



Beader Diane Star (left), with MAWA staff Adriana Alarcón (centre) and Niamh Dooley: making together at MAWA, April 2021

In early 2024, MAWA will be moving to a brand new, purpose-built facility in the heart of Winnipeg's Exchange District. Located on the site of the old former Public Safety Building between Old Market Square and Red River College, the Marketlands development will contain an "Art Hub," 100 affordable housing units and a makers' market. The building will be fully accessible and built to the highest standards of energy efficiency.

We will be joined on the main and second floors by our longstanding partners Urban Shaman Aboriginal Art Gallery, Video Pool Media Arts Centre and Creative Manitoba. Imagine the collaborations! Already there are plans for a co-programming media wall, a residency apartment and more.

Most importantly, there will be room for MAWA to grow. Too often we have had to turn folks away from a Crafternoon or Beading Circle, rent space for an Over the Top meeting, or ask our bookkeeper to work in the kitchen. Although bigger isn't always better (sustainability is our first priority), the time has come to take the next step in MAWA's evolution. We envision a space with a variety of

seating for all bodies, our resource library on view rather than tucked into an office, and a residency apartment that is accessible to all artists. We imagine closer relationships with all of the arts orgs in the Exchange and a larger footprint for exciting new ideas. We dream of MAWA serving the artists of this community far into the future.

MAWA has loved being at 611 Main Street. We feel that we have contributed to the health of this neighbourhood. Our current space, designed by architect Neil Minuk, is beautiful and bright. Our current landlord, Richard Walls, is unfailingly supportive. Our current neighbours, The Edge Gallery and Clay Centre, constantly inspire us. We are grateful to all of the MAWA volunteers and staff who got us here. There will be some sadness in leaving, but it is time to make a leap into the next chapter of MAWA's evolution. We look forward to taking this journey with you!

— Shawna Dempsey and Dana Kletke

P.S. Enjoy some extra summer reading in this issue.

From everyone at MAWA, have a safe and fun summer!

All are welcome to attend these free noon-hour lectures on art, art theory and criticism held on the first Friday of each month.

WATCH FIRST FRIDAY LECTURES LIVE online at facebook.com/mawawpg or on Zoom (watch your "Coming Up at MAWA" emails for links), and ask your questions through the comment function. Lectures will feature live ASL translation. Within a couple of weeks of broadcast, the First Friday Lectures will be available with captioning and ASL at mawa.ca/videos/lectures.



Trauma, Embodiment, Art

BY LAURA MAGNUSSON

Friday | June 4, 2021 | 12 - 1 pm | online

Art can elucidate felt experiences of trauma in visual, embodied ways that are not possible through spoken and written language alone. How do artists make use of their own bodies to make visible internal, often invisible, lived realities of violence and survival? This talk will consider a range of interdisciplinary work from women and non-binary artists.

Laura Magnusson is a queer interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker of white settler descent. Originally from Treaty 1 Territory/Winnipeg, she is currently based in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal pursuing a PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities at Concordia University. Magnusson's research-creation seeks to elucidate felt experiences of trauma, most recently by combining video, sculpture, performance and water. She holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from the University of Michigan (2019), and a BFA in Sculpture from the University of Manitoba (2010).



Laura Magnusson, *Blue*, video still, 2019



What Can't the Gallery Hold? (Blackness, apparently...)

BY ALLISON YEARWOOD

Friday | September 3, 2021 | 12 - 1 pm | online

With the recent "Blackout" of the international and national art scenes, new and old Black art leaders, artists, intellectuals and curators have finally been given space and influence in art spaces. But are those spaces ready to support, understand and, more importantly, produce the conversations, ideas and work that these folks are bringing? Can the art space be a brave space for us to trust?

Allison Yearwood returns to her hometown of Winnipeg from the Banff Centre, where she was Program Manager in the Indigenous Arts Department. Previously, Yearwood served as Art and Business Manager at Yamaji Art, an Aboriginal art centre in Australia; General Manager of the Collective of Black Artists in Toronto; and Programming and Events Coordinator at the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. She is currently the Executive Director of Plug In ICA.



Digital filtered photograph of Allison Yearwood, taken by Charmaine Green



"Should I go to grad school?"

WITH LEAH DECTER

Thursday | June 3, 2021 | 7 - 9 pm | online

To receive a link, email training@creativemanitoba.ca

An Artist Boot Camp presented in partnership with Creative Manitoba

What are the pros and cons of doing a graduate degree in relation to your art practice? This workshop will explore how to weigh benefits versus cost and address questions regarding the application process, financial support and how to find a program that is right for you.

Leah Decter is an inter-media artist, educator and scholar who holds a PhD in Cultural Studies and an MFA in New Media. She has worked with MFA students at NSCAD University, the University of Manitoba and the International Low Residency Program at the Transart Institute. Leah is currently the Canada Research Chair in Creative Technologies and Community Engagement at NSCAD University.



