

**IT'S WORTH REPEATING (SO I DID)**

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**Bachelor of Fine Arts, NSCAD University, 2007**

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**TARA LYNN MACDOUGALL**

Date of Defence: July 30 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

My thesis exhibition, *It's worth repeating (so I did)*, consists of a selection of works in audio, prints, painting and sculpture. This paper addresses the making of each piece with a focus on such themes as class, gender, value, labour, hierarchy and institutional structures as they relate to the art object. I consider my work a kind of stratification or a layering of experience, discipline and knowledge. Stacking, repeating, quoting, stamping, levelling are techniques used to comment on and push back against entrenched organizational and ideological structures of power. The term stratification also relates to geological strata referencing the coal mining history of my family. Through the piling of prints, ceramic and foam objects, quotes and information, a strata of "support" is inferred, referencing the many aids, collaborations and foundations I have come to know through community, union affiliation, and memberships in artist-run culture.

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## **INTRODUCTION: Tell a Good Story**

This Thesis Support Paper will discuss my Thesis Exhibition which consists of a selection of works in audio, print, painting and sculpture. Through the process of writing, I have considered the concept of origins. Describing the works' beginnings led me to reflect on my own beginnings and therein a story has emerged, one that tangles descriptions of the work, its concepts, materials and making, with descriptions of my own life. This paper discusses finished pieces, processes and methods, while woven through the text are anecdotes and snippets that aim to examine my own biography, experiences and history and how these have informed the evolution of my work.

The crafting of this paper has been extremely challenging. I am making a point of writing this here to acknowledge that writing can be difficult, and that it doesn't/shouldn't take away from the work or practice itself. I like there to be many routes into my work and many routes out; I prefer to leave it open. I know my work, and I know it comfortably sits in tandem with contemporary art practices and ideas, but I can't effortlessly tell you about it. There is no 'right' way into the work, but through this writing, I will give you a partial 'in.' This paper will not smoothly transition from one section to the next. You may ask yourself why is this Joan Jonas story here? Why is this Ann Hamilton quote here? They are here, because this text also reflects on my relationship to academia, or rather on systems of academic knowledge; it is an attempt to reject the dominant logic of what is considered valuable within these systems and what is not.

I actually do like writing as a way to tell a story. I have always been comfortable telling stories. My family originates from Cape Breton where oral history is said to be in the blood. This may be due to the influence and culture of

the Mi'kmaq people, or to the Island's relative isolation, but there is a deep tradition of storytelling and every member of my family can tell a good one. I am going to write about my father's death and how he died as a result of his job. I am going to write about my great grandfather's death and how he died on the job. I will tell you about how these losses have impacted my thinking about worth and value particularly with regard to hierarchical systems such as class. Within the context of this paper I use value defined as merit, or the importance, worth or regard put upon an object or person. I will tell you about my current work, reflecting on questions about voice, power, economy, gender and class.

Until my current experience as a graduate student (during which time I have studied with two female faculty), I have been predominantly taught within art institutions by men—artists such as Tony McAulay, Norm Colton, Mick Durham, Patrick Thibert, Gary Spearin, Christian Giroux, Jeremy Drummond, Thierry Delva, Gerard Choy, Andrew Forster, Alex Livingston, and Gerald Ferguson. The female artists with whom I studied during my FIRST degree are Adriana Kuiper, Jocelyn Gardner and Suzanne Funnell. While these women taught me only one class or a single semester, most of the men taught me several classes over several semesters. These men have greatly influenced the development of my practice, and while I am grateful for their expertise and mentorship, I have followed their lead by leaving myself, and any sort of personal expression out of my work, without in fact realizing this was a gap I wanted to fill. In this writing, as in the thesis project, I am employing feminist art strategies such as narrative, humour, and autobiography to illuminate how my personal politics and the preoccupations taken up in my art practice, have arisen.

I grapple with the formal qualities within my work. I want the work and its structure to be in opposition to patriarchal and colonial norms.<sup>1</sup> I aim to challenge accepted notions, I try to respond to an art world that is sexist, racist, and oppressive, I don't want the work to be elitist, I want to both take up space, but also be mindful that I must also make space.<sup>2</sup> Take up space for female identified artists who have historically been underrepresented and in doing so, making a place for other artists and ideas that have been additionally underrepresented such as artists of colour, and queer artists. My effort is in pushing back, centering ideas about gender and class, and stirring discussion. I attempt this by using techniques and methods that are designed to undermine or complicate duality theory, as discussed by Elizabeth Grosz, in which the rational, scientific, mind (masculine) is elevated over the emotional, embodied world (feminine).<sup>3</sup> Techniques include a tendency to use materials that are often overlooked or undervalued like spray insulation foam, paper, packing materials, Styrofoam, undercar light kits and spray paint. My methods also involve a mixing of high and low art materials and the combination of fine art techniques with invisible labour and factory line construction. The work also emanates from the elevated status these objects obtain upon installation in a gallery space and the hierarchy or systems that inflate, alter and exaggerate their value.

In this paper my blue-collar roots merge with the power, status and privilege derived from higher education. I think about my work as a kind of stratification—the combining of layers of experience, discipline, knowledge, and

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Falvey, "Drawing Lines," *esse Arts + Opinions*, Spring Summer 18, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Maura Reilly, "What is Curatorial Activism?," *ARTNEWS*, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.artnews.com/2017/11/07/what-is-curatorial-activism/>.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 14.

rationale into a loosely cohesive set of expressive pieces. Stacking, repeating, layering, levelling are approaches used in order to comment on and push back against entrenched organizational and institutional ideological structures of power and their capacity for abuse. The term stratification also relates to geological strata referencing the coal mining history of my family discussed in the paper as foundational to my development as an artist. Stacking and strata also reference the concept of support, which I'm interested in thinking more about. Through the piling of paper, material, quotes and information, 'support' is presented as "what bears, sustains, props, and holds up."<sup>4</sup> This kind of assembling references the many aids, collaborations and foundations I have come to know through community, union affiliation, and memberships in artist-run culture.

Quotes from *It's worth repeating (so I did)* will interrupt this text; they will be used somewhat unconventionally, serving as epigraphs to introduce new sections of text, aligning my thinking and experiences with other female artists who are respected as authorities in their field. My thesis work takes cues from conceptual and feminist art practices and from institutional critique, and I will frame my current work as post-conceptual, post-feminist and post-institutional critique.

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<sup>4</sup> Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade, foreword to *Support Structures* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 6.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 A Million Shitty Jobs

“... I had a million shitty jobs. Overnight shift diner waitress. I worked at a group home. Taught gymnastics. Kindergarten teacher. I organized books for uh a like a marine who was like obsessed with like ships. I was commuting back and forth from working in a restaurant in New Jersey. So I could get my first apartment in New York. I was basically painting on top of my bed, staying up every other night to paint...”<sup>5</sup>

Jamian Juliano-Villani

At the start of my professional practice I was primarily a painter.<sup>6</sup> I paid for the bulk of my artistic training with money I earned as an automotive painter at Daimler Chrysler in Windsor, Ontario. The irony of earning a paycheque under the title ‘painter’ to fund a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree where I was learning to paint, was not lost on me, and I soon incorporated the instruction I received about painting within the automotive sector into my artistic practice. I began creating large-scale paintings using automotive paint and industry techniques that exploited painting mistakes or errors that within my factory job I was trained not to generate. I used welded metal frames to which I riveted thin aluminum sheets in order to fashion structures that resembled the typical gallery style canvas but also reflected the exterior of the automobile, conflating the two surfaces of which I was proficiently qualified to paint. I established a system to produce the work in which I would only use the colours that Chrysler had used for their automobiles in the years I was employed there, and I would apply the paint in a manner that would create the factory line mistake and repeat these gestures until I had covered the aluminum surface. I would then incorporate the language, through screen-

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<sup>5</sup> Art21, October 06, 2017, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/jamian-juliano-villani-gets-to-work/>.

<sup>6</sup> Gary Spearin once told me that I was not a painter, that I used paint but wasn’t a painter. I liked Gary a lot, still do, I really respected his opinion, but I took this as a kind of put down, or challenge. I went to NSCAD and in studio chose to work predominantly in paint. I’d show him!

printing, of advertising slogans from automotive print ads I had sourced from promotions in art periodicals. When removed from their slick marketing aesthetics, the slogans became vague and open to broad interpretations. Out of context, this advertising language could be inspirational, encouraging, and even introspective.

## 1.2. The Factory Takes

“...so I think ya know one of the things about reading the labour history is that you’re devastated by so much of it, it’s a history that’s about the erasure of the body in some way, the unmaking, if the challenge of our time is the challenge of empathy to make an empathetic relation that is to see another person to feel their pain, story, whatever, than how can uh a poetic material making be part of that ya know...”<sup>7</sup>

Ann Hamilton

I come from a working class background. I am quite familiar with the factory line.<sup>8</sup> My mother and father met in Windsor Ontario, both having moved from Cape Breton to find work. My father and his brothers were factory employees. My father worked at Kelsey Hayes, a supplier of wheels, brakes, and other components to the automotive industry. He had a high school diploma<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Hamilton: "the event of a thread" | Art21 "Exclusive", April 19, 2013, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fj4umqXGjM>.

