

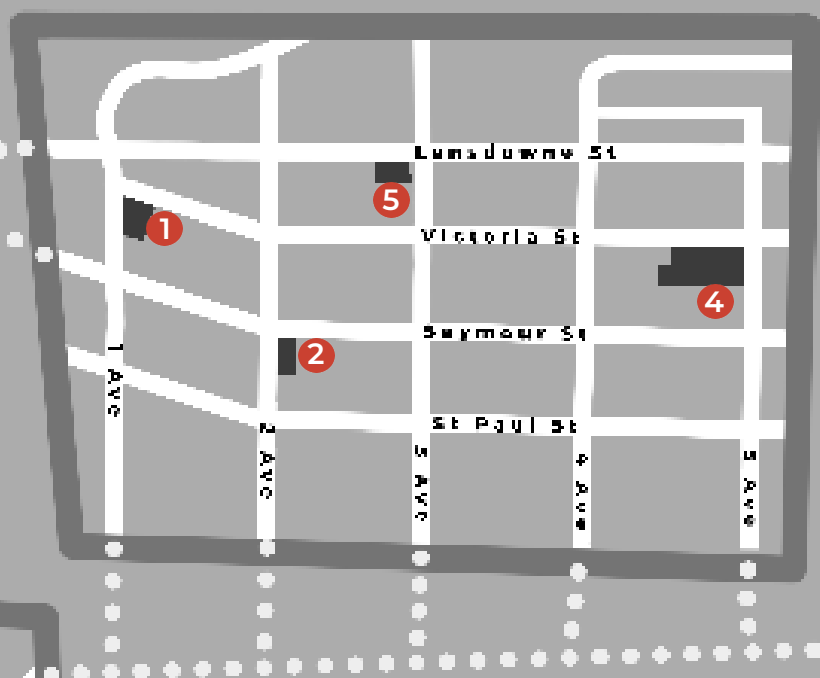
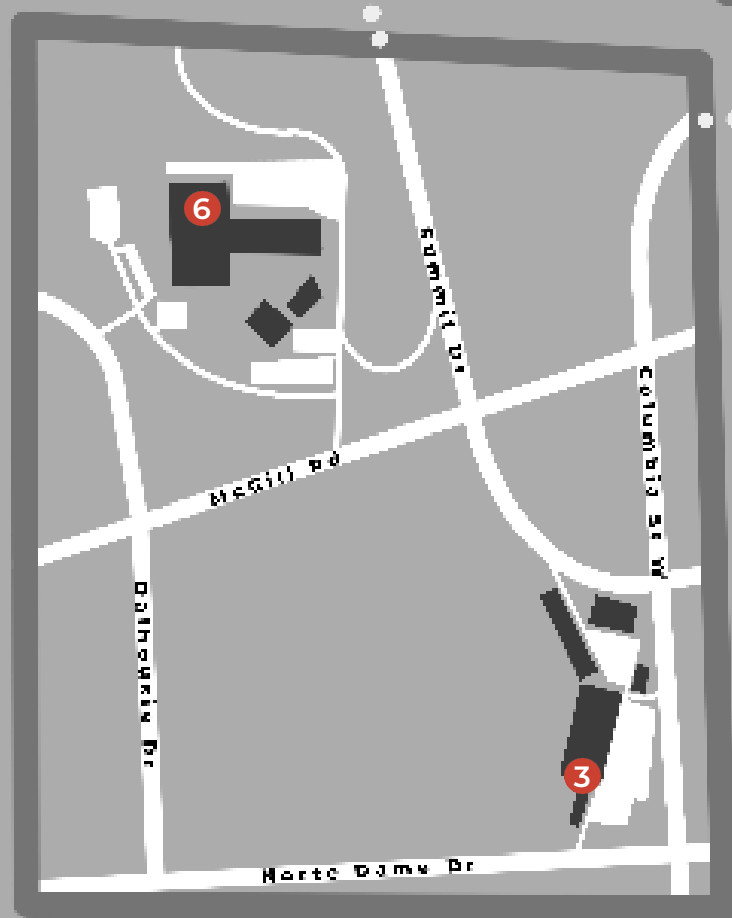
Thompson Rivers University
BFA 2021 graduating class