Suzie Smith explores one of the roles a mentor can fulfill, while an image on the TV screen of founding foremothers Diane Whitehouse and Sheila Butler looks on, *Mentorship Essentials*, September 2020

Mentorship Essentials

WITH SHAWNA DEMPSEY AND ADRIANA ALARCÓN

Saturday | Sept 11, 2021 | 1 - 4 pm | at MAWA | \$50

Registration and payment deadline:

Friday, September 10 at 4 pm

mawa.ca/workshops/mentorship-workshops

or by phone 204-949-9490

This three-hour workshop will explore the dynamic of the mentor/mentee relationship. Attendees will participate in a variety of activities designed to highlight their own experiences, strengths, skills and gifts, as well as some of the challenges in establishing a mutual mentorship vision. Topics discussed will include: defining structure, boundaries and expectations; avoiding pitfalls and negotiating conflict; and creating closure. The workshop will also explore

learning models and will offer a variety of approaches and practical advice. It is an excellent how-to for anyone considering setting up a mentorship program, anyone who will be mentoring, or anyone who works in peer-based arts education. It is based on MAWA's experience as a pioneer in the field of arts mentorship over the past 38 years.

MAWA Co-ED Shawna Dempsey has mentored for MAWA, Video Pool and Crossing Communities. She has also taught mentoring workshops for Visual Arts Ontario, Visual Arts Nova Scotia and CARFAC Saskatchewan, among others. MAWA Program and Outreach Coordinator Adriana Alarcón has lectured about mentorship at conferences throughout Western Canada. She leads MAWA's Foundation Mentorship Program.

Dura Mater : Objective/Subjective

EXHIBITION AND TALKS ON ISSUES OF SCIENCE AND ART
BUHLER GALLERY, ST. BONIFACE HOSPITAL
Thursday, May 13 – Sunday, Aug 8, 2021 | by appointment
*Presented in partnership with the Buhler Gallery and
Manitoba Neuroscience Network*

Artists Julie Gendron, Erika Lincoln, Bonnie Marin, Janet Shaw-Russell and Tricia Wasney were paired with neuroscientists over the course of a year to share research, thoughts, confusions and wonder regarding brains, bodies, chemistry, perceptions and relationships. The resulting artworks have been curated by Leona Herzog, Director of the Buhler Gallery, into this provocative exhibition. Watch for associated talks by artists, scientists and science students about the intersections of brain science and art.

The Buhler Gallery
is open to visitors
Monday to Thursday 2 - 6 pm;
Friday 10 am - 2 pm; and
Sunday 12 - 4 pm.
Email tgadd@sbgh.mb.ca
to make an appointment.



Bonnie Marin, *Universal Beauty*, collage and pencil crayon, 2020

Erika Lincoln,
Neural KNOT: Syncopated/Synaptic/Syncope,
copper wire, thread, mic stands, sound
& vibration platform, motor, electronics,
generative algorithm, 2021

Care

A SHOWCASE OF WORKS CREATED THROUGH MICROGRANTS
Opening come and go | Friday | June 4 | 5 - 9 pm | at MAWA
Gallery hours | June 4 - 25, 2021 | Wednesday - Friday | 10 am - 5 pm
Artwork drop-off | Thursday and Friday, May 27 - 28, 10 - 5 pm |
Tuesday, June 1, 6 - 8 pm | **pending COVID restrictions**
*Presented in partnership with the University of Manitoba Institute
of Humanities and QPOC Winnipeg*

Care features works funded in 2020 through microgrants provided to artists by MAWA, the University of Manitoba Institute of Humanities and QPOC Winnipeg. It reflects a multiplicity of perspectives, preoccupations and passions, and is a snapshot of our community during the global pandemic. Join us in celebrating the tenacity of local art and artists, and the ability to create through crisis.

Care Microgrant Panel Discussion

Wednesday | June 16, 2021 | 7 - 9 pm | online at umhumanities.com

Artists and artlovers who identify as BIPOC are invited to this online gathering featuring guest panelists, moderated by Ekene Maduka, to talk about the work in *Care* and issues it raises. The panel will explore both the possibilities and limits of regarding artmaking as a type of research, particularly within anti-colonial, anti-racist practices.



Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, still from
How High the Moon, film, 2020



Ekene Maduka, panel moderator

free! artist talk

Reclaiming My Spirit through Clay

BY KC ADAMS

Thursday | June 10, 2021 | 7 pm | online

youtube.com/ManitobaCraftCouncil

Presented in partnership with the Manitoba Craft Council

Clay is a catalyst for change, and a catalyst for reclaiming your own personal history. KC Adams will speak about her journey to working with clay, and how her connection with clay has helped her learn about her ancestors and her blood memory. Through her teachings, KC will share how others can use clay to connect with their own ancestors and history, regardless of background, skill level or age.

As an artist, Adams is interested in social practice and economic issues faced by North America's consumerist culture. The focus of her work is the investigation of the dynamic relationship between nature (the living) and technology (progress).

Note: If you have a hearing impairment, contact mccprogramming@c2centreforcrafft.ca prior to the talk to receive a Zoom link with captioning capacity.