<sup>8</sup> I’ve worked at several different factories in Windsor Ontario. I will list them here: Quality Safety Systems manufactures seat belts. Butcher Engineering, an automotive parts packaging plant. Hiram Walker an alcohol distillery manufacturing facility. Kautex Textron manufactures gas tanks. Chrysler Pilette Road Plant 6 (or the big van plant, now closed) I watched the very last Dodge Ram van ever roll off the line, and I clapped and cheered and cried with my fellow employee’s some of whom lost their jobs that day. Chrysler Windsor Assembly plant, where I worked the longest, manufactured the Chrysler Minivan and Chrysler Pacifica. My last shift there my co- worker’s clapped and cheered as I walked off the line.

<sup>9</sup> There was a small article or editorial in the Inverness Oran, reporting my father’s passing, they quoted his high school teacher as saying that my father was a strong student and could fit more into half a page than most could in three or four pages, it became an analogy for his life, he had to fit a lot into half a page.

when he moved to Windsor. After getting married, and having children, he went to school in the evenings to become an electrician.

When I was eleven, my father, Hugh MacDougall (1942 - 1988), passed away after a short battle with lung cancer. A hazardous work environment led to his death and the deaths of several of his coworkers. The handling of a carcinogen, unbeknownst to them, caused the aggressive cancer. Nothing was ever done, and employees presumably continued to work under dangerous conditions. My mother, Lorraine MacDougall, was directed to a lawyer, who advised her that attempting to battle a large corporation was not in her best interest. "The best you can do is take care of your children," he told her.<sup>10</sup> My father's union sent a flowered wreath in the shape of a wheel with one missing spoke to his funeral. His coworkers took up a collection for our family.

Two years later the Kelsey Hayes plant in Windsor closed for good, citing "grave operational problems and mounting losses due to significant overcapacity in the steel wheels manufacturing industry."<sup>11</sup> My uncle, also employed by the plant, lost his job. In Windsor, as in Cape Breton, local industries 'make' or mold the generations of people who live there. In Cape Breton, where the industry was coal mining and in Windsor where it was automobiles, entire families were changed, broken, modified, and whole lives were bettered, augmented, and reorganized. Industry can have the odd ability to shape circumstances for both better and worse. In Windsor there are whole generations of children from

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<sup>10</sup> "Mesothelioma Legal Help Centers," Asbestos Manufacturers, Distributors – Kelsey-Hayes Co., accessed September 17, 2017. <http://malignantmesotheliomalawyers.com/asbestos-manufacturers-distributors-kelsey-hayes-co/>.

<sup>11</sup> Associated Press, "COMPANY NEWS; Canada Closing Set By Kelsey-Hayes," *New York Times* (New York, NY), October 20, 1990. <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/20/business/company-news-canada-closing-set-by-kelsey-hayes.html>.

working class parents, who due to boom in production have university educations, that they might not otherwise have, I am among them, and I owe my ability to fund my education directly to car manufacturing. I am interested in these polarities, and why we uphold systems of power that tell us who is worthy of life, health, respect, education, voice etc. and who is not.

### 1.3. Meet me in the Middle

I'd like to think that I have all layers of uh conceptual in the art, that it --its easily read. But on the other hand, I do hope that its more complicated, and that it's not just one easy read and then that's it.<sup>12</sup>

Nancy Spero

For my project *Meet me in the Middle* I solicit artists to handwrite the text "meet me in the middle" in any manner, each text written on an individual page. The artists have all been visitors to my studio throughout the duration of my MFA program. I then photocopy their writing and produce a series of screen prints featuring the handwritten phrase but exclude identifiers pointing to the specific hand of particular artists. By withdrawing the artist's hand and replacing it with a manufactured substitution the intent is to level or democratize the artists involved. By utilizing tropes and toying with the notion of artist as genius,<sup>13</sup> I employ laborious techniques such as copying, repetition and standardization involving multiples and handwork in order to examine the value and status of an artwork in relation to the kinds of labour that go into its formation. Walter Benjamin's influential discussion on the aura of the art object altered the perception of the art object as a singular, original entity in the context of

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<sup>12</sup> "Nancy Spero in "Protest", Art21, November 04,2007, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/nancy-spero-in-protest-segment/>.

<sup>13</sup> Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, "God's little artist," in *Old Mistresses Women, Art and Ideology*, (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013): 82-113.

industrialization making possible the mass production of items, opening the door for a technologically replicated work of art copy item to be available to the masses. Benjamin asserts "... technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record."<sup>14</sup> This takes the superiority out of the work and makes it accessible to more people in society. I have hand cut each paper from an inexpensive pad, then printed each artist's handwritten text multiple times, one text per sheet, the prints end up stacked in a pile and are available to be taken from the exhibition. The stacking echoes larger societal ideals in which artists are ranked by importance and prestige, and is a rejection of the economic status given to works of art, in this case the work is made to be available, rather than out of reach, to any person who attends the exhibition and may want it. The edition of prints is unlimited, there is an oversupply thus eliminating any objective for economic value.

Meeting a beholder halfway or—in the case of this project—in *the middle*, is the finding of a middle ground or a compromise. This work is a way of gathering a community, a coming together, and a quiet diplomacy. The replacing of the artist's hand further permits a toying with the trope of artist as genius. The question becomes which artist? Whose mark has value and why? It is tongue-in-cheek authorship, and it questions authenticity. The phrase "meet me in the middle" can be read as a concession or as a purposeful statement of unease

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969.), 220.

regarding social mobility. According to Benjamin “the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.”<sup>15</sup>

The second iteration of this project, made of ceramic slip cast, expands on the notions questioned in the first. Through the ceramic slip casting of the original paper on which the artists wrote their text, I am left with a porcelain piece of “paper,” which references the less “valuable” copy, or screen print of the original handwritten text. Thus we are left with no original. It is a cremation of sorts, as the original has burned out in the kiln; we do however have the bisque porcelain reproduction. The reproduction is highly fragile, brittle, and potentially entombs the aura of the original work of art. The final ceramic piece is an example of the “contemporary decay of the aura,”<sup>16</sup> as Walter Benjamin believes—or does this act preserve the aura? Does the piece have no value because the original is gone or does it inherit value due to its fragility and the nature of the material? Bisque porcelain is a type of unglazed white porcelain, it has a matte finish, one historical use has been to make small sculptures or figurines that resemble smooth carved marble. A lesser material than marble used in mass or small batch manufacturing for the public with a concern in decoration, the material choice comments on mass production and availability, yet copies the appearance of value in past authentic ‘masterpieces’. This version is also presented as a stack, the bisque ‘paper’ being much more delicate than its original, it is susceptible to breakage from finger pressure or to damage from the stress of its own weight in the pile. It mirrors the presentation of the paper printed original but it is unavailable in that it cannot be taken by gallery visitors. It remains in the exhibition as a memory of the original, thereby shifting the meaning of the pile to one of a more highly valued commodity

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 223.

but In Benjamin’s words “works of art are received and valued on different planes.”<sup>17</sup>

These two iterations made from the same source material—that is the writing of ‘Meet me in the Middle’ by artists at different stages of their careers—display polar forms or situations in which we find art: the highly valued and the discarded copy. This ceramic stack is more organic and its layers resemble sedimentary strata and are more visible than the paper version. It is also a statement on societal and institutional hierarchies that place rank and wealth above the ordinary or common.

#### **1.4. THE RED ROWS/THE RED ROSE**

There’s something that, if you’re quiet enough and you listen, you’re being guided or directed to uncover specific bits of information. There’s always this act of digging, kind of like resuscitating life back into those lost fragments. The materials that I choose are already speaking –speaking to the past through internal intuition.<sup>18</sup>

Abigail DeVille

There is something about coming from the blood of coal miners that persists in what I suppose is my own type of ‘mining.’ My art practice has always found me digging and culling through the Western art historical canon, and extracting and pulling from art magazines, advertisements, popular culture, and just about everything in between. In art and among artists this type of appropriation, this ‘mining’ of the canon or the practice of using afore made art and objects is nothing new. Appropriation as a tool “raises questions of originality,

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 224.

<sup>18</sup> “Abigail DeVille Listens to History”| Art 21 “New York Close Up”, YouTube, March 14,2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/2>.

authenticity and authorship”<sup>19</sup>, and has been used repeatedly in art to interrogate its own history. Questions of imagination, validity, and invention are questions that I continue to ponder and they intersect with questions regarding value. Mining as a verb can mean drawing useful or valuable material from something. I’ve often used it when describing my practice. I am partial to the word as a connector, a tie to the history of the coal miners in my family—my Grandfather,<sup>20</sup> his father, his brothers, and his father’s father, along with my grandmother’s father. Stratification is a geological term that describes how rocks are formed in nature, but its second meaning denotes layers, classes or categories. I’ve been using the term to describe my art process, tying it back to the workers of my family, but it can also allude to the layering and piles, the modes of display, and the making in my current work.

My great grandfather, Neil MacIsaac, was killed in the Inverness No.1 Coal Mine in February of 1924. The official cause listed in the Nova Scotia archives is ‘fall of stone.’<sup>21</sup> Six months after his death, my grandmother Neilena ‘Ninna’ (MacIsaac) MacArthur (1924 -1988) was born. Due to my family’s oral history I was privy to stories of Neil growing up. I was often told that my height is a direct result of Neil MacIsaac, his genetics passed on. ‘Big’ Neil as he was known in Inverness, Cape Breton and in the mines, was said to be 6 ft. 7 inches tall, though

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<sup>19</sup> “Tate Museum,” Art Term Appropriation, accessed March 15, 2018.  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/appropriation>

<sup>20</sup> My Grandfather attended the reception of one of my art exhibitions, he was 86 years old at the time, so I got him a stool from the gallery office when he was tired of standing. I stood next to him as he sat so he didn’t feel awkward being the only one sitting. He sat surveying the room and eventually said “I don’t know what it is dear, but they seem to like it”. He was referring to my art work and the response he perceived amongst the gallery visitors.

