with aceartinc.

To unearth is to bring to light that which has been forgotten, lost or buried. For one year, 10 women and non-binary artists met monthly as mentees in the 2021-2022 Foundation Mentorship Program (FMP) through MAWA. This exhibition, *Unearthing*, presents some of the work created during that year, when the mentees came together even while often having to stay apart.

During their 12 months together, they formed relationships and community. They also held down jobs, started families, cared for children and elderly parents, supported their communities and navigated a pandemic.

Although the members of this intergenerational, multicultural, gender-diverse and widely-able cohort face sometimes overwhelming barriers to thriving as artists, they have helped each other, depended on each other and made it together. They have respected the autonomy of the individual while recognizing that interdependence made them stronger, more resilient and more powerful than when alone. This is an important message in a time of climate crisis, rising fascism and increasing threats to our community of women, non-binary, disabled, queer, trans and racialized people.

Unearthing features artists Kelly Campbell, Kristiane Church, Lane Delmonico Gibson, Chrystal Gray, Lindsay Inglis, Yolanda Paulsen, Brenda Stuart, Lisa Walter, Cathy Woods and Aikaterini Zegeye-Gebrahiwot.



Caroline Monnet, *Mindjidwewin*, weaving on synthetic roofing underlay, 2022



Lisa Walter, *Insulting words in the singing of birds*, ceramic and mixed media, 2022, installation photo courtesy of the Harbourfront Centre

Tiny Gallery: MAWA Members' Wall

The 45"-wide "bump" on the north wall of our program space is dedicated to featuring work by MAWA members in any 2D or 3D media. Interested in showcasing your work? Contact Shawna at dempsey@mawa.ca.

Coming up in the Tiny Gallery:
February: Ashley Huot



Francine Martin with her Tiny Gallery exhibit of *Inner Space / Inner State*, 3D collage, 2022

Get Involved

Want to get more involved in MAWA? Consider applying to join the Board of Directors—there is a downloadable form at mawa.ca/about/staff-board. MAWA also has committees that would benefit from your experience and labour. Or give us a hand with Over the Top by asking local businesses for raffle donations or baking some cupcakes (see page 7 for details).

MAWA hires over 100 artists every year. Let Shawna know about a skill or an area of research you would like to share (dempsey@mawa.ca). There are SO MANY ways to get involved.

Holiday Party

Friday | Dec 2, 2022 | 1pm | at MAWA

After the December First Friday Lecture by Nikki Brasseur, MAWA will be hosting the annual holiday party with treats and prizes. Come celebrate with us!

Holiday Closure

MAWA will close for the holidays at 4 pm on Friday, December 23 and reopen at 10 am on Wednesday, January 4. Whatever and however you celebrate or don't, MAWA wishes you a peaceful season as the days begin to lengthen again.

Repairathon: Save the Date

This year, in celebration of International Women's Day, MAWA is hosting a Repairathon. Save up those sweaters with moth holes, shirts with frayed cuffs and jeans without knees: on March 4, MAWA needlework instructors will be on hand to help you transform them into fun and functional items. Let's keep textiles out of landfills by artfully recycling!

Bursaries and Accessibility

Did you know that MAWA offers need-based bursaries? If you cannot pay the full cost of any MAWA program, contact Dana at dkletke@mawa.ca. Full or partial financial support is granted confidentially on a case-by-case basis. Don't let financial circumstances prevent you from participating.

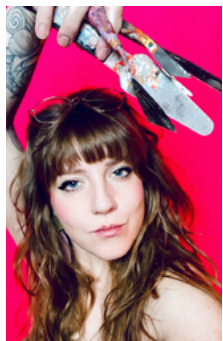
If you have any accessibility needs for any program, please let us know! Thanks to our partner Arts Accessibility Network Manitoba, ASL interpretation is available for all MAWA programs if booked two weeks in advance. Contact Adriana at programs@mawa.ca and let us know what you would like to attend.

MAWA's move

Some of you might be wondering if MAWA still plans to move from its current location on Main Street. In short, yes! We anticipate that the new Marketlands purpose-built facility will be complete in early 2025. MAWA will be on the ground floor, at the corner of Bannatyne and Princess. We will be sharing the complex with Urban Shaman, Video Pool, Creative Manitoba and, in the tower upstairs, rental housing. Marketlands will provide MAWA with more space and lots of opportunity to collaborate with other arts orgs. We will keep you updated as plans develop for this next step in MAWA's evolution.

Attention Writers

Interested in writing about art and art ideas for the MAWA newsletter? This is a paid opportunity (\$300 for 700 words). Pitch your ideas to Shawna at dempsey@mawa.ca today!