Perceptions



perceptions

creating our realities



Perceptions Exhibition

April 17, 2021 – May 15, 2021

Kaitlyn Heaney

- ① Brendan Shaw Realty, 109 Victoria St

Elsie Joe

- ② Kamloops Museum and Archives, 207 Seymour St

Yue Li

- ③ The Rice Bowl Rose Garden, 1180 Columbia St W

Junxiang Ma

- ④ Amplified Café 465 Victoria St
- ⑤ REpublic Gallery, 275 Lansdowne St

Laura Amethyst Mackenzie

Laurie Mackie

Janet McChesney

- ⑥ Thompson Rivers University Art Gallery,
805 TRU Way

An exhibition catalogue for *Perceptions: creating our realities*
Thompson Rivers University, 2021
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Designed by Lea Bucknell, Elsie Joe, Yue Li, and Laurie Mackie
Photo Documentation by Kaitlyn Heaney, Elsie Joe, Donald Lawrence, Yue Li,
and Laura Amethyst Mackenzie

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Introduction

“Your work reminds me of my hometown ...” is a comment written in a guest book accompanying Yue Li’s artworks “Rice Fields” and “Rice Bowl”. The copper-plate etching that prompted that comment represents the centuries-old rice paddies terraced into the hills in China, Yue’s home country. A second etching represents a bowl of rice in a traditional Chinese ceramic dish. Yue’s two works are exhibited in the Rice Bowl Rose Garden rather than in an art gallery and, for that, I am reminded of the many murals and other artworks that may be seen in family-run restaurants across Canada, reminders of the often distant places that those families and many of their customers have come from. They speak to ideas of belonging and of extended communities. Interests in community are an important idea for the 2021 graduating class of TRU’s BFA program. These students have formed a small community of their own, working together in the studios and on-line through the year, extending their BFA exhibition out into the Kamloops community. They have taken a hybrid approach, with some of the students exhibiting their work in Thompson Rivers University’s Art Gallery and others realizing projects in offsite locations, with the intention of creating new and expanded audiences for their own and future graduates’ artworks.



The students’ interests are wide ranging, though several projects explore such recurring themes as relationships between the animal and human worlds, and the socially constructed landscapes of human habitation. Across such interests there is both critical reflection as well as a basic impulse to imagine, tell and visualize stories. Three of these artists, Laurie Mackie, Janet McChesney and Laura Amethyst Mackenzie have used TRU’s Art Gallery as the venue in which to tell their stories.

Laurie Mackie has particular interests around the social construction of identity, “the secret world of women” and the “intensely personal topics which come first from [her own] experience, but are also a vast shared experience”. Informed by such interests and by Michel Foucault’s theories around gender and power relationships Mackie creates such sculptural works as a cast and illuminated representation of the reproductive organs of women or a dollhouse which comes in which an outer façade gives way to a disrupted interior space and associations of a loss of childhood innocence. As a writer Mackie brings textual components into some of her sculptural works and looks towards graduate studies as a means of foregrounding interests in writing and interdisciplinary approaches to artmaking.

For both Janet McChesney and Laura Amethyst Mackenzie it is the uneasy meeting of animal and human populations that lies behind their artworks. Janet’s sculptures are emphatic in revealing threats put upon animal species by human actions and, in turn, challenges to society presented by invasive species. As one enters the gallery space they are presented with a quarter-sized representation of the diving tail and fluke of a humpback whale – a portrait of one of the actual whales of the Salish Sea and member of a population in precarious balance amidst the marine traffic of the area, facing entanglement, underwater noise levels, harassment, and damage to habitat. Accompanying the shiny, black sculpture is an audio track mixing the humpback’s vocal calls – what we hear of the whales – with the sounds of shipping traffic – what the whales hear of us. Nearby, a swarm of 100 or so Vespa Mandarina hornets – named “sparrow bees in Japan” but labeled “killer hornets” in North American media – are seen through a nest-like form, placing the viewer in the position of a hornet inside the nest. This evokes curiosity, or maybe fear as we react out of our limited understanding. Laura Amethyst Mackenzie’s photographs depict deer inhabiting more romanticized landscapes but the natural world is not just once removed by the intermediary role of the photographer as there are multiple layers of social construction at play. These are Laura’s true subject and such post-colonial critiques are a key part of Laura’s interests. Details in the photographs reveal that the landscapes are, in fact, dioramas, a form invented a century ago in such places as Chicago’s Field Museum or, as Laura notes, with precedent a half century before that in the extravagant photographic studios of such figures as Montreal’s William Notman. These landscapes are, however, recent constructions, described by Laura as a “strange type of Realism” created to lure customers into a giant new “wilderness” supply store on the traditional lands of the Tsawwassen peoples. Laura Amethyst Mackenzie’s photographs speak to the manner in which a belief in a pristine wilderness lingers,

against all odds and in the most ironic of situations.