<sup>21</sup> “Men in the Mines,” Nova Scotia Archives, accessed April 3, 2018.  
<https://novascotia.ca/archives/meninmines/resultsF.asp?Start=1501&Search=&fieldSelect=&orderby=name>

my mother (who never laid eyes on him) disputes he was probably only 6 ft. 5 inches. I stand at 5 feet 11 inches.<sup>22</sup> I'm tall because Big Neil was tall, or at least that is what I am told.

The No.1 coalmine in Inverness stole my Grandmother's father, but in future years that same coalmine provided for her children. My Grandfather Charlie (Neilena's husband) also worked in the coalmines, and the family lived in company housing locally called "the red rows." My mother often spoke of her family home in the "red rows." I always thought it sounded romantic because it was close to the water and sometimes seal pups came up in their front yard. I never heard "red rows" when she told these stories, as in rows of company houses presumably quickly and shoddily built and painted red, I only heard "red rose." My mother's nostalgia for her childhood home in the Red Rows was impressed upon me from an early age. Being from Windsor Ontario or the 'Rose City' I have a good understanding that the 'rose' of a place doesn't necessarily connote the automatic splendour of a location. Windsor was and still is vastly industrial with very little green space within the city limits, and I don't remember ever seeing any actual roses except those painted on the 'Welcome to Windsor' sign. Of course the 'rose' of the Red Rows was just a case of a misheard word, but the attractiveness of this housing was heard in the tenderness with which my mother described it. I have a genuine curiosity about class and class systems, how they are ordered, their differences in rationale, way of life, and expenditures.<sup>23</sup> My work interrogates class

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<sup>22</sup> My height was a factor in securing my position in the painting department at Daimler Chrysler. I was one of only two or three women who worked in my section, this was due to being able to move quickly down the line and being able to see the top of the roofs and door jambs of the vans, height was a factor in expediency for the paint department.

<sup>23</sup> Shawn Micallef, *The Trouble with Brunch Work, Class and the Pursuit of Leisure*, (Toronto, ON: Coach House Books, 2014), 13.

prejudice and societal structures which lower the importance of individuals or items based on out-of-date ideas that suggest appropriateness or competence.

My art practice has always been an extension of my day-to-day. I have always looked at my art practice as work, as in equal to any other occupation, no different than a job. I don't elevate art into some form of a higher calling, I follow the lead and explorations of artists like Kelly Mark, Micah Lexier, Andrea Fraser, Hito Steyerl, and Karen Finley who work in similar manners. Like Kelly Mark, in both my work and my practice I situate myself in close relation to the working class. This serves to both deflate and inflate my experiences within elite systems and is an honest depiction of self. It also serves to speak to issues around the actual precarity and "actual low income status of many working artists".<sup>24</sup> I want to show the contrast of these systems, how they can exclude and demean, inflate and sanction. I use humour to soften the blow.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.5. It's worth repeating (so I did)**

My work in a way is a quiet protest. It's a protest against the politics of memory, the politics of remembering and forgetting. It's the protest against this politically driven historical amnesia and in order to do that umm ya know it... it gives more of an impact if you do it from within, if that voice comes from within.<sup>26</sup>

Tiffany Chung

In keeping with ideas of authenticity and authorship, my project, *Its worth repeating (so I did)*, is a collection of quotes extracted from well-known Western

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<sup>24</sup> Micah Lexier & Kelly Mark: Head-to-Head, (Halifax: Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Curator: Robin Metcalfe, 2011), Exhibition Catalogue.

<sup>25</sup> I want to show this without being demeaning or exclusive, but I wonder if that's even possible.

<sup>26</sup> "The Socially Conscious Cartography of Tiffany Chung Brilliant Ideas Ep.39," Bloomberg, YouTube, November 9, 2016, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAgs-BTIUnI>.

female artists that I have sourced from a number of readily available sites, including YouTube videos of commencement speeches, snippets from art television broadcasts like *Art21*<sup>27</sup> or *Brilliant Ideas*,<sup>28</sup> and sound recordings of artists' talks given in museums in North America and abroad. These quotes are shaped into a cohesive script, an "artist talk" of my own, in which I recite the quotes that I have gathered and present them as a sound piece. I had originally conceived of this piece as an extended artist talk, the many ideas, and influences, voiced by a single artist. I am partial to the confusion that happens to the listener, that there are subtle clues that they may or may not pick up on that it is not the 'voice' of one artist but numerous. Voiced by one person the many becomes one, which points to underrepresentation. The voice of one woman reciting the words of many women functions as a way to stage and tackle gaps or distinctions in power. We have become accustomed to hearing men's voices filling rooms and interrupting public space, the work becomes a gendered way of reclaiming space. The audio recording develops into a document of a performance just as the videos from which I extract are documents of performance.

Judith Butler's text *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* explores beliefs that explain "woman" as a condition that is culturally constructed as opposed to an inherent birth right, she maintains that femininity and masculinity are a result of performing and re-performing acts that are rooted in cultural comprehensions of gender. She investigates "in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts,

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<sup>27</sup>*Art:21 – Art in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1997; New York City/PBS)

<sup>28</sup> *Brilliant Ideas* (New York City/Bloomberg)

and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts.”<sup>29</sup>

Related to Butler’s ideas about the cultural construction of identity, *Its worth repeating (so I did)* is a work that deals in performance and success in the art world. The piece exclusively highlights the words of women artists, with the intention of emphasizing the artists included and bringing attention to the circumstance that voices of women artists are still heard less than that of their male counterparts. Rebecca Solnit writes “men and women are given different kinds and amounts of space to occupy, literally, geographically, conceptually, and conversationally. This is measurable in movies but exists in real life as well.”<sup>30</sup> Solnit cites a 2014 study in which films from the ten largest movie markets worldwide exposed that “more than two thirds of speaking and named characters were male, and less than a quarter of films” showed a female character in the lead role or sharing the lead with another central character.<sup>31</sup> Uncovered is the idea that films with women taking up the bulk of the speaking are deemed to be films solely for women, while the majority of films, in which females are excluded in the dialogue are considered movies for everyone.<sup>32</sup> This silencing or ignoring of women’s voices, often just takes the form of not considering them in the first place. This project seeks to put female voices in the forefront, and centre them as active and knowledgeable participants in the contemporary discourse of art. Reading the script or ‘artist talk’ becomes a commentary on performing social class and

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<sup>29</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” In *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, ed. Carole R. McCann & Seung-Kyung Kim (4th ed. New York: Routledge, 2017), 482.

<sup>30</sup> Rebecca Solnit, “A Short History of Silence.” In *The Mother of All Questions*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 48.

<sup>31</sup> Solnit, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Solnit,

privilege, while speaking to issues of gender, audibility, and inequity in the art world. In Solnit's view, "if our voices are essential aspects of our humanity, to be rendered voiceless is to be dehumanised or excluded from one's humanity. And the history of silence is central to women's history."<sup>33</sup>

Although there is an attempt by institutions to right the absence of female artists, currently work by women artists is far less exhibited and collected than male artists. Female artists still face exclusion, and institutions inevitably are still trying to right these wrongs. There have been several efforts to fix this imbalance, the launching of all woman artist exhibitions like *Womanhouse* organized independently by artists Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro (1972), *Bad Girls* at New Museum (1994), *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at MOCA (2007), *Global Feminisms* at Brooklyn Museum (2007), *Elle* at Centre Pompidou (2009), *Champagne Life* at Saatchi (2016) and the list goes on, however these shows by museums are often one offs and these institutions frequently return to their regular routines of rarely exhibiting work by women and almost solely collecting men, gender equity in the arts has not been reached. At the time of this writing, a current show at the Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) titled *Speaking for Herself* is mounted, the exhibition is entirely composed of work by female identified artists. The wall didactic reads: "The longstanding and systemic exclusion or erasure of women artists from art history, exhibitions, collections, the art market and commercial gallery representation is not a debatable issue, It's a fact."<sup>34</sup> The AGH makes a point of noting that exhibitions involving work solely created by men

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<sup>33</sup> Solnit

<sup>34</sup> "Art Gallery of Hamilton," *Speaking for Herself*, accessed March 21, 2018. <https://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/exhibition/speaking-for-herself/>.

tends to be the standard of gallery and museum exhibitions and collections.<sup>35</sup>

There is most certainly less gender bias in 2018 than in decades past, but women artists still struggle to receive representation, museum shows, and on average women artists still earn less than their male counterparts. According to an infographic put out by the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC: 65 – 75% of students in MFA programs are women, \$20K is the difference in men and women’s annual income across all arts jobs, 9% of artists in 9<sup>th</sup> ed. of *Janson’s History of Western Art* are women, up from 0 in 1986 and 25-35% of artist’s with gallery representation in the U.S and U.K. are women.<sup>36</sup>

In 1971 in her essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* Linda Nochlin maintained “in the field of art history, the white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as *the* viewpoint of the art historian, may—and does—prove to be inadequate not merely on moral and ethical grounds, or because it is elitist, but on purely intellectual ones.”<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately that inadequacy is still mostly upheld, there have been small and gradual changes and bids to correct discrepancies but the essay remains relevant. By bringing together voices of women artists, and uniting their experiences into one experience, as voiced through a single artist, *It’s worth repeating (so I did)* emphasizes that the many are seldom heard while the few or single token voices are the only ones being heard. Befitting Nochlin’s ideas “*women* must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look the facts of their situation full

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “National Museum of Women in the Arts,” *Get the Facts*, accessed May 1, 2018. <https://nmwa.org/advocate/get-facts>.