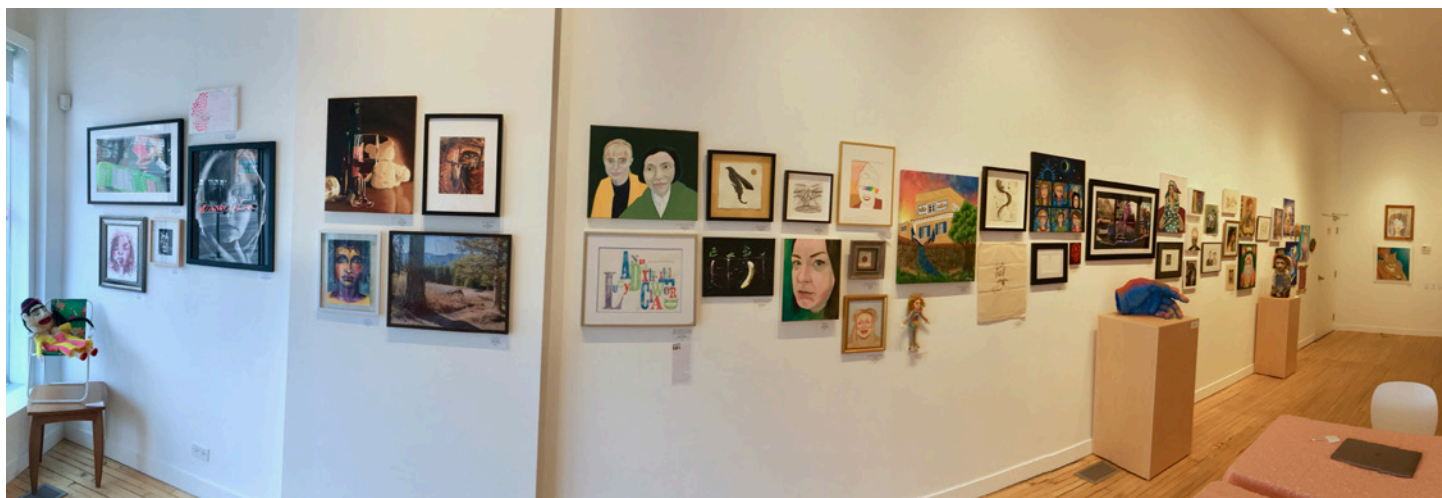


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We really appreciate your support!

Anonymous, Noor Bhangu, Crystal Hardy, Zongwe Binesikwe, Leandra Brandson, Rhian Brynjolson, the Bur Oak Fund, Cathy Collins, Alejandra Díaz-Roman, Francesca Du Brock, Rosemary Dzus, Elvira and Harry Finnigan, Karen Fletcher, Bonnie Hallman, Rachel Iwaasa, Donna Jones, Eleni Kilbride, Clare Lawlor in memory of Lillian Firner, Ingrid McMillan, Bev Pike, Shereen Ramprashad, Mary Reid, Marilyn Schick, Jennifer Smith, Mary Ann Steggles, Shanelle St. Hilaire, Reva Stone and Iris Yudai.



This was some of the stunning work that filled MAWA's space during the MAWA Members' Exhibition, *Portrait*, April 2021. Congratulations to everyone who participated!

Cross-Cultural Beading Circle

WITH NIAMH DOOLEY

Monday | June 7 and 14, 2021 | 6 - 8 pm | online

All welcome! **Free!**

To register, email dooley@mawa.ca or call 204-396-0505

It happens every year — the beaders want to bead! This program has been extended into June by popular demand. Everyone is invited to share their skills, learn and 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, for an opportunity to gather and work on our own projects, together. Others 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) can be delivered to you or be available for pick-up at MAWA. Note that numbers for these sessions will be limited. Watch your MAWA emails or contact Niamh to see when special guests will be joining us.

The Craft Program at MAWA is supported by Indigenous Initiatives and the Department of Municipal Relations of the Province of Manitoba.



Danielle Desrocher, guest beader, teaching at the Cross-Cultural Beading Circle online, April 2021



Beading together, September 2020



Tough Love

WITH LUCIE LEDERHENDLER

Wednesday | June 9, 2021 | 6:30 - 8:30 pm | online

Free! Artists of all genders welcome

To register for a crit or to participate, email programs@mawa.ca with "Tough Love June 9" in the subject line to receive a meeting link

Do you feel like you are working in a vacuum, without community context? Want honest advice or practice 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!

Lucie Lederhendler (she/her) is a curator, researcher, and artist of Yiddish and settler heritage. She has recently become the curator at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba. Previously, her practice was based in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal where she focussed on supporting emerging artists in hybrid spaces, often as a member of the curatorial collective Studio Beluga. Currently, her personal research involves seeking out sea monsters and gaining focus in empty spaces.



A young bidder with some of the amazing works in the 2020 Over the Top Art Auction, July 2020

Over the Top is coming

AUCTION LOT #1 OPENS SEPTEMBER 3, 2021 AT NOON!

MAWA's 16th annual fundraiser, the Over the Top Art Auction, is taking place September – November 2021, online, and MAWA hopes you will participate. This event raises up to 12% of MAWA's budget and makes so much programming possible. Want to take part in this amazing community initiative, perhaps the largest group show in Winnipeg? Check out the FAQs below.