To realize the offsite projects that are a part of Perceptions the students had to plan for and adapt to alternate venues – a good set of skills for any emerging artist to develop. Elsie Joe's

space-travelling coyote (described below), though appearing as a solid sculpture comes apart and bolts together as seven distinct components and the large painted backdrop was custom created with the Museum's Bay Window in mind. For their respective venues two of the students, Kaitlyn Heaney and Junxiang Ma created walls custom configured for their spaces.



The offsite location for "The Swamp," Kaitlyn Heaney's contribution to the exhibition, necessitated construction of a curved wall, creating a small amphitheatre-like space for her large and complex drawing. Whereas Janet

McChesney and Laura Amethyst Mackenzie speak in their work to the intersection of the human world and the world of known animals Kaitlyn has drawn an imaginary landscape that is inhabited by the walven, a fantastical and sometimes unseen creature. Despite being otherworldly, the walven embodies many human traits. Kaitlyn's fictional inhabitants of the swamp live what she considers to be an existential life, shaped in response to the particular nature of their landscape. In an allegorical manner Kaitlyn writes of the swamp as being "an unforgiving landscape that provides an environment for living things that need to figure out how to strive on their own".

Junxiang Ma's paintings, exhibited in two off-site venues, present views of landscapes that are informed, in part, by a romanticizing impulse towards such imagery as trees and lily-covered ponds. At the same time, the paintings have another dimension. The greenery of some of the landscapes present a foil for imagery of distant buildings or the lush green landscape is viewed through an illusionistically rendered pane of glass – Junxiang's interest in reflections in such paintings speaks at the same time to the natural conditions of light and to the built environment, and often, like Yue Li, recalls familiar places back in China. Junxiang's

paintings of trees are close-cropped, coming as much from traditions of modernist painting as they do from romantic imagery. For Junxiang they are strange trees, ones seen during a Kamloops winter and that are not known to him in China; that speak to being away from home while studying at TRU.

Elsie Joe has created “Coyote and the Moon” as a way of extending stories that she recalls being told as a child of the journeys of her ancestors, of their being the first lunar explorers, and of those travellers finding artifacts crafted from the lunar dust itself. In Elsie’s installation those artifacts are familiar in form to the material objects of the Nl̓e kepmx peoples of BC’s Interior. In the diorama that Elsie has created in the Bay Window of the Kamloops Museum and Archives there is the familiar space suit of the latter twentieth century but the



figure inside is not an American astronaut or a Cosmonaut. Instead, the central figure of much indigenous story-telling is the Trickster. In a playful manner this artwork, invites viewers to think critically about such issues as exploration and colonization, but at the same time encourages viewers to invoke their own imaginative

impulses, to find a place for themselves in the stories they are told.