<sup>37</sup> Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, In *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Amelia Jones (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 229.

in the face, without self-pity, or cop-outs”<sup>38</sup> simultaneously they must commit to forming a world in “which equal achievement will not only be made possible but actively encouraged by social institutions.”<sup>39</sup> It is 47 years later, and women are still fighting for parity and an equal footing. A contemporary account for realizing equality can be read in Sarah Ahmed’s objectives. Ahmed admits there is difficulty when speaking about sexism, or racism, as declaring such inequalities can be viewed as destructive to the institution. However she states if declaring inequalities is understood as detrimental to institutions than we must damage institutions.<sup>40</sup>

By eliminating quotes from male artists, my intent is to emphasize the importance of female artists. The project establishes an exercise in performing social class and privilege and speaks to issues I am exploring that investigate gender, class, and hierarchies. There is also a strata component to this project, the layering of quotes of several artists pieced together to form a larger unit, a single artist talk, voiced by one artist.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, ePub edition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. Factory Spawn<sup>41</sup>

...I didn't want to make what looked like art, in terms of painting. I just thought, no, I want to make something that looks mass-produced. And I didn't want it to have anything to do with Art Theory.<sup>42</sup>

Cindy Sherman

Maybe as a result of my background, my work has never rooted itself in academic theory or theorists, but rather in the pedagogy of family, community, fellow artists, and lived experience. My experiences growing up in a blue-collar town reinforced in me that what you needed to learn could be taught and that knowledge was achieved by learning skills from a family member, a neighbour, or a neighbour's neighbour. When our family home needed a new roof it was our neighbour and family friend Philip Politi (1944-1998) who climbed up with my father and my Uncle Melvin to reshingle it. Philip taught my father and my Uncle how to redo the whole roof and they were able to fix it for the cost of materials. After my father passed away, Philip and his brother Vince Politi removed and rebuilt our front cement porch, and Philip recruited his friend Mario to repave our driveway. In *The Trouble with Brunch Work, Class, and the Pursuit of Leisure* Shawn Micallef writes, "that's how Windsor worked, and to a large extent, still works. Everybody knows somebody who knows how to do something, whether paving a driveway or changing the brake rotors on a car."<sup>43</sup> That was my experience as well, all that needed fixing, repairing or improving was performed by your neighbours,

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<sup>41</sup> At a Juno awards party in Halifax in 2006, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time asked me where I was from. When I responded "Windsor, Ontario" he responded "oh? You're Factory Spawn."

<sup>42</sup> Art21 Cindy Sherman in "Transformation", October 21, 2009, , accessed February 16, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/cindy-sherman-in-transformation-segment/>.

<sup>43</sup> Shawn Micallef, *The Trouble with Brunch Work, Class and the Pursuit of Leisure*, (Toronto, ON: Coach House Books, 2014), 15.

from the paving of a driveway, to the installation of hardwood floors, to the catering of a party. My extended family taught me many skills including how to sew, how to change a tire, how to knit, how to can or preserve and most notably how to persevere.

"Support those who support you" was a Canadian Autoworkers Union (CAW) slogan that was on billboards and bumper stickers and in store windows and almost everywhere in Windsor when I was growing up. My sense of solidarity with Artist Run Culture (ARC), and "unions" with other artists, comes from these formative years. My father's young death and my great grandfather's death has had an undeniable impact on my interrogation of value and on the importance placed on some lives, and denied to others. I delve into ideas of appropriation, quotation, performativity, and art world structures as a way to reconcile my personal experiences as a working class woman within academic systems and institutions like the museum to politically engage with their hierarchies and social strata. I negotiate between high and low culture, high and low materials, obtuse and theoretical knowledge to push back against systems that dictate what denotes success and what indicates failure.<sup>44</sup> The piece, *Kelly Mark Broke My Heart: I Really Should... get over it*, was made in response to Kelly Mark turning down the invitation to be the external examiner on my thesis committee. The piece consists of a candy dispenser filled with white special order m & m's<sup>45</sup> candy printed with black text that reads 'Kelly Mark broke my heart!' Additional m & m's have a tiny image of Kelly Mark printed on them. The title references Kelly

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<sup>44</sup> Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>45</sup> In this case m&m stands for MacDougall & Mark.

Mark's *I Really Should...*<sup>46</sup> and looks at chocolate as a tool for consolation. I had hoped to make a case for having an external examiner who did not hold an M.F.A., the terminal degree, however Kelly Mark turned me down first, thus breaking my heart. I really should get over it.

## 2.2. Artist Run Culture

I am quite hooked on what ya know the mystery of what happens when ya know people are together and what they do and that's why that's why I work this way ya know I don't know that ...I don't know that me sitting in the studio on my own would ever produce anything like that and always is something unexpected, I never know what's going to come around the corner.<sup>47</sup>

Sonia Boyce

The experience of learning new skills through the assistance of friends or family has continued for me through my involvement with Artist Run Culture and the circle of artists I have been lucky enough to come into contact with over the years. When preparing a grant or an application, I have trusted the writing to be checked by artist friends and colleagues. Similarly, when imagining a project in which I would have to learn a new skill, reaching out to my peers in these communities has always proved successful. It seems one artist will always know another artist who is willing to demonstrate that skill. The politics or frames of reference I have alluded to in my work have always been, and I suspect will continue to be, connected to the terms of ordinary day-to-day, community, friends and family relationships.

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<sup>46</sup> Kelly Mark, "Kelly Mark I Really Should... (Fridge: 2 Versions)," accessed June 20, 2018, [http://kellymark.com/SC\\_IRSFridge1.html](http://kellymark.com/SC_IRSFridge1.html).

<sup>47</sup> "Sonia Boyce, Pioneer and Trailblazer Brilliant Ideas Ep.60," Bloomberg, YouTube, August 29, 2017, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uslJWg5JirE&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXC F7iILikGBY7HFg&index=15>.

I have been a member of the Board of Directors and on various committees and worked in several volunteer capacities within numerous artist run centres throughout Canada including Eyelevel gallery, Modern Fuel, The Khyber Centre for the Arts, and Forest City Gallery. These spaces for me are reminiscent of and mirror trade union attitudes of unity and support. Maintaining and improving conditions for workers is the main objective of trade unions, and most artist run centres include in their mandate a line about supporting artistic creation and artists' rights. I didn't immediately recognize this mirroring until recently. As the hierarchy of the gallery system goes artist run centres are near the bottom rungs, they are not without their own problems, and often parallel the difficulties found in larger institutions. The majority are grassroots organizations, that rely on volunteers and much scrambling and scraping takes place in order to program, pay their staff, and pay the artists. Upon moving to Lethbridge, there was not an active artist run centre, and I quickly felt its absence. I realized how heavily I relied on these spaces in order to meet and join a community in the cities in which I lived. In reflecting on who is engaged with the ARC's of which I was involved, and pondering the support and negotiation that comes with involvement, revealed a connection to the precarity, provisions, and camaraderie found not just in trade unions but in my experience of working class neighbourhoods.

In practical terms artist run centres were initially established as a means to support non-commercial artistic practice. Early centres were highly critical of the commodification of art, and were more accessible for emerging artists and artists working in non-traditional methods. These centres are built on support (i.e. they operate primarily on support from the Canada Council and Provincial Art Councils) and they provide support, they attempt to support artistic practice that

is emerging and experimental, interdisciplinary and the works of marginalized artists.<sup>48</sup>I discuss my background, and my involvement with artist run culture and unions as a simple way to speak to different types of knowing. I want to bring attention to things not traditionally thought of as valuable, knowledge that isn't sanctioned but embodied, to make visible 'that which assists, corroborates, advocates, articulates, substantiates, champions, and endorses.'<sup>49</sup> My method and making employs the idea of support, I stack, and pile, the work is held up and underpinned by other copies and essentially structured of and by itself.

### **2.3 I'm Still Unpacking These Thoughts**

A series of small paintings using black and white paint describe phrases derived from multiple sources. Quotations by prominent male artists making bold declarations are subverted into reflections of self-doubt and idiosyncratic wondering.

John Baldessari's famous conceptual art work, "I will not make any more boring art"<sup>50</sup> becomes "I may occasionally make boring art and that's ok." Or Lawrence Weiner's commanding statement, "Learn to read art,"<sup>51</sup> becomes "Learn to read art or die trying." Other sources for these paintings include art critic, Lucy Lippard's quotation of a common complaint about conceptual art's lack of soul. "Not enough to look at" functions as a quote of a quote. Lippard and Women's Art

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<sup>48</sup> Anne Whitelaw, *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, (Toronto ON: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

<sup>49</sup> Condorelli and Wade, 6.