How can I donate art?

MAWA will be accepting donations of one work per artist in all media, from any adult artist of any gender, whether a MAWA member or not. If you want to donate artwork, please email Alison at info@mawa.ca.

Do I have to submit anything with my artwork?

Please fill out a MAWA 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 link to your social media. You can fill out a contract at MAWA when you drop off your submission or you can download a contract from our website at mawa.ca/events/over-the-top-art-auction/.

Is there a minimum bid?

Yes! 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 point you would rather have your work back than see it go for less.

Can I keep some of the proceeds of the sale?

Artists can choose how much of the sale of their artwork they want to donate to MAWA — 100%, 75% or 50% — and can keep the rest. Payment to artists will take place within a month of the sale of their work.

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.

How will the auction work online?

MAWA will photograph each work and post it with the title, artist's name, dimensions, materials and one social media or web link on charityauction.bid/mawa, a secure and professional auction site.

When and where can I drop off my artwork?

Artwork drop-off will be Wednesday - Friday, June 16 - July 16 (10 am - 4 pm) and Saturday, June 19 and July 10 (noon - 4 pm) at 611 Main St.

What if I miss the drop-off dates?

If we do not receive your artwork by July 16, we may not be able to include your work in the auction. If none of these times work for you, contact MAWA's office 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 (under Canadian tax law, charitable tax receipts cannot be issued for services or gift certificates). Please email info@mawa.ca with "raffle donation" in the subject line.



Self-Directed Residency at MAWA Deadline: Anytime (for residencies June – November 2021)

Are you a woman or non-binary MAWA member who would benefit from a stay in downtown Winnipeg to focus on your practice? Have the demands of the pandemic, including childcare, eldercare, work and art, meant that art too often falls off the plate? If so, MAWA welcomes your application to our Self-Directed Residency.

Your stay in the second-floor loft at 611 Main Street could include (but is not limited to) thinking, drawing, research, seeing an exhibition, taking part in a workshop and shopping for art supplies. Free parking is included, just steps from the apartment. Note: There is one flight of stairs and no elevator, so the apartment is not accessible for everyone.

Stays can vary in length from 2 to 7 nights. The cost is the same for any duration: \$100. If finances are a barrier, please let MAWA staff know.

To apply, please email Adriana at programs@mawa.ca to explain why you would like to stay at MAWA. Requests will be accommodated based on availability. Artists at all stages of their career are encouraged to apply.



MAWA's beautiful 700 sq ft loft on the 2nd floor of 611 Main Street

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 AccessAbility Network Manitoba, ASL interpretation is available for all MAWA programs if booked two weeks in advance. Just contact Shawna at dempsey@mawa.ca and let us know what you would like to attend.

Mentors on the Fly

MAWA maintains a list of recommended mentors you can contact for studio visits, crits, help with grant applications, grad school applications and other professional advice for a fee of \$40/hour. Check out the current roster at: mawa.ca/mentorship/mentors-on-the-fly/.

Do you have expertise that you are willing to share? To apply to be a Mentor on the Fly, contact Shawna at dempsey@mawa.ca with your CV and a 100-word bio outlining your skills.

Microgrant Recipients

Congratulations to the recipients of the most recent round of Make and Grow Microgrants for MAWA Members! We look forward to hearing about the new work and learning opportunities undertaken by Susan Aydan Abbott, Zongwe Binesikwe, Dale Boldt, Barb Bottle, mahlet cuff, Rosemary Dzus, Ulziitugs Enkhbold (Ue), Monique Fillion, Olga Krahn, Callie Lugosi, Melanie Matheson, Tania Nault, Katharina Nuss, Lucy Pavez, yolanda paulsen quintana (Azul) and Lisa Walter.

Working Together

All of MAWA's activity would not be possible without the generosity of our community, who help by donating artwork to our Over the Top fundraiser. Financial gifts to MAWA are also key in providing more MAWA programming. Last year MAWA supporters donated over \$10,000 through gifts as small as \$5 and as large as \$1,000. Each and every donation is so appreciated, and truly makes it possible for MAWA to do what we do.

MAWA also partners with other not-for-profit organizations to share resources. In the last year we worked with All Art Now Sweden, The Buhler Gallery, the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Circle Blue Media, Creative Manitoba, Gimli Film Festival, Jiser Spain, Louis Riel Institute, Manitoba Arts Network, Manitoba Association for Art Education, Manitoba Craft Council, Manitoba Museum, Manitoba Neuroscience Network, Platform Centre for Digital + Photographic Arts, Plug In ICA, QPOC Winnipeg, STEPS Public Art, University of Manitoba Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Manitoba Institute for the Humanities, Winnipeg Film Group Cinematheque, and WNDX Festival. By doing things together, so much more is possible.

If you are associated with another organization that shares the same goals as MAWA, please let us know. We are always happy to build more bridges, expand our audience and participation, and increase our ability to serve visual artists in Manitoba.



One of many exciting works funded by a MAWA Microgrant: Christine Brouzes, *Unspoken*, mixed media, 2021. Brouzes writes, "The crow knows but won't speak, the red dress hangs empty and someone knows what happened to the woman who used to wear it, but the information to find her or her killer is unspoken; the mask itself when worn covers the mouth and makes some words unspoken as we turn to digital more than in-person/verbal communication."