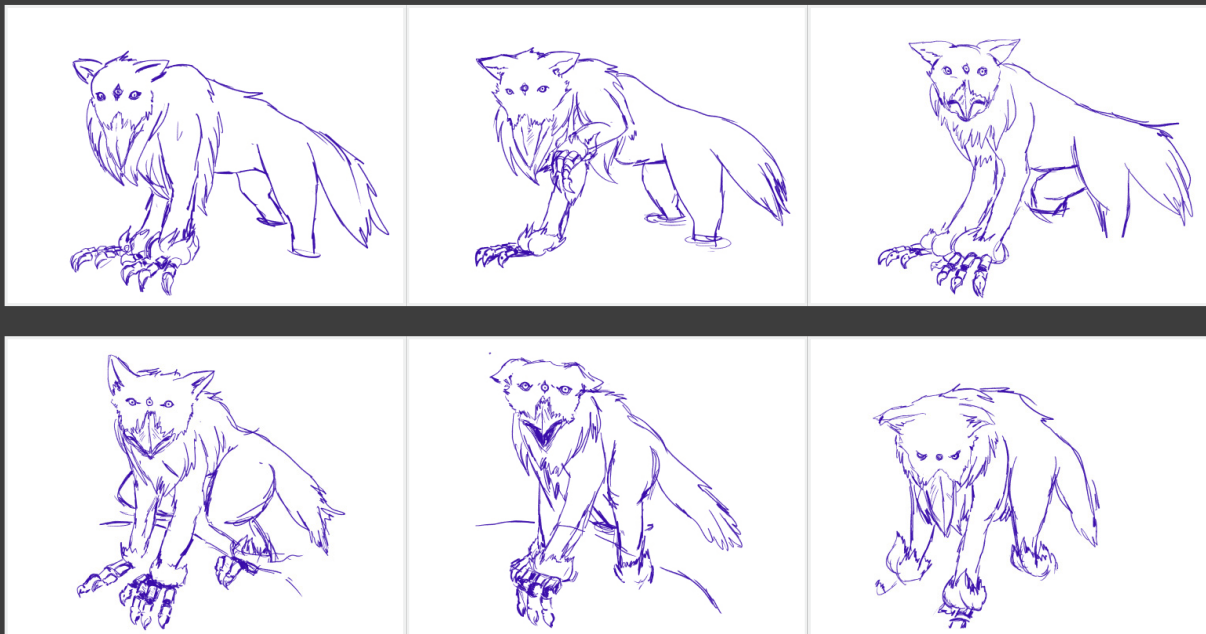
I hope that as viewers the audience for Perceptions enjoys these artworks and what the students have to say about them, as I have in working with this group of emerging artists through this past year.

Donald Lawrence

Kaitlyn Heaney

I have drawn a swamp. Its trees are twisted and unwelcoming, as if the onlooker is not invited to the strange land. The installation's limbo landscape is further exaggerated by various shades of ink wash. The trees' bark is feathered outward to create a sense of wooded scales and the waters have an inky black depth, seemingly devoid of life. This fabricated landscape is a dreary home for several uncanny creatures-this biome is shaped by its own denizens, and the denizens are likewise shaped by the biome. This creates an interdependent relationship that is necessary for to survival of both.

Existentialism and believing in divinity are two contrasting ideas that I'm using to create a visual juxtaposition. Divinity is a construct created by humanity that gives people purpose, but Existentialism is about people finding their own purpose without divine power guiding them. By creating a pantheon (or bestiary) of creatures with their own functionality, I'm creating a construct of belief much like the gods in Greek and Roman myths. The swamp is an unforgiving landscape that provides an environment for living things that need to figure out how to strive on their own, thus forcing these creatures to adapt, or else they will flounder.



from top to bottom:
Swamp Animation
 rotoscoped anima-
 tion keyframes

Installation view
 ink on paper
 126" x 89" on curved
 surface







Swamp,
Ink on paper
approx. 126" x 89"

Elsie Joe

I have always had an interest in stories and storytelling and the visual media that accompanies those stories. Coyote and the Moon is representative of that interest. This sculptural artwork references and builds on First Nations oral storytelling traditions. The original story was recorded in Hannah Darwin and Mamie Henry's book *Our Tellings* and titled dskljhasdf. The last line of the story explains that the inhabitants who were described as having originally lived on the moon vanished, but without explanation as to why or how. My sculpture speculates on possible reason for their disappearance. Trickster Coyote is a prominent cultural figure for First Nations peoples. With him I expand and create an ambiguous adjacent narrative intended for the viewer to use as a "jumping-off" point for further exploration. Whether creating the story's ending for themselves or as an introduction to First Nations culture, Coyote and the Moon is intended to urge the viewer to further explorations into their own culture, mine or others.



Coyote and the Moon (sculpture detail)
multimedia sculpture, incorporating plaster, pigment and imitation gold leaf
approx. 60" x 41" x 24"





Coyote and the Moon,
multimedia
sculpture, incor-
porating plaster,
pigment, imita-
tion gold leaf with
painted canvas
backdrop
approx 48" x 180
x 84"