<sup>50</sup> "John Baldessari *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* 1971," MoMA, accessed June 20, 2018, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/59546>.

<sup>51</sup> "Lawrence Weiner *Learn to Read Art* 1995," Art Catalogues at LACMA, accessed June 20, 2018, <https://www.artcatalogues.com/products/weiner-lawrence-learn-to-read-art-ny-public-library-poster>.

Workers famously sent a telegram that interrupted the Halifax Conference<sup>52</sup> in 1970, invitations were only extended to men (with the exception Ingrid Baxter married at the time to Iain Baxter and part of N.E. Thing Co.). The telegram read "Pay your dues. We are due for ours." These phrases are mixed with thoughts of my own such as "I had a really great idea but I forgot to write it down", and "Not for sale – make me an offer". There are also snippets of advice and sayings from the book *Questions and Answers for American Mine Examinations* such as "Follow the air but never go before it"<sup>53</sup>. They are further disrupted by a play between paint and pencil, some words are painted black, easily read from distance, while others are drawn only in pencil. From a distance they become new phrases or single words. They are wrapped in bubble wrap as though they have not yet been unpacked for installation.

#### 2.4. How To Deal

...a certain kind of relationships to museums got put into place uh in me, on the one hand a tremendous kind of investment and aspiration that I brought to those institutions and um on the other hand a tremendous anxiety about whether I would ever be good enough, whether I would ever be adequate you know whether I would ever be legitimate in relationship to those institutions which represented a culture that was very very different than the culture that I grew up with.<sup>54</sup>

Andrea Fraser

*Meet me in the Middle* and *It's worth repeating (so I did)* have steered me to look at performativity, specifically in regards to gender and social class and how

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<sup>52</sup> "The Halifax Conference Videos," Nova Scotia College of Art & Design CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, accessed June 20, 2018, <http://nscad.cairnrepo.org/islandora/object/nscad%3A5721>.

<sup>53</sup> W.M. Tate, *Questions and Answers for American Mine Examinations Part I. Mine Ventilation* (Scranton, PA: The Colliery Engineer Co., 1897)

<sup>54</sup> "Andrea Fraser," Vimeo, February 25, 2016, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/156752738>.

these ideas link to the concerns of Hito Steyerl . Steyerl's 2013 video *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational.Mov File* is, as the title indicates, a list of ways a person might not be seen while in the public sphere, and gives directives on how to deal with virtual representation and constant surveillance. A voice over of a text to speech android instructs on how to blend in while in plain sight, one such point is "being female and over 50."<sup>55</sup> While *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN* is specific to omnipresent surveillance, it is a valuable tool to scrutinize two current projects of video work.

The videos are short sketches in which I narrate "how to be happy" and "how to have a thriving art career." *Seven strategies for Happiness* is shot on my daily bus commute, and turns the camera on myself while in the public sphere. *Pedicure as a cure for what socially ails you* is shot in the bathtub, and again turns the camera on myself to document a private moment of a home pedicure. The narration is meant to comment on anxiety experiences in social class, and relays humorous philosophies of wealth and notions of social mobility. The voice, my own, is overlaid on the image of a woman in the bath and makes statements that include "never let anyone know you're poor" and "if you can't afford a pedicure never let anyone see your feet" as offers of ways to make it. According to Steyerl analog film held a higher value and was thought to be visually important by cinema discourse. Film economies were and are secured by "systems of national culture, capitalist studio production, the cult of mostly male genius, and the original version, and thus are often conservative in their very structure. Resolution

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<sup>55</sup> "Hito Steyerl, How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File, 2013," Artforum International, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-51651>.

was fetishized as if its lack amounted to castration of the author.”<sup>56</sup> Steyerl also notes that the poor image is a “lumpen proletarian in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution.”<sup>57</sup> The videos are self-referential and jokily express and collapse an internalized neoliberal rationale. The videos are shot using a cell phone, in keeping with the method of using ‘cheap’ or common materials. The working class body (my own) is exposed and an attempt is made to ‘make over’ said body to be less abject and more proper or a corrected version for societal consumption. Julia Kristeva observes in

*Approaching Abjection:*

There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful- a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it.<sup>58</sup>

Poverty is abject. There is a tendency to brand the working class as dim and as exacting filth. Using the picture of a working class body as abject, the resolve is to overhaul it, repair it, not unlike something that is broken, the abject must be stable or hidden. Abject is “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.”<sup>59</sup> There is no real separation from this abjectness, it is something I cannot separate myself from, the tension is in the trying, and the performativity in the ‘passing’. In keeping

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<sup>56</sup> Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image,” *e-flux Journal #10* (2009): accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” In *Powers of Horror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Kristeva., 4.

with the practice of stacking and piling, I have used an extended shot in both videos and repeated it for the length of the work.

## **2.5. That Part About How Joan Jonas and I both love Cape Breton**

I say ... I try to make work about how we are to one another and to me that is the big picture of what a social relation can be and frequently is.<sup>60</sup>

Barbara Kruger

In my entire life, I've only not gone to Cape Breton in the summer twice, this year will mark the third. The first time I didn't go, was four years ago, my first summer living in Kingston Ontario while my partner was studying at Queen's University. The second was last summer due to my studies in relation to this degree and the third will be this summer as I defend this paper and work. I feel amiss for the entire year when I don't go. I long for the beach, and the salt air, and the quiet. There are a few well-known New York artists who are also known to summer in Cape Breton, in and on the outskirts of my parent's hometown. Among the artists are Joan Jonas, Richard Serra, Robert Frank, June Leaf, Hermine Ford, Robert Moscovitz, Pat Steir, Elizabeth Murray and Philip Glass. I assume they like it there for the same reasons that I do, the beach, the salt air, and the quiet. They live in relative obscurity, likely no one cares about their art careers, current projects or there they exist in a state of duality. Last August, Joan Jonas held an evening in Inverness where she presented her video work, according to the Inverness County Centre for the Arts<sup>61</sup> Facebook event page three people 'went,'

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<sup>60</sup> SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, December 23, 2010, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP7hbDkJql8>.

<sup>61</sup> My grandfather Charlie MacArthur (1920-2010), the coal miner I mentioned earlier, went on to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Nova Scotia. He was the member for Inverness from 1988-1998. He got the ball rolling on the Inverness Centre for the Arts, though it wasn't built until after he retired from office. I was with him at the grocery store in Inverness, when a woman approached him, she

and five people were 'interested,' four if you don't count me. It's that sort of levelling and evening out of a person's worth and that type or dichotomy of importance, so important in one place, almost non-existent in another that really interests me.

## 2.6. OK OK OK OK OK

Well I mean, every decision, aesthetic decision has a value behind it. And if all the decisions are being made by the same people, then you know the art will never look like the whole of our culture. And right now, the art world is kind of run by, you know, billionaire art collectors who buy art that appeal to their values. And we say art should look like the rest of our culture, you know, unless all the voices are in the history of art, it's not really history of art. It's a history of power.<sup>62</sup>

Frida (of The Guerrilla Girls)

My work has been concentrating on constructed ideas of class, gender and value. Recognizing my privilege as white, cis-gendered, able-bodied and heterosexual, I am challenging my own perception of my affiliation to art world systems, to recognize misconceptions or actualities that seemingly come with success. Artists must navigate the hierarchies of the art scene that balance on rankings of reputation, standing, importance, commercial representation, education, wealth, cleverness, and status.

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was holding his hand and asking him to attend a meeting. I noticed, because she was holding his hand, that she had dirty fingernails. She was well dressed, and clean otherwise. Afterwards my grandfather told me she was trying to get an art centre going. I was in art school at the time, and just 'home' in Cape Breton for part of the summer. He made the comment that she was a nice woman, followed by a joke about how her hands always looked like she's been working in the pit. The pit referring to the coal mines. I sort of knew she was an artist because of her hands, even before he mentioned the art centre. It was fairly obvious to me that the 'dirt' was likely conte or graphite. I don't know who that woman was that day but for all I know it was Joan Jonas.

<sup>62</sup> "Guerrilla Girls Talk The History of Art vs. The History of Power," The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, YouTube, January 14, 2016, accessed March 5, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxBQB2fUl\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxBQB2fUl_g).

I began the project *OK OK OK OK OK* by using spray insulation foam and forming the letters 'O' and 'K' multiple times to form several versions of the word ok. I then sprayed each letter with white gloss spray paint. I chose to paint each letter as a way of improving the station of the letters. The white gloss paint can give the material, at first glance an almost ceramic appearance, a more precious and sanctioned material than spray insulation foam. The foam is a bland pale yellow straight from the can but is disguised by the gloss and purity of the white paint. "OK" in spoken language is informal and used to imply agreement or acceptance. It can also mean satisfactory, or not especially good. I like that such a simple colloquialism can have two very different implications—one meaning not especially good or so so, and the other an endorsement of support or a thumbs up.

"I'm ok" can be a neutral or agreeable response to a question of "how are you doing" or "how are you." Sara Ahmed suggests "that happiness in the form of emotional labour can be condensed in the formula: making others happy by appearing happy."<sup>63</sup> This work began with the simplest of concepts, it started as an exercise meant to convey that I was ok, an exercise in emotional labour. Being from a working class family means that I am just ok (not especially good), but earning a graduate degree means that I am ok (thumbs up!). Spray insulation foam is a regular material meant to keep drafts out and is ok. White gloss spray paint can take an ordinary object and make it appear fresh, and fancy, put that object in a gallery and you've successfully elevated its status even more. I use humour to address the concerns I have with status and standing. I'm doing ok, I'll be ok, I am ok.