Tiny Gallery: MAWA Members' Wall

The 45"-wide "bump" on the north wall of our program space is dedicated to showcasing work by MAWA members in any 2D or 3D media. Coming up in the Tiny Gallery:

July - Nat Boone August - Tracy Fehr

Summer Hours

Between July 17 and August 27, MAWA staff won't be keeping regular office hours. We'll be at the beach! (Sometimes...) We suggest that you phone before dropping by or, better yet, make an appointment. Flexible hours will allow us to plan for the flurry of activities in the fall. That said, the MAWA staff is still here for you. If you have any questions, concerns or ideas, please call us.

MAWA summer staff (left to right):
Program and Outreach Coordinator Adriana Alarcón,
Administrative and Communications Coordinator Alison Davis, and
Co-Executive Directors Dana Kletke and Shawna Dempsey, July 2020



Michelle Wilson, *Reclamation*, video still, 2019

Outlaw #5

BY MICHELLE WILSON

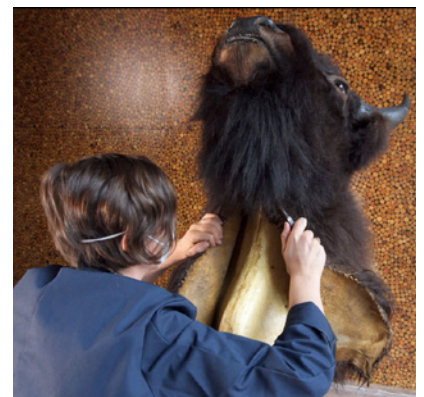
I went to the Manitoba Museum in 2017 to see “Outlaw #5.” He was on display as part of the *Legacies of Confederation* exhibit, and I was eager to see this bison bull who had haunted several Winnipeg institutions since 1912. The gallery where I found him was not large, and from the ceiling hung a surveyor’s chain, the metal bit-like links fencing in the forever arrested “Outlaw.”

Taxidermy is just the stretching of a thin layer of fur and flesh over an artful human-made form. Glass or resin eyes give the illusion of liveliness. It is seductive. There is a morbid pleasure in looking into those eyes, but eventually, you become aware that you are just seeing your reflection.

The inherited myth conveyed by the *Legacies of Confederation* exhibit was seductive as well. It is a myth that I, as a white settler, have inherited. This bison’s body, masculine and virile, was one of the last to resist Canada’s salvation. His kin were bought from Michel Pablo, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and saved from destruction through Parks Canada’s protection.

The outlines of this story hold up if you stand very squarely in your settler identity — If you embrace Parks Canada, the protector of Canada’s natural and cultural heritage for your enjoyment, as your inheritance. But narrow your eyes and shift your perspective. You will see that this legacy myth is only a thin shroud over the complicated tangle of colonial realities that brought this bison here.

It was almost six years ago that I went to listen to the bison at Riding Mountain National Park. I realized that to begin to apprehend another being, you must know them in community with their imbricated kin because they are continually becoming in relationship with them. In the years that followed, I have come to know that those ties do not end in “nature.” There is no divide between human and environmental history, and so to know the bison I sat with on those scorching August afternoons, I would have to look hard at the forces that brought them to this fenced pasture. It is almost six years, and I am almost ready to tell that story, but it will not fit here.



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So let me focus on what this “fine specimen” can connect us to if we return him to his context. Tribal members had brought bison to the Flathead Reservation in an act of stewardship and conservation. These bison were allowed free range on pastureland that was held communally by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. There they thrived for decades, multiplying until over 700 of them grazed the valley south of Flathead Lake. The bounds of the reservation and the tribal authority protected several generations while the US military and hide-hunters eradicated the bison outside the reservation. The Salish model of care was working. The old bulls like Outlaw #5 would sometimes stray off the reservation, and Michel Pablo or his ranch hands would drive them back. Pablo wanted to avoid conflict with his white neighbours, and when Pablo could not keep a bull within the reservation, he had him shot. When the old creature was butchered and skinned, they often found that these neighbours had filled his tough, battered hide with all kinds of buckshot and .22 calibre bullets.



In 1904, after years of bitter protest by tribal leaders and in violation of the 1855 Hellgate Treaty, Theodore Roosevelt signed the Flathead Allotment Act into law. This law forced tribal members to take individual parcels of land, opening the remaining lands within the reservation to non-Indian homesteaders. With white farmers and ranchers would

come more fences and guns. The bison needed to be saved from federal American policy, though many would frame it as an inevitable tide of white expansion. The Canadian government arranged to purchase and ship 708 bison from the Flathead Reservation to the ecologically disastrous Buffalo National Park near Wainwright, Alberta. Maybe Outlaw #5 was lucky; he was one of a few dozen that Pablo had killed, butchered and skinned on the land when they proved too large and “wild” to herd and load onto carts and trains. He was not wounded with buckshot by white settlers. He did not break his own neck in a frenzy as some mothers did when they were loaded onto wagons without their calves.