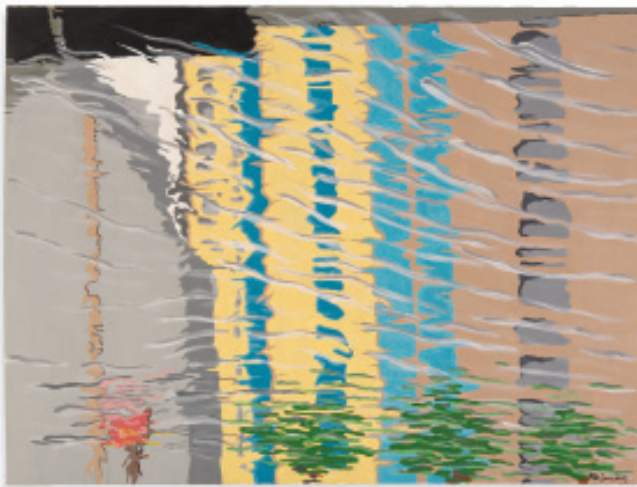
Ma Junxiang

The joy of painting is to express scenery viewed, knowledge learned, and life experienced. Rather than focus on the historical events re-enacted on ancient oil paintings, I record personal thoughts, as if talking to myself. When examining my works, the viewer sees a certain aspect of who and what I am.

I enjoy exploring new scenes and alternative processes. I pay attention to other artists, thinking about their works in relation to mine. While experiencing and trying various methods of expression, the most important thing is to express myself in my work—the understanding and viewing. Oil painting is an attitude to life. Each time I wave the brush, each time I create color in harmony; it reflects my mood and emotion. When viewing a completed painting, my mind recalls the scene, mood, and character I was during its creation. These are private things to me, but on the screen of the painting, they are visible to everyone.

My “Observing Through the Water” series captures these scenes and moments. On one rainy day, sitting the car, I passed by a small town. Through the window, I noticed a cluster of lotus trees. That moment is replicated as water droplets on the glass and the distant and distorted view of the trees. Whether in a car wash or a snowy day, the window glass fogs, the outside is a blur. The specifics of the scene are lost, turn into an abstract.

“Trees” series is a study of three trees. The lines of trees and the direction of branches form a different kind of abstract view. With no ground view and no description of root systems, these painting depict only the middle of the trees. They are an exploration of composition and line arrangement; bring the viewer closer and creating a visual impact.

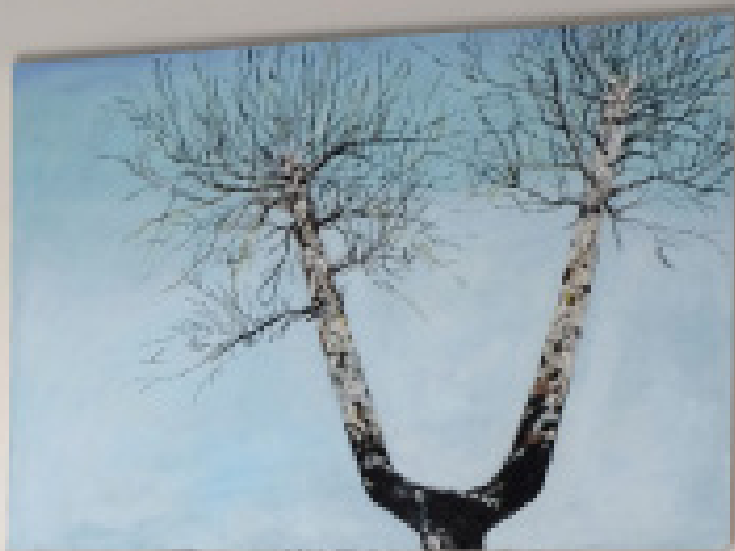


from top to bottom:
Observing Through the Water: During the Car-wash
 acrylic on canvas
 36"x48"

Observing Through the Water: Jian Shui Memory
 acrylic on canvas
 36"x48"

Observing Through the Water: Mist
 acrylic on canvas
 36"x48"





Installation view
oil on canvas
each 24" x 36"

Yue Li

My work is based on cultural identity, so I use various Chinese elements to create different forms of art to explore the relationship between Chinese culture and art. Those involve folklore, myths and legends, ancient poems and characteristics of Chinese architecture, etc. I use these in printed forms to show familiarity with Chinese symbols and create new meanings in different environments.

My work "Terraces" was set in the Hani ethnic group in Yunnan and is called Yuanyang Terraces. The Honghe Hani Terraces are the wonders of a terraced farming civilization created by the Hani people and their sub-groups using the special geography and climate to cultivate tea and rice. The Hani people cultivated these terraced fields since ancient times, and are representative of their culture.

No figures appear in "Terraces", but human traces are everywhere. I chose green as the main color to represent the growth process from soaking the fields in water to ploughing, from seedling cultivation and planting to deep spring colors. This is the vitality created by farmers and cattle, and it is also the result of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Similarly, the arc-shaped ridges of different widths constitute the beauty of the organic lines of the terraces.