Critical Painting Perspectives

WITH LAURA LEWIS
Mondays | Dec 5, 2022, Jan 9
and Feb 6, 2023 | 9 - 10:30 am
online
for women and gender
minority painters

This reading group is dedicated to exploring ideas, practices, theory and criticism with respect to contemporary painting. Start the month (and morning) with paint! Join the conversation on the first Monday of every month at 9 am, to discuss the selected reading over a virtual cup of coffee. Interested in participating? Email laura@mawa.ca for links to the month's short accessible article and the Zoom meet-up.

Laura Lewis is a queer visual artist originally from Halifax, and a 2018 graduate from the BFA Honours program, School of Art, University of Manitoba, who is currently based in Winnipeg. Lewis' conceptual figurative painting practice explores philosophical questions concerning identity and sexuality.



Laura Lewis, *Mother of Goo*, oil on canvas, 2022



Photo by Simon Fuh

Tough Love

WITH GUEST LILLIAN O'BRIEN DAVIS
Thursday | Feb 9, 2023
6:30 - 8:30 pm | at MAWA
Artists of all genders welcome
*Presented in partnership with the
University of Manitoba School
of Art Gallery*

Want honest responses to your work? Want to practise talking about art? Join other artists and a special guest to give and receive constructive group critique. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in the dialogue, whether you are sharing work or not. There is more "love" than "tough," so don't be shy! To register for feedback or to participate in the discussion, email programs@mawa.ca with "Tough Love Feb 2023" in the subject line.

Lillian O'Brien Davis is the Curator of Exhibitions and Public Programs at Gallery 44 - Centre for Contemporary Photography, Toronto. She has curated projects at Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Susan Hobbs Gallery and the MacKenzie Art Gallery. Her writing has appeared in BlackFlash Magazine, Canadian Art online and C Magazine, among others. Her latest curatorial project, featuring works by Erika DeFreitas, Tim Whiten and Betye Saar, opens at the University of Manitoba School of Art Gallery on February 16.



Erika DeFreitas,
Score no. 34
(after *Greyish Blue*)
from the series
Scores on a Colourless Blue,
2022



Orange Shirt Day Pins workshop at the Cross-Cultural Beading Circle, taught by Dakota Nadeau (seated rear), September 2022



Mentorship Essentials workshop, September 2022



Riva Symko delivering her First Friday Lecture, *Text in Contemporary Fibre Art*, September 2022



French artist Estelle Chaigne delivering her Artist in Residence artist talk, August 2022



Alison Gillmor delivering the annual Wendy Wersch Memorial Lecture at the WFG Cinematheque, October 2022



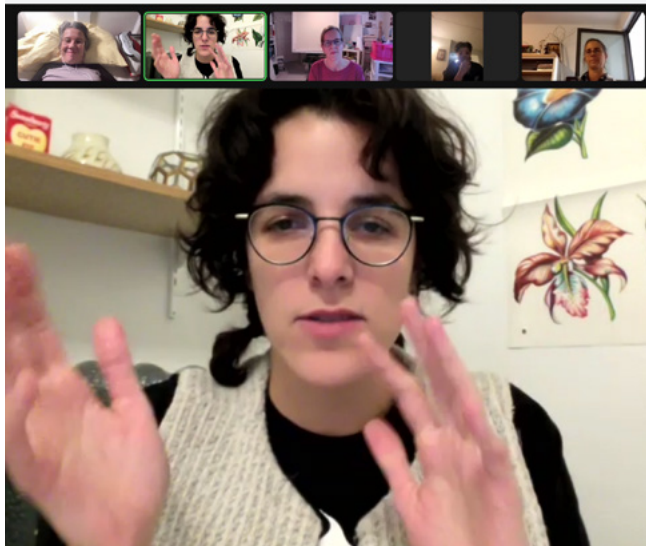
Second meeting of the Gauntlet Mitten workshop taught by Carole Fréchette (standing right), October 2022



Japanese artist Tomoko Inagaki delivering her Artist in Residence artist talk, July 2022



Dr. Chantal Nadeau (left) and artist Jessie Mott, the collaborative duo Like Queer Animals, installing their exhibition at MAWA, October 2022



Francesca Carella Arfinengo leading a Theory at Home discussion about Decolonizing Theory, October 2022



Field Trip participants at Brokenhead Roundhouse, September 2022



Claire Johnston sharing knowledge at the Cross-Cultural Beading Circle, October 2022



Swedish artist Ebba Bohlin delivering her Artist in Residence artist talk, October 2022

Mad art and the contested mind

BY LISA WALTER

Some years ago, I stood in front of William Kurelek's painting *I Spit on Life*¹ and recalled that he had denied having a mental illness when he painted it. Instead, he said, he had been having a spiritual crisis. Looking at the image, a monumental rendering of suffering to which I felt powerfully drawn, his assertion seemed ludicrous to me. With Hieronymous Bosch-like extremity, Kurelek had depicted torture, self-mutilation and suicide. How could he have been anything but mentally ill?