Outlaw #5 carries these stories in his flesh. Still, I have to ask, what does he obscure? Taxidermy obscures the bison he was. As long as his remains are stretched over the artificial form, I am distracted by the colonial act of recreating nature in the white male vision of mastery and order. As an emblem of federal conservation, he obscures Salish efforts to protect their kin, their success in creating a pocket of free and thriving bison, and the violence and suffering that followed when settler governments wrested the bison from them. The colonial story of bison conservation is one of rescue. As Pauline Wakeham puts it, conservation narratives attempt “to overwrite colonial violence” and locate it in a distant past. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation and many other signatories to the Buffalo Treaty are writing a new and yet ancient story, and it is theirs to tell. It is incumbent on us to find it.

I may have inherited the myths that came with “Outlaw #5.” I have also inherited the responsibility to peel back the myths and expose the framework supporting them so that a messy, bloody, complicit truth can be known.

Michelle Wilson is an inter-media artist and mother of French/British descent. She is currently a PhD candidate in Art and Visual Culture at the University of Western Ontario.

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Text & Tactility

BY NEHAL EL-HADI

Since becoming the editor of *Studio Magazine* two years ago, I've found myself immersed in a wondrous world of matter and making. I came into the position as a journalist and researcher, but it was in learning about craft processes, techniques, stories, objects and people that I have found my own life and work re-enriched. I find that my own craft of writing is influenced by the things I have learned about matter and making.

There are many phrases and approaches that reflect the relationship between language and objects: many wildly successful self-help books recommend envisioning and naming desires to attract them into one's life. We're told to watch what we think and say, so as not to act in bad faith. One of my favourite quotes comes from Saul Williams' *The Dead Emcee Scrolls*: "What we say matters (becomes matter)."¹



sadé hooks, *helios love* (available in brass, gold, or sterling silver at www.sade.gold).
Photo by Najva Sol

My immersion in the world of craft has revealed to me the sophisticated and complex relationships between objects and language, the latter of which we sometimes use so casually. The vocabulary we develop shapes our cosmologies — our ways of seeing, understanding and being in the world.

In an essay titled "The Matter in Hand," craft scholar and curator Martina Margetts begins: "Craft means creativity, activity and productivity. In contrast, the meaning of material is full of ambiguity."² It is through descriptive language that the function and aesthetics of the crafted object come into being, through narrative that the crafted object acquires meaning.

The somesthetic senses are touch, kinaesthesia (awareness of the ways in which one occupies or moves through space) and haptic perception, which combines movement and touch and happens when we actively engage with an object. In our bodies, mechanoreceptors, thermoreceptors and nociceptors — which sense movement, temperature and pain, respectively — convert information into nerve signals. There are six different mechanoreceptors³ that respond to touch, pressure, vibration and stretching. Our skin is both the boundary between ourselves and everything else, and the interface through which we experience our environments and the objects in them.

Language further translates these experiences and allows us to make sense of these interactions with our physical environments: we assign meanings, create narratives, produce memories, develop desires.

But touch comes way before language. The sense of touch is our first sense to develop in the womb, appearing approximately seven to eight weeks after conception (some research indicates it might even be as early as three weeks). The sense of touch for a newborn is mainly experienced through being handled: picked up, held, wiped.

Touch is one of the ways in which we first gain literacy about our environment and objects within it. Our experiences and perception of touch reveal a reading of materials that we cannot necessarily confirm by sight alone: weight, texture, temperature. Makers and artists rely on touch — often more than sight — for an understanding of their materials: an accumulated literacy acquired through years of sensing can indicate through touch alone the viscosity of a clay, the brittleness of a glass, how a fabric feels against the skin.

An approach derived from cultural studies would also approach and "read" the crafted object as text: one which contains the narratives of the places, processes and people involved in its production, as well as the contexts of its use. Focusing on a study of the crafted object to explore our own nature — what would be referred to as an object-oriented ontology — reveals different understandings of what it means to be human. "Functional objects bear images of us as users and as human beings,"⁴ writes Anders Ljungberg, and this application and communication of meaning and function is revelatory.



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Akin to media theorist Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message," Anni Albers once responded in a panel:

How do we choose our specific material, our means of communication? "Accidentally." Something speaks to us, a sound, a touch, hardness or softness, it catches us and asks us to be formed. We are finding our language, and as we go along we learn to obey their rules and their limits... What I am trying to get across is that material is a means of communication.⁵

I'm still learning about the ways in which craft provides understanding beyond language, and text beyond metaphor. In an increasingly digital (and recently, isolated) world, spending more time interacting with objects is driven by a more visceral need to make sense of the changing world around us.

Nehal El-Hadi is a writer, researcher, and editor whose work explores the relationships between the body (racialised, gendered), place (urban, virtual) and technology (internet, health). She lives in Toronto, where she is the Science+Technology Editor at The Conversation Canada and Editor-in-Chief of Studio Magazine.

¹ Williams, S. (2006). *The Dead Emcee Scrolls: The Lost Teachings of Hip-Hop*. NYC: MTV Books.