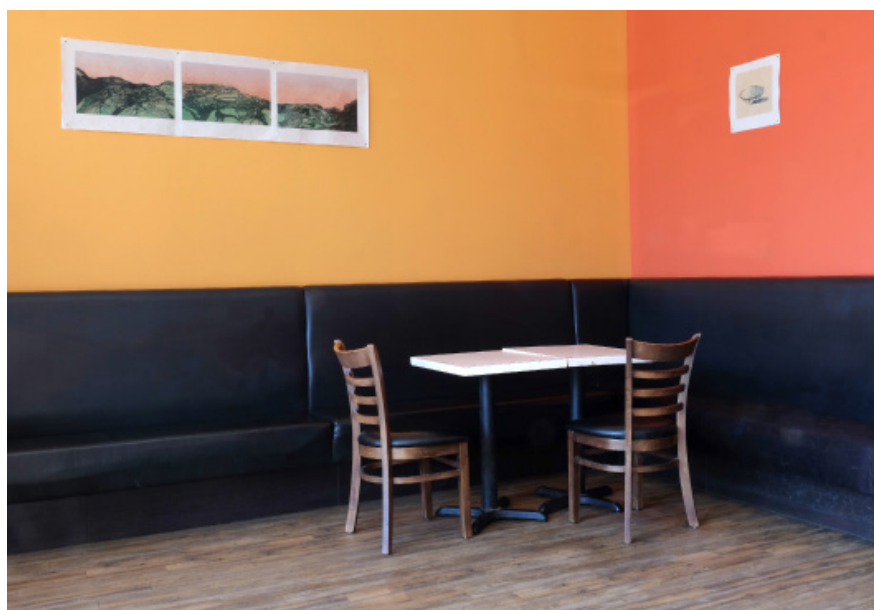
I chose these terraced fields as my theme because in China farming has dominated for a long time. There is a strong belief that "Food is fundamental for the people." For thousands of years, people have adapted to the living space of high mountains and valleys. Dikes are built according to different topography and soil quality, and the natural conditions of "how high is the mountain and how high the water" are used to open up terraces of different shapes, which are an important source of food.

The terraces demonstrate the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and the magnificent beauty that has continued since ancient times. They are a totem on the ground, lying quietly on the mountain, telling its stories and culture to each generation.



Rice Bowl
etching - intaglio, chine collé on gampi rice paper
14.5" x 15"





clockwise from top:
Rice Fields
 etching - intaglio, mul-
 berry rice paper
 54" x 36"

Installation view

Yue Li printing *Rice Fields*

Laura Amethyst Mackenzie

My work questions land use and colonization using photo-based artwork in reference to realism and created mythologies. Through photography, my subject of animals in fabricated settings asks questions. Epic depictions of taxidermied wildlife in sculptural and painted scenes show the animals as a facsimile of their former selves. The dioramas, a fantastic, colonial view of nature, were designed to draw visitors to a large outlet hunting store and, in the process, commodify these animals. Showcasing these animals as an attraction has a sense of the otherworldly.

The wildlife depicted in this collection reference the real but suggest the ideal. A strange type of realism is created as these works portray an idyllic form of North American wildlife which is not easily available to view in the everyday landscape. The peculiarity of these highly staged dioramas fascinates me.

Through the use of photographic equipment, my eye captures what I want the viewer to see. However, these photographs have undergone some manipulation using digital processes. Having removed the unnecessary indicators that these images are simply dioramas, I have made the scenes more believable, moving the viewer to a threshold of uncertainty between the perception of a believable real and the perception of a constructed ideal.

This photographic series examines the effects of simulation and presentation while questioning colonization, commodification and the complexities and interconnectedness of the relationships between humans and nature in a post-colonial landscape.



Three Deer In Forest
colour digital photo
13½" x 12"



Grizzly Bear
colour digital photo
13½" x 12"





from left to right:
Three Caribou Running
 colour digital photo
 30" x 22.5"

Two Moose and Two Geese
 colour digital photo
 30" x 22.5"

White Mountain Goat
 colour digital photo
 30" x 22.5"



Laurie Mackie

Word and image are my obsession. Both invoke emotion, prompt examination, provoke questions. Each is a half of the whole. Each gains strength from the other. As an artist, I work with mixed media: wood, Mylar, Plexiglas, fabric, paper, paint, film, and resin. Sometimes my projects are 2D, sometimes 3D. I enjoy the feel of the work in my hands; the bend and shape of emotion.