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<sup>63</sup> Ahmed.

## **Conclusion**

Here it comes, the part I've been waiting for: the end. I have been waiting for this moment for two years, not the end of the program but more specifically the end of the writing of this document. I have been trying to talk about class, gender, and value as it relates to my personal experiences. I feel I do that best by using specific examples from my life, so before we conclude here is one last story.

In my first semester at the University of Lethbridge, I made an appointment to meet with one of my professors, I admitted to her my fear of not being able to pass the class she was instructing, I was straining to write and didn't know the ins and outs of an essay. She assured me it would be fine, that I was working at an appropriate level, but then made a comparison that most of the other students in the class 'worked at Starbucks,' implying an ages old stereotype that working in a service position somehow told of your level of intelligence. What she didn't know was the two years leading up to enrolling in this degree I was working in a coffee shop, eight weeks before this meeting in her office, I was pouring coffee for a wage. It was a flippant offhand remark, but one that enraged me. The idea wasn't new to me, but her position, in my mind, should have held her above this sort of thinking. Later I realized, I had used the same prejudice in ranking that she had used except I was excusing myself and angry with her. These value judgements are built into all of us, social structures manifest in different ways. No matter how learned a person, there is always more to learn.

I'm not sure how to even things out but I use methods in my work as ways of pointing to problems. They don't solve them, but they pick and peel away, reveal them. My work interrogates class prejudice and societal structures. I am pushing back against the very structures which shall validate me, lift me up from my

humble beginnings and stamp me as having arrived. I understand that while wanting to undermine it; I'm interested in a kind of levelling.

My thesis exhibition became very much about blending in, and about taking up space. Taking up space in several different ways, and several different types of space. The work I made over these last two years was cleverly chosen, I formerly engaged with the Penny gallery with all its idiosyncrasies and challenges. Emphasizing the long display wall and filling it with an imperfect repeating pattern of my project *OK OK OK OK OK*. The work stood out because it was the largest piece in the exhibition but also fit in by its almost quiet presence of white work on a white wall. I took up further space with my piece *It's worth repeating (so I did)* whereby my voice filled the exhibition space. Two back-to-back speakers played the audio work on a loop, thereby ensuring my voice was audible in every part of the gallery, a reflection on the struggle as a woman to be 'heard', as well as a move to take up as much space as possible. The recitation and editing was crafted specifically for this exhibition and spoke to certain works and contradicted others. Within this iteration of *It's worth repeating (so I did)* an example of that allusion to agreement and denial is the inclusion of a Cindy Sherman quote that proposed making a work as big as an entire wall of the gallery, followed by a quote from Phyllida Barlow explaining a complete lack of interest in making large work. I'm playing with dichotomies in an attempt to dismantle hierarchies of right and wrong, acceptable and deplorable. I engaged with the public space outside the gallery and installed *Flags are the New Neon (thankfully flags are affordable)*, a flag on top of the building for the length of my exhibition. This took the form of occupying bureaucratic space in addition to public space. The request to install the flag went all the way up the bureaucratic chain for approval - from a graduate

student to the Office of the President, and also had to go before a University of Lethbridge Art Placement Committee, and finally the City of Lethbridge, Regulatory Department, to ensure compliance with by-laws/regulations. It was approved on the condition that a description of the flag's installation be located in a prominent place in the front of the building (i.e. posted on the door) so that the public would understand the context. I did not meet this condition, I have a dislike for didactics that spoon feed interpretations of a work to a specialized audience, yet alienate a general audience by using difficult language and expert resources. I also didn't want to draw special attention to the flag, as no other work in the exhibition had a specific explanation. To my knowledge the flag did not elicit any response from the public, to the gallery or to the University of Lethbridge, though it took up a large amount of bureaucratic space, in the public sphere I guess it blended in. My work *If someone tells you they GOT RICH...* mimics the appearance of a step and repeat wall, used at special events for advertising, they are printed with a repeating pattern that are visible in photos. My version used a repeating pattern of the phrase: If someone tell you they got rich through hard work ask them whose? The piece was activated during the closing reception of my exhibition. It was the first piece a visitor encountered upon entering the gallery. It took up a lot of floor space in the gallery and within the exhibition but also on social media, where visitors were posting selfies in front of it. Installed on the back of the step and repeat wall were the videos *Seven strategies for Happiness* and *Pedicure as a cure for what socially ails you...* they were displayed on two tablets with headphones where visitors could watch and listen. This provided a nice juxtaposition between the activation and spectacle of the front of the step and

repeat wall with its shadow side or back, where the video monitors might go undetected. There is a fluctuation between public space and private space.

I still have questions regarding value, class, gender, and hierarchy, though the work in this exhibition and this writing aided me in answering some of those questions. I'll persist in pondering uncertainties about power, and how society is structured and why everyone isn't working harder to dismantle these unfair systems we continue to take part in. I am a believer in all types of learning, and I remain connected to the pedagogy of my community and familial bonds, affirming that this type of knowledge is also valid. I have blended different ways of knowing in conjunction with my studio practice, I have and will continue to utilize my experiences as a foundation for my art practice.

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## Appendix I

Project: *Meet me in the Middle*

### List of Participants

1. Andrew Rabyniuk
2. Sarah Stringam
3. Shona Fitz-Gerald Laing
4. Megan Morman
5. Linda Duvall
6. Mary Kavanagh
7. Jackson TwoBears
8. Kevin Sehn
9. Tanya Doody
10. Denton Fredrickson
11. Don Gill
12. Tara Lynn MacDougall
13. Jarrett Duncan
14. Michael DiRisio
15. Aimee Henny Brown
16. Dagmar Dahle
17. Tori Foster
18. Aaron Hagan
19. Mary-Anne McTrowe
20. David Miller
21. Katie Bruce
22. J.P. Marchant
23. Miguelzinta Solis
24. Tyler Muzzin
25. Joseph Tisiga
26. Ursula Johnson
27. Ian Carr-Harris
28. Nicole Reidmueller
29. Yvonne Lammerich
30. Hyang Cho
31. Richard Ibhgy
32. Marilou Lemmens
33. Deanna Bowen
34. Nicholas Wade
35. Adrian Cooke
36. Val Cooke
37. Marianne Gerlinger
38. Glen MacKinnon
39. Leanne Elias
40. Kathleen Ritter
41. Catherine Ross
43. D'Arcy Logan
44. Gary Evans
45. Niall Donaghy
46. Brent Coulton

## Appendix II

### *It's worth repeating (so I did)*

1. Joan Jonas  
Vimeo, April 25, 2015, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/125085474>

I think that often one develops one's basic ideas very early and then continuously one although one's work may change in appearance radically uh those ideas continue to inform the work.

2. Diana Al-Hadid  
"Diana Al-Hadid Plays the Classics," Art21, May 1, 2015, accessed March 18, 2018, Art21 <http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/diana-al-hadid-plays-the-classics/>.

I love storytelling and I...I love stories and I love novels and characters but there is a part of me that resists that kind of specificity I like to hold back and be more 're lots of little parts a lot of construction taking away and cutting and adding and pasting and bending and morphing something I'm very physical with my work I think it's mostly driven by temperament my work isn't really one decision that's stable it's a lot of interwoven and fluctuating decisions and that's why it permits me a different kind of brain activity.

3. Liz Magor  
"Everyone Should Have a Studio, Liz Magor," Art21, February 10, 2017, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/liz-magor-everyone-should-have-a-studio-short/>.

Working might be uh placating or calming situation where I have no distractions ...I was going to say it's like meditating but what do I know about meditating ..not very much. Its um a way to keep myself on a single focus on a single track and there's something pleasurable about that so I'm here for pleasure in a way although uh ...it's not fun.

4. Rachel Whiteread  
"Rachel Whiteread Interview Pt 1," Artheadful, YouTube, February 02, 2011, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tz-EqD-j3II&t=224s>

I think I've always worked in a way that's been you know it's just like taking it step by step and it's been in a very linear way ...essentially it's been like kind of a thought process that's been illustrated by sculpture and I think as my language has developed and as my kind of thoughts have developed that's changed and obviously now I have this much larger kind of vocabulary that I can work with.... which is actually kind of more daunting in a way you have far more choices that you hafta ...so you know you spend a long time scratching your head before you finally actually make it ...where I think initially it was very much a process of enjoying new materials, working out how to work with colour working out how to work with form working out

how to make something sort of sit on the floor lean against the wall and now I kind of have all of this information.

5. Wanda Koop

Katherine Knight, David Craig, Wanda Koop, McNabb Connolly (Firm), and Site Media (Firm), 2011. *Koop: The Art of Wanda Koop*, Mississauga, ON; Toronto, Ont.; Site Media.

Right now I feel kind of shaken up... when I uh start doing a body of work I feel vulnerable, I feel maybe not up to it, maybe not capable, maybe it's it's going to disappear or I'm not going be able to hold onto it and uh I think if I stop trusting the process than I would stop making art.

6. Avery Singer

"Avery Singer's Next Painting," Art21, June 02, 2017, accessed February 3, 2017, <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/avery-singers-next-painting/>.