² Margetts, M. (2018). "The Matter in Hand," in K. A. Bull & A. Gali (eds.) *Documents on Contemporary Craft No. 5: Material Perceptions*. Oslo: Norwegian Crafts.

³ Marzvarian, A., and A.F. Alhawaj (2020). Physiology, Sensory Receptors. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK539861/

⁴ Ljunberg, A. (2018). "An Emotional Perspective on Everyday Use," in K. A. Bull & A. Gali (eds.) *Documents on Contemporary Craft No. 5: Material Perceptions*. Oslo: Norwegian Crafts.

⁵ Albers, A. (1982). "Material as Metaphor." albersfoundation.org/artists/selected-writings/anni-albers/#tab4

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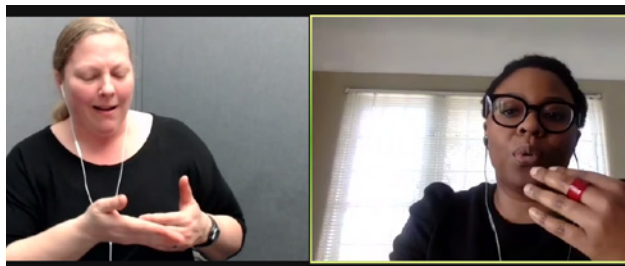


Interested in doing Critical Writing for the MAWA newsletter and website?
Please reach out to
Shawna at dempsey@mawa.ca
and pitch your idea.
Emerging writers are most welcome!

Note that this is a paid opportunity.

what you may have missed

We will look back at old photos from this past year and marvel. Everyone looks like a masked crusader or a contestant on "Hollywood Squares!" And yet with the help of those masks and modern technology, we have persevered. On Zoom or masked and in-person, you have continued to make MAWA... MAWA. You have taught, learned, shared, wondered, read, critiqued, listened, grown and created art. Cheers to you all!



Sally Frater (right) delivering "Eco-criticism and Feminism" with ASL interpretation—the first time MAWA has offered ASL for a First Friday Lecture, April 2021



FEMtastic Film Club discussion led by curator soJin Chun (bottom) about *Kelet*, a film by Susani Mahadura, April 2021



Installer Craig Love (right) and MAWA Student Intern Lasha Mackedenski installing the MAWA Members' Exhibition, *Portrait*, April 2021



Alison Stoney Cox sharing Traditional Drum Teachings at Indigenous Art Night, April 2021



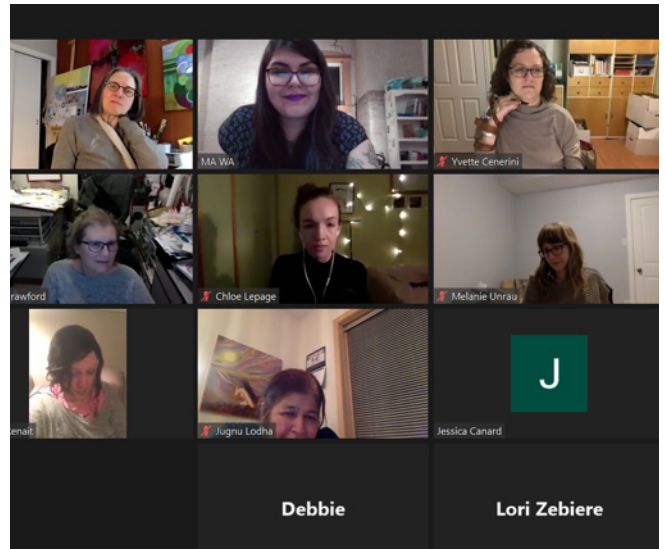
A proud participant in the Focused Mentorship in Integrated Paint/Collage, led by Bonnie Marin (right), October 2020



Cynthia Boehm teaching one of two Norway-House-style Cree/Métis beading workshops online from MAWA, with Hassaan Ashraf and Annie Beach's artwork in the background, February 2021



Artist Mothers at MAWA, led by Jocelyn Chorney (2nd row, left) and Loricla Palchoko Matheson (bottom left), February 2021



One of the monthly Art Jam makers' nights, led by Jessica Canard (top row, centre), January 2021



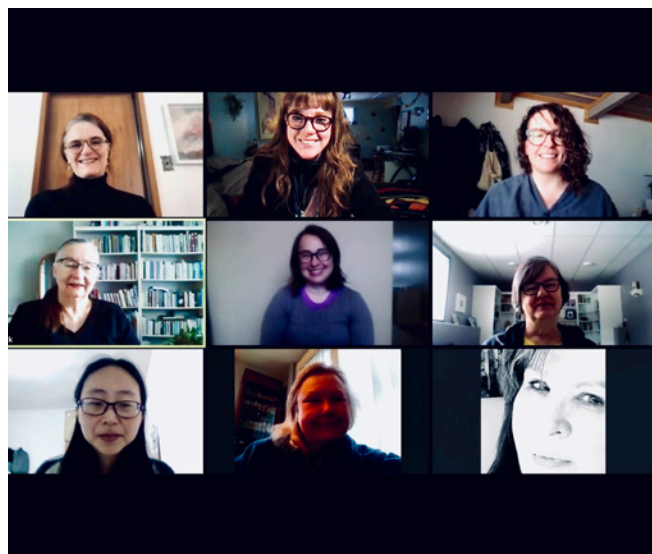
Curator Mariana Muñoz Gomez with Niamh Dooley's work in the exhibition *Casting a line*, March 2021