As a writer, I look for the words, the phrases that create image, a visual story that embeds the reader within. Very often, one of those words or phrases “sticks” and translates into a visual display. If I had to categorize my bodies of work, written and visual, I would define them as an examination of “wrongs”. I talk about the dark things, the hidden. I talk about secrets.

This is a continuing theme in this year’s visual works. Earlier pieces—The Forgotten and Nursery Rhymes—speak to forms of eugenics and how societal standards deal with human imperfection. Later works narrowed that focus to girls and women, but my examination expanded to include how women seek perfection and the outcome of that search, as in What to Wear and Look at Me Repulsive. Inherent in those works is the same notion of societal standards blindly accepted without question.

My current body of work delves deeper into the secret world of women. These are intensely personal topics which come from my experience, but are also a vast shared experience. As thought processes evolved, I began to understand that behind the production of these pieces, I was constructing a deeper, implicit commentary. I’ve realized that, unknowingly, these are a visual representation of Michel Foucault’s theories involving the relationships between women, power, sexuality, and the institutions of law, religion, education, and government.

Through this process, I’ve come to realize that my knowledge of wrongs had still somehow remained “on the surface”. Only as I come to the end, do I understand.



Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore
multimedia sculpture incorporating
wood, and video
approx 36" x 30" x 12"





from left to right:
Spiral
 repurposed aluminum
 cans and wire
 approx 60" x 36" x 36"

Unnatural Selection
 approx 12" x 14" x 7"



A background image showing numerous bees in flight against a light, slightly textured background. The bees are in various positions, some closer and more detailed, others further away and blurred, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Janet McChesney

I have an interest in the world around us and the evolving, far more accessible scientific knowledge. Climate change melts glaciers and builds tornados ready to swirl over dry landscapes. Oil fields with abandoned derricks pollute farmland. Forest fires rage and noise pollution endangers whales. My works indulge my interest in the current state of our scientific knowledge in these areas. I endeavor to draw the viewer's attention and evoke a personal response to what we often have already heard from reported published research, snippets from news media and our own observations of living, but it is a knowledge we tend to take for granted.

Perhaps art can draw attention in a more profound way to bring about awareness and response. In presenting my work, I've learned more about my interest areas, delved deeper into what is reported, found and worked with a variety of materials that were new to me, and ruined multiple pieces of clothing, gone down innumerable rat holes, and made many errors (also known as learning opportunities). Topics that began as small 'pinches' of knowledge led me deeper into my subjects. I've learned about myself and what motivates me to action. I offer that insight in my work. My mantra: "Look until you really see. Pay attention". Sometimes the bridges of "what was" must be burnt to determine "what will be."



Homecoming mixed media sculpture incorporating
wire, polymer clay and paper
approx 120" x 24" x 42"





from left to right:
Soundings: Minke Fluke
 multimedia sculpture
 approx 24"x24"x36"

Soundings: Humpback Fluke
 multimedia sculpture
 approx 36" x 48"x 60"

Biographies



Kaitlyn Heaney

Kaitlyn Heaney was born in 1993 and raised in Kamloops, and has been a resident for most of her life, save for a year spent in the Yukon with extended family. On her return home in 2012, Kaitlyn chose to work full-time to save money for school. In the winter of 2016, she enrolled at Thompson River's University. There she furthered her skills in drawing and learnt how to paint along the way. She has always drawn, though she did not start putting together large compositions until university.



Elsie Joe

Elsie Joe is an interdisciplinary artist who grew up on the outskirts of Merritt B.C. Since childhood, she has had an interest in arts and crafts and was often found creating works in mud and rocks or drawing and painting where she shouldn't. At her mother's urging, she enrolled in Thompson Rivers University's Bachelor of Fine Arts specializing in Visual Arts. Her artworks largely focus on aspects of texture, narrative, design and science. Elsie plans to pursue further studies in Visual Arts or Museum Studies.