I don't know what it is but I just love solitude and I love working alone and defining my own time and my own life and my own space. You don't look at the clock anymore and then all of a sudden the sun is down and you realize you've been painting for 14 hours, and you have this progress in front of you. This is your task, this is what makes being an artist soooo hard. Because I don't want to reproduce others peoples paintings I want to make my own.

7. Jamian Juliano-Villani

"Jamian Juliano-Villani Gets to Work," Art21, October 6, 2017, accessed December 2, 2017, - <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/jamian-juliano-villani-gets-to-work/>.

It's a very simple routine: I come in, reheat my coffee, go on to computer, look at stuff, clean my brushes, and then I get to work. I've not had time off since I started, which is crazy. Once you have a deadline, it's like impending doom. It's like a pimp! Constantly, like you owe someone something. Stress assassinates creativity. If you make a bad painting and your job is an artist, it's like the worst. It's mortifying. It's like having like chocolate smeared all over your face or something – and you're like going to some like gala. You're only as good as your last painting. – which sucks – but, you know, it's kind of the truth.

8. Ellen Gallagher

"*Painting Beyond Painting: Ellen Gallagher Brilliant Ideas Ep.10*," Bloomberg, YouTube, September 17, 2015, accessed February 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb3o3QYSXtU&t=189s>.

There's this thing that happens when you when you're starting work, not just when you're starting it you can be well into it, and it's just not happening and you ride home on your bike, and it's the worst feeling, it's just the worst possible feeling and its really unresolvable. So what's really nice are those few times where you go home and you're like there's literally uh a thread connecting you back to the studio cause you can't wait to get back, the work becomes a being and and uh that's for me the most perfect time in the work that's the best.

9. Cornelia Parker

"Artist Cornelia Parker Questions the Rules That Govern Us Brilliant Ideas Ep.2," Bloomberg, YouTube, May 26, 2015, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGtS2oX-Rao>.

I have a studio but I don't use it very much, its... its more of a storage place. On the whole I've made most of my work from the kitchen table. I have to almost convince myself I'm not working <laughs>, it must be a throwback from my childhood when I was being forced to work when I didn't want to so I'm always collecting I'm always looking I'm taking photographs all the time, my iPhone is my sketchbook. Um I'm listening to conversations I'm collecting little gems of ideas and these things sort of I absorb somehow unconsciously you know they're not you know I'm not worried about whether they make sense.

10. Sonia Boyce

"Sonia Boyce, Pioneer and Trailblazer Brilliant Ideas Ep.60," Bloomberg, YouTube, August 29, 2017, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uslJWg5JirE&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7IILikGBY7HFg&index=15>.

I am quite hooked on what ya know the mystery of what happens when ya know people are together and what they do and that's why that's why I work this way ya know I don't know that ...I don't know that me sitting in the studio on my own would ever produce anything like that and always is something unexpected, I never know what's going to come around the corner.

11. Jenny Saville

"Artist Jenny Saville: why human bodies fascinate," Channel 4 News, YouTube, May 8, 2016, accessed September 5, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=137&v=MgXNp8ToVHk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=137&v=MgXNp8ToVHk).

Uh, I just always felt like that I always felt that I have been an observer I suppose that I sort of drift around observing these things, and um and making work is my way of spitting that back out again or something.

12. Wanda Koop

Katherine Knight, David Craig, Wanda Koop, McNabb Connolly (Firm), and Site Media (Firm), 2011. *Koop: The Art of Wanda Koop*, Mississauga, ON; Toronto, Ont;: Site Media.

When I'm making um a...a really large painting on the big easel, I...I build my paintings with many many layers of fine washes... I'm not that interested in the surface as a uh painterly convention to me it's much more interesting if it somehow looks like its painted itself.

13. Kiki Smith  
ART/new york Kiki Smith, (New York, NY: Inner-Tube Video, 1994), DVD.

I mean I DON'T ...I only think about things a little bit... like afterwards I mean sometimes I think about them before but in general I always just think about them afterwards sort of what I'm doing its more just like it tells you do it and you do it and then afterwards when you think about why you're doing it or what's interesting about why you're doing it to you or you know something or what you're trying to push around or something but I I guess I trust you know that is a place where I really trust myself that if I take care of my work it will sort of take care of me you know if I'm really attentive to it it will make my life ok or something like that.

14. Barbara Kruger  
"INTERVIEW. BARBARA KRUGER," YouTube, December 23, 2010, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP7hbDkJql8>

I'm very wary of categories, I resist terms like political art, or feminist art, or black art or queer art, because I think that it tends to marginalize work, and close down the possibility of meaning. I say ... I try to make work about how we are to one another and to me that is the big picture of what a social relation can be and frequently is.

15. Amy Sberald  
"BRIGHT. Amy Sberald, Painter" Vimeo, December 19, 2013, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/82288095>.

I think one key insight that I want people to leave with after they look at my work. Just to be able to imagine. Little bit of imagination will affect somebody who is looking at a painting and make them see themselves differently. Ya know, walk into somebody else's shoes or just engaging in a different way.

16. Keltie Ferris  
"Keltie Ferris Spray Paints in Solitude"| Art 21 "New York Close Up", YouTube, March 14, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/5>.

Making paintings is such an enterprise in solitude. One of the things I really struggle about whether I could actually do this for my life, it's like I don't know if I can be alone that much. It was really rough for me when I left school and started painting alone and full time. I was living at home and working at home. So I had no reason to ever leave the house. I'd like go and buy milk, and I would chat to the person selling milk, for <laughs> like way too long <chuckle>.

17. Maggi Hambling  
"Maggi Hambling's Five Favourite Objects," VOGUE, VOGUEvideo, December 07, 2017, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.vogue.co.uk/video/maggi-hamblings-five-favourite-objects>.

Whisky helps, not while I'm working but to look at the work and uh feel a little bit more philosophical about it ... a bit of more whisky!

18. Phyllida Barlow  
“*The Physical, Terrifying Boldness of Phyllida Barlow* Brilliant Ideas Ep.57,” Bloomberg, YouTube, July 10, 2017, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U13vtixS52w&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7llIkGBY7HFg&index=18>.

Mine own fascinations and my sense of being beguiled is not going to appeal to everyone <laughs> by a long shot you know. I do think that that the explanation is often the death of something <laughs> you know and its justification so in a way I do sort of contravene that continuously I don't have that expectation that the work will seamlessly explain itself.

19. Abigail DeVille  
“Abigail DeVille Listens to History” | Art 21 “New York Close Up”, YouTube, March 14, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/2>.

There's merit in the attempt to make something, that could talk about something larger than yourself. People are messy, history is messy. The work needs to be ...<laughs> reflect that. Thinking about bureaucracy and things kinda just piling up. Thinking about all the voices that were lost. When things are painful, people don't want to talk about them. But we can't forget about the class of invisible people that were present at every single juncture and every single moment in the formation of this country and its myths.

20. Tiffany Chung  
“*The Socially Conscious Cartography of Tiffany Chung* Brilliant Ideas Ep.39,” Bloomberg, YouTube, November 9, 2016, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAgs-BTIUnI>.

There are certain limitations in art. You can only take it so far. I really want to push it beyond what people think art is and really tap into the international policy making. I just want to use my work and my research to hopefully demand some changes. My work in a way is a quiet protest, it's a protest against the politics of memory, the politics of remembering and forgetting, it's the protest against this politically driven historical amnesia and in order to do that umm ya know it it gives more of an impact if you do it from within. If that voice comes from within.

21. Diana Thater  
“Diana Thater: “Delphine” | ART21 “Exclusive”, YouTube, October 21, 2016, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR8hHg06ooY&list=PL9461961E1AD6BD70&index=5->.

I don't put the politics of activism and the politics of my work together. I think it makes a muddle. My life as an artist is a different one. The politics are much more subtle. When you make you know... films about the natural world that aren't narrative that's the problem...mmhahah there's no narrative. So what are you editing for? Can you just put one image of a dolphin after another image of a dolphin? They're all great you know ...you film dolphins every image you get is fantastic. You have to figure out ways to

put images next to one another and that requires that you think about time. How do you keep throwing the viewer back at themselves? So they don't get lost in something? I don't want people to lose themselves in a story.

22. Jamian Juliano-Villani

"Jamian Juliano-Villani Gets to Work," Art21, October 6, 2017, accessed December 2, 2017, - <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/jamian-juliano-villani-gets-to-work/>.

One of my friends was telling me, like "Just put some crap in there, no one can tell." It's like "Thanks Jerk!" <inhales sharply> But uh, I can definitely tell. It's like huh these are supposed to be like confident. I just turned 30, I mean I chain smoke—like you know --a pack and a half a day. I drink a lot. My sleeping habits are terrible. I eat garbage. This is just a vessel, you know what I mean? <laughs> The past couple years I did so much stamina and like I just kept on working and pumping. And now it's like, when it actually matters, I got to make sure I still have it. I think the main pressure is maintaining integrity and making work that you feel good about –even under pressure, which is really difficult. I really want to push the paintings – and I don't know how yet, but hopefully I'll figure it out and make them something that they aren't yet. I know I'm going to make like some embarrassing, bad sculptures, or videos or something. But like, fuck it, I got to do it, now's the time—while I have the energy.

23. Pipilotti Rist

"*Pipilotti Rist, Pioneer of Video Art Brilliant Ideas Ep.55*," Bloomberg, YouTube, June 14, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCusgvPo5vM&index=20&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7iILikGBY7HFg>.