Casting a line, March 2021



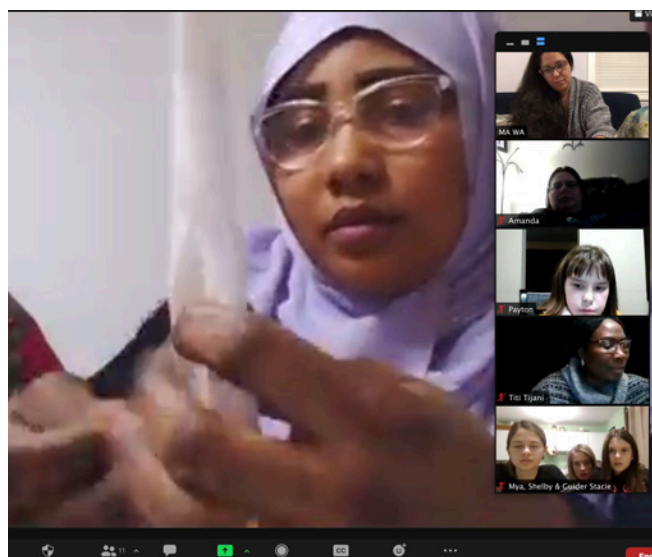
Florence Yee's artwork in *Casting a line*, March 2021



One of the monthly Critical Painting Perspectives discussions, led by Laura Darnbrough (top row centre), February 2021



Cross-Cultural Beading Circle, December 2020



Hanan Ahmed leading Henna Traditions, Techniques and Tips, March 2021

MAY

Ongoing - Sun, Aug 8 *Dura Mater : Objective/Subjective*
exhibition at the Buhler Gallery,
St. Boniface Hospital –
by appointment only

JUNE

Thurs, Jun 3, 7-9 pm **Artist Boot Camp online**
Leah Decter: "Should I go to grad school?"

Fri, Jun 4, 12-1 pm **First Friday Lecture online**
Laura Magnusson: *Trauma, Embodiment, Art*

Fri, Jun 4, 5-9 pm **Care Opening come and go**

Fri, Jun 4 - Fri, Jun 25 **Care Microgrants Exhibition**
Wed-Fri, 10 am-5 pm

Mon, Jun 7, 6-8 pm **Cross-Cultural Beading Circle**

Wed, Jun 9, 6:30-8:30 pm **Tough Love online**
Guest: Lucie Lederhendler

Thurs, June 10, 7 pm **Artist Talk**
KC Adams: *Reclaiming My Spirit through Clay*

Mon, Jun 14, 6-8 pm **Cross-Cultural Beading Circle**
(last one until fall)

Wed, Jun 16, 10 am **Over the Top -**
Art donation drop-off begins

Wed, Jun 16, 7-9 pm **Care Microgrant Panel**
Discussion for BIPOC online

JULY

July 2 -30

Fri, July 16, 4 pm

Tiny Gallery
Nat Boone

Over the Top -
Art donation drop-off ends

AUGUST

Aug 4 -27

Tiny Gallery
Tracy Fehr

SEPTEMBER

Fri, Sept 3, 12-1 pm

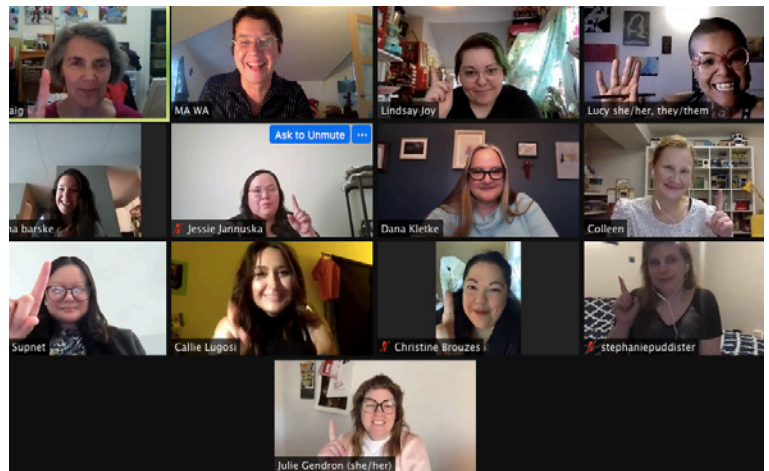
First Friday Lecture online
Allison Yearwood: *What Can't the Gallery Hold? (Blackness, apparently...)*

Fri, Sept. 3, 12 pm

Over the Top Art Auction - Lot #1 opens

Sat, Sept 11, 1-4 pm

Mentorship Essentials Workshop



MAWA's hard-working board, voting up a storm, April 2021



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office hours | Wed - Fri | 10 am - 4 pm
due to COVID restrictions, hours may vary

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