Eleven years later, I have a very different perspective. I know now what it's like to have other people's notions of my madness supplant my own; who am I to supplant Kurelek's?

"Madness," for me, has meaning that lives in layers. It means recapturing my power to choose how to live my differentness. It means clearing away the biomedical frameworks of illness that have been used to stake claims on my mind. It means knowing this is a political act, and that mad people have been doing this for a long time.

I see myself as a mad artist blithely trampling the carefully curated gardens of the Academy and the thorny roses of the medical Colleges. I just want to make art and, like any artist, make it my own way, but galleries are fraught places for mad people.

There is a sordid historical collusion between psychiatry and art's *haut monde*. Since the early 20th century, collections of artwork by insane asylum inmates have been thought of as a kind of worm-hole into the human psyche, rather than as art. Hospital museum curators (who tend to be psychiatrists) and contemporary artists alike continue to perpetuate sanist tropes about mad art and experiences of madness. As one documentary opines about the artists of the Prinzhorn Collection (many of whom were gassed to death in Nazi Germany), "Each of these people is a hidden universe requiring a key."²

Art by "mentally ill" artists continues to be understood and evaluated as therapeutic, rather than aesthetic

Art by "mentally ill" artists continues to be understood and evaluated as therapeutic, rather than aesthetic; it's more attributable to impulse and pathology than to skill. The art academy's disdain for art therapy devalues and shuts out mad artists and implies that their work, as crazy people, results from an illness that the artist can scarcely take credit for.



Susan Aydan Abbott, *Crone 1*, digital print, 2022

Who, then, gets to tell us what it is to be mad, to be differently-minded? Psychiatry and psychology practitioners are obviously regarded as the go-to experts. The Museum of the Mind website observes that the psychiatrist of one artist, Joan Gunther, "seems to be placing his own views in the notes rather than Joan's, and it can be quite difficult to tell whose view has been noted down."³ We also turn to non-mad artists of all disciplines for portrayals of asylums, madness and psychiatric treatments, often rife with depictions of demented doctors, criminally insane inmates and vengeance-seeking spirits.

This stands in stark contrast to the needs of mad artists to articulate the contested mind. "A considerable body of scholarship has already demonstrated that the individualization and medicalization of social problems are at the heart of psychiatry,"⁴ according to researcher Jasna Russo. Artist Hanan Hazime describes how, as a Muslim woman, her emotional responses to real danger have been seen by mental health care providers as a sign of mental illness. Standardized assessments for psychiatric illnesses lack cultural insight, she says. "It looks different for me."⁵

Susan Aydan Abbott is a graduate of MAWA's 2018 Foundation Mentorship Program. She explains that institutions need to be able to adapt to the needs of artists with mental illness and hidden disabilities, and provide flexibility with time restraints, fluctuating moods and space to "do me, unfiltered, unexplained."⁶

Aydan Abbott and Hazime both express concerns about tokenism. Hazime notes the irony in an offer she received from a gallery to comment publicly on its diversity and inclusion, but not to exhibit her work. "I just want to show my art," she observes wryly. "My art can speak for itself."⁷

True accessibility requires the art establishment to confront the financial, social and biomedical policing of mad, intersectional lives. Maybe you will think me crazy if I propose that mad artists should be funded, rather than our projects; that mad art should be recognized as a discipline (or perhaps an “undiscipline”); and that we need to lead rather than being merely included, like that awkward kid your mom made you invite to your birthday party. We need to throw our own parties.

Perhaps the tallest order is the simplest one: for mad artists to be accepted as the authors of our experience. As the authors of “Mobilizing Mad Art in the Neoliberal University” put it, “the most exciting possibilities occur when we take up *art as process*⁸ through which we open up, provoke, defy and resist ahistorical and apolitical approaches to madness.”⁹

Lisa Walter is an undisciplinary artist and social change educator based in Treaty 1 territory/Winnipeg. She is delighted to have graduated from the 2021/22 Foundation Mentorship Program.

¹ The painting can be accessed online as part of the 2011 Kurelek retrospective, *The Messenger* (which incidentally illustrates the interpretation of mad art as “therapy”).

² *Between Insanity and Beauty – The Art Collection of Dr Prinzhorn*. Written and directed by Christian Beetz, Gebrüder Beetz Filmproduktion, 2007.