Ma Junxiang

A Chinese international student, Ma Junxiang came to Canada in 2014. Through his Fine Arts studies, Jun found his niche in painting and his current body of work focuses on that interest. The first of his large scale series "Observation Through Water", looks at water surfaces and how, even though transparent, the fluctuations of that surface distort the landscape. Jun's "Tree" series depicts Kamloops' local trees. Their branches bare and lonely in winter, he captures their many novel shapes. In these series, Jun hopes to catch and interpret differing emotions. The TRU Art Gallery hosted his photographic work in the From the Selfie to the Self exhibition and his series Burnt. After graduation, Jun plans a return to his homeland.



Yue Li

An international student from China, Yue began her education at TRU in the BBA program. After two years, however, she returned to the arts which had been a major part of her life since childhood. Canada's environment and geography broadened her artistic vision and concepts, giving her a new creative direction. Combining elements of Chinese cultural characteristics with her love of printmaking technology, Yue recreates both her worlds in art. Plums and orchids, bamboo and chrysanthemums, poetry and folklore are often features in her prints.

Xu Bing, a printmaker who resides in New York and China is a major influence on her work. Yue hopes that, as an "other" from overseas, she too, can find a sense of cultural identity. presenting the local culture of her heritage.



Laura Amethyst Mackenzie

Laura is a Graduate of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program at Thompson Rivers University. Her hometown is Kamloops, BC in the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people.

As an artist and Métis, she explores numerous subjects through painting, drawing, sculpture, analogue and digital photography. Among these are topics in the Humanities, Healing Intergenerational Trauma, Feminism, and Post-Colonial Critique.

After graduation, she plans to study Psychology in preparation for a Master's program in Art Therapy or Fine Arts. As a trauma survivor she hopes to use her education and life experiences to help others heal and explore their creativity.



Laurie Mackie

Laurie Mackie is a photographer and writer currently residing in Barriere. After thirty-plus years in the accounting and taxation fields, she returned to school in 2011 determined to explore her love of words and the creation of story. Following the granting of her B.A. in Creative Writing and intrigued by the relationship between word and image, she decided to pursue a degree in Visual Arts. Primarily a sculptor, Laurie works with mixed and multi-media to document power relationships and how those relationships affect girls and women.

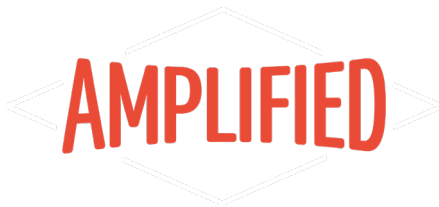


Janet McChesney

Born in Vancouver, Janet McChesney spent most of her life in Toronto. After gaining an HBA in Economics and Political Science, she worked in various managerial roles with a global corporation and visited many areas of the world. This gave her the opportunity to learn about different cultures and art. Not until retirement did Janet begin to create her own art. Now a mixed media sculptural and abstract painting artist, she explores the intersection between scientific knowledge and the environment re-creating environmental issues. Janet's artworks have been seen in the Salmon Arm and TRU Art Galleries. Alberta Printmakers and Cascade Print exchanges. Future plans include etching processes and the possibility of a master's degree.

Acknowledgements

The 2021 BFA Graduating Class would like to thank our Kamloops business people, realtors, and the Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association for their support and generosity in providing funding or display locations for *Perceptions*, the 2021 BFA Graduating Exhibition.



Thompson Rivers University's Kamloops campus is on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc.

We also acknowledge the generosity and support all faculty, TRU's Learning Technology & Innovation team, friends and family members have shown to the 2021 BFA graduating class. Your encouragement has been overwhelming. In particular, the BFA graduating class of 2021 would like to recognize:

Donald Lawrence, TRU's Faculty of Arts Chair. Don has negotiated a minefield of uncertainty and charted new territory over the course of this year and has laid new groundwork for the 2021 graduates as well as for all future BFA exhibitions. We appreciate all that you have accomplished for us.

Lea Bucknell, our go-to person extraordinaire. No matter what cry for help, you are always there to troubleshoot and work through numerous problems to ensure the success of not only the 2021 BFA graduates but also for the success of all other faculty and Visual Arts students. We all depend on your expertise in so many areas.

And of course, a special thanks goes out to Finn Modder our friend and colleague in the BFA Visual Arts program: You worked tirelessly behind the scenes to help ensure the success of the 2021 year-end exhibition through scouting and locating venues, and negotiating with owners and property management firms. You played a key role in helping realize this unique 2021 year-end exhibition. We couldn't have done it without you.

Thank You