³ Retrieved from <https://museumofthemind.org.uk/blog/joan-gunther>, September 1, 2022.

⁴ Russo, J. (2022) “De-psychiatrizing our own research work.” *Front Sociol*, 7:929056. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2022.929056

⁵ Hazime, Hanan. Interview. Conducted by Lisa Walter. 1 September 2022.

⁶ Aydon Abbott, Susan. Interview. Conducted by Lisa Walter. 1 September 2022.

⁷ Hazime, Hanan. Interview. Conducted by Lisa Walter. 1 September 2022.

⁸ Emphasis is mine.

⁹ Reid, J., Snyder, S.N., Voronka, J., Landry, D., and Church, K. (2019). “Mobilizing Mad Art in the Neoliberal University: Resisting Regulatory Efforts by Inscribing Art as Political Practice.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 13(3), 255-271. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/731353>.

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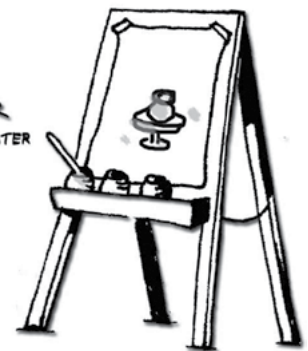
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DECEMBER

Wed-Fri, Nov 4 - Dec 2 10 am-4 pm	Crip Strength AANM Juried Show at MAWA	Mon, Dec 5, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Vi Houssin: Off-Loom Bead Weaving
Fri, Dec 2, 12-1 pm	First Friday Lecture online + at MAWA Nikki Brasseur: <i>Access and Inclusivity</i>	Thurs, Dec 8, 7-9 pm	Artist Boot Camp online Grace Han: <i>Artist Residencies</i>
Fri, Dec 2, 1-2 pm	Holiday Party at MAWA	Mon, Dec 19, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Vi Houssin: Off-Loom Bead Weaving
Mon, Dec 5, 9-10:30 am	Critical Painting Perspectives online		

JANUARY

Fri, Jan 6, 12-1 pm	First Friday Lecture online + at MAWA Artist Talks by Suzie Smith and Alexis Dirks	Tues-Sat, Jan 14 - 27 11 am-5 pm	Unearthing Foundation Mentorship Program graduate exhibition at aceartinc., 206 Princess Street
Fri, Jan 6, 5-7:30 pm	Maada'ookii/To Share Exhibition opening at MAWA	Mon, Jan 16, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Zoe Stevens: Flat Stitch Blueberry Pins
Wed-Fri, Jan 6 - 27	Maada'ookii/To Share Exhibition opening at Platform	Wed, Jan 18, 7-9 pm	Artist Boot Camp online Sarah Crawley: <i>Grantwriting: Proposals</i>
Fri, Jan 6, 6-9 pm	I saw the way you speak Exhibition opening at Platform	Mon, Jan 23, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Zoe Stevens: Flat Stitch Blueberry Pins
Wed-Sat, Jan 7 - Feb 11 11 am-4 pm	I saw the way you speak Exhibition at Platform	Wed, Jan 25, 7-9 pm	Artist Boot Camp online Sarah Crawley: <i>Grantwriting: Résumés and Budgets</i>
Mon, Jan 9, 9-10:30 am	Critical Painting Perspectives online	Tues, Jan 31, 7-9:30 pm	Feminist Figure Drawing at MAWA
Fri, Jan 13, 7-9 pm	Unearthing Foundation Mentorship Program grads Exhibition opening at aceartinc., 206 Princess Street		

FEBRUARY

Feb 1 - 24	Tiny Gallery: Ashley Huot	Mon, Feb 13, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Daphne Daniels: Daisy Wreath Earrings
Fri, Feb 3, 12-1 pm	First Friday Lecture online + at MAWA Kelly Klick: <i>Pregnancy and Birth in Art</i>	Mon, Feb 27, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA open session
Mon, Feb 6, 9-10:30 am	Critical Painting Perspectives online	Tues, Feb 28, 7-9:30 pm	Feminist Figure Drawing at MAWA
Mon, Feb 6, 6-8 pm	Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online + at MAWA Daphne Daniels: Daisy Wreath Earrings		
Thurs, Feb 9 6:30-8:30 pm	Tough Love at MAWA Guest: Lillian O'Brien Davis		



MAWA is intergenerational! First Friday lecturer Serena Keshavjee (centre) with MAWA Program and Outreach Coordinator Adriana Alarcón (right) and U of W MA student in Curatorial Practices Wendy Alakpodia, wearing a fabulously apt T-shirt in light of Keshavjee's lecture topic, *Interpreting Ectoplasm*, November 2022