I get often critiqued that to celebrate pleasure or celebrate beauty is often treated as being corrupt. But I think to to work on beauty and pleasure without selling something is extremely needed that we can relax our brains that we can contemplate, come back to us.

24. Tracey Emin

"1/2 Tracey Emin - What Do Artists Do All Day?" YouTube, June 08, 2015, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZBkxqNJC9g>.

and anybody who wants to be an artist that thinks it's just about being in your garret and painting ...forget it ...it's never going to work for you... you have to also have your head screwed on and be together cause otherwise nobody is ever going to know you 're there...that's another thing.

25. Barbara Kruger

"INTERVIEW. BARBARA KRUGER," YouTube, December 23, 2010, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP7hbDkJql8>.

I think what's driving me as an artist is that I am interested in doubt. I'm more interested in questions than in answers, and I think that art is the creation of commentary, whether its visual or music or writing, it's sort of the way that the artist figures out how to visualize or textualize or musicalize their experience of the world.

26. Diana Thater

"*The Multifaceted Video Art of Diana Thater Brilliant Ideas Ep.19*," Bloomberg, YouTube, January 15, 2016, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emrt1xr6mGM>.

All artists hope that their work changes the way people see the world. And all artists hope that people walk in and say: oh my god I've never seen anything quite like this before.

27. Tania Bruguera

"Artist Profile: Tania Bruguera on her Sociopolitical Art Practice," Guggenheim Museum, YouTube, April 9, 2015, accessed September 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdsu0aCXctE>.

I am kind of like a serpent that peels off its skin every few years – or every year or whatever times – because as an artist, I have gone through that change several times. I feel like once people quote -unquote "understand" what I'm doing it is very hard for me to tell them stuff, because they don't even want to see it anymore, because they ...before even seeing it, they think they know what it is. And all of my work is about making people think. So in order for them to think, they have to be open to hearing first, and then have their own conclusions later.

28. Ann Hamilton

"Ann Hamilton: "the Event of a Thread"| Art 21 "Exclusive", YouTube, April 19, 2013, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fj4umqXGjM>.

I think ...as an artist you're always trying to figure out how do you give voice in some way or another to something that's there but that's not necessarily visible and that ummm there's that uhhhh part of me that has a real desire to umm be able to think about how ummm making might accrue enough weight in the world in the face of all the unmaking that's going on then, now etc. so I think ya know one of the things about reading the labour history is that you're devastated by so much of it it's a history that's about the erasure of the body in some way the unmaking if the challenge of our time is the challenge of empathy to make an empathetic relation that is to see another person to feel their pain, story, whatever, than how can uh a poetic material making be part of that ya know now I'm looking at I'm 15 years later where I am still very much thinking about how do we have a voice how's our voice matter how does making matter?

29. Avery Singer

"Avery Singer's Next Painting," Art21, June 02, 2017, accessed February 3, 2017, <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/avery-singers-next-painting/>.

There's some expression your best ideas come to you in the shower, in transit, and as you're about to go to sleep. I haven't stopped thinking about what the next painting is. I feel incredibly free when I have an art idea. Being an artist is almost like a pursuit of this feeling of freedom. I love that feeling. I live for that.

30. Liz Larner  
"Liz Larner in "Los Angeles", Art21, September 23, 2016, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s8/liz-larner-in-los-angeles-segment/>.

The thing for me about sculpture is that it's the most physical form of art while still retaining this aspect of the poetic...totally. I guess the idea of an artist being someone that can change their mind, but that's kinda of what you're required to do is to follow your ideas and not just do the same thing over and over again. That's part of what I found really exciting about being an artist.

31. Agnes Martin  
Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World, dir. Mary Lance (Corrales, NM: New Deal Films, 2003), DVD.

I think artists are very fortunate in that they can sit around and... and wait for in inspiration...erhm ...instead of you know uh...there's quite a bit of action in the rest any other people working, getting up and going to work, you know talking to people all day of course they think I'm unfortunate that I spend all day absolutely by myself but you just can't be an artist if you can't be alone.

32. Judy Chicago  
"Judy Chicago on feminist art," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, YouTube, October 25, 2010, accessed September 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UA9cp9jqHZE>.

For a woman to openly express her own content was extremely dangerous, it was tantamount to risking one's, well for me, what little modest reputation I had at the time and as a sort of you know wrought in the macho environment of LA art in the 60's. and uh faced with things like attitudes like uh you know you can't be a woman and an artist to the idea that there was no such thing as female content. That women didn't have a different point of view I mean none of that was accepted. It wasn't even thought about at that time and so what does that do what does it do to a young woman who is raised in an environment a forum a visual forum that comes out of the male experience. So I was basically alone at that time and extremely isolated and yet I was deeply committed to being myself as an artist, and so in these drawings I tried to face the constraints of the formal language I had inherited. and figure out how I could break through it. Literally break through it, without sacrificing the transformation of form, you know the beauty of form, and colour and line but to find a way to be myself using it and the drawings actually chronicle that.

33. Nancy Spero  
"Nancy Spero in "Protest", Art21, November 04,2007, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/nancy-spero-in-protest-segment/>.

I guess maybe my art can be said to be a protest. I don't know if its railing against the world or something, but I am protesting. And as an artist, I I am privileged to to create things the way that I think that they should be, you

know because that gets out my – my message to the world. See, I’m interested in messages. And if people want to take something from it, I am thrilled, of course.

34. Keltie Ferris

“Keltie Ferris Spray Paints in Solitude”| Art 21 “New York Close Up”, YouTube, March 14, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/5>.

I think there’s a little bit of a guilt to being an artist in this time, or any time, when you could be doing something more proactively positive, directly in the world. It’s hard to do something that’s not justified by anything. I don’t know if I actually succeed in that, but that’s the goal. There is something very indulging about painting. My individual creativity splodged over the surface for you to admire how unique my mark making shit smearing process is. I – I struggle with that, not all the time but I occasionally do struggle with that about what I do with my life.

35. Louise Bourgeois

“Secret Knowledge Tracey Emin – Louise Bourgeois,” YouTube, May 23, 2014, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHyAsMdBbH4&t=10s>.

The torment? But it's absurd ...it's not a torment to be an artist. The premise is idiotic. It is not a torment to be an artist it is a privilege!

36. Cornelia Parker

“Artist Cornelia Parker Questions the Rules That Govern Us Brilliant Ideas Ep.2,” Bloomberg, YouTube, May 26, 2015, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGtS2oX-Rao>.

I think being an artist is quite a political act I think, its you’re like a philosopher but you’re not affiliated to one school of thought ya know you can be this free thinker and make irrational like ya know things tangible really and I like that very much and society does need artists ya know we are important and we have to have that as part of our culture because that feeds so much more. A lot of friends of mine are scientists who are saying: oh you know you artists get away with murder, ya know you could be heretics you can say things that are irrational and not have to have peer review to back them up.

37. Maggi Hambling

“Maggi Hambling’s Five Favourite Objects,” VOGUE, VOGUEvideo, December 07, 2017, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.vogue.co.uk/video/maggi-hamblings-five-favourite-objects>.

Well I have to say oil paint is one of my favourite things, this this stuff in this tube, this sexy stuff that is alive itself is what I live with and battle with every day. The most important thing anyone ever said to me, was my mentor, I mean now dead, the artist Led Haynes, who said uh , when I was 15, he said to me, well if you’re going to be an artist you have to make your work your best friend, that you can, go to it whatever you’re feeling, you know you’re feeling tired, you’re feeling bored, you’re feeling happy, you’re feeling randy, whatever you’re feeling, go to your work and have a conversation with it.

And that's that's how I've lived my life, and so that is why this is the most real place for me and the rest is the rest.

38. Pipilotti Rist

"*Pipilotti Rist, Pioneer of Video Art* Brilliant Ideas Ep.55," Bloomberg, YouTube, June 14, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCusgvPo5vM&index=20&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7iLLikGBY7HFg>.

Of course there is art deals with all the inequality and problems, which I appreciate a lot. But for me I decided not to use my force to always tell what's wrong but sucking out the possible pleasures of daily life, and of our extreme complex body it's just what I want to give back.

39. Tiffany Chung

"*The Socially Conscious Cartography of Tiffany Chung* Brilliant Ideas Ep.39," Bloomberg, YouTube, November 9, 2016, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAgs-BTlUnI>.

I'm not sure if all artists are expected to delve into history. I'm so interested in history and politics umm and I'm interested in the kind of imposed political borders ummm and the impacts of that on certain groups of the population and I'm really interested in investigating into certain histories that are totally erased into oblivion.

40. Nancy Spero

"Nancy Spero in "Protest", Art21, November 04,2007, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/nancy-spero-in-protest-segment/>.

...But I decided I – I just had to do my thing, and so I started doing very small work—very small work – figures that are sometimes an inch tall or even less, almost microscopic. And so in a way that's a retort. And also it's a retort to the large works of – of the mostly male New York artists. Leon, of course, always in my mind was an exception. How totally sympathetic he was to my art.

41. Cindy Sherman

Cindy Sherman in "Transformation", Art21, October 21, 2009, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/cindy-sherman-in-transformation-segment/>.

I wanted to make pictures that were really big, really in your face. Before I even shot anything I thought "I want to make a show of really big pictures," because you see male artists doing it all the time, even when they're not even, like, well known. They're just like make a picture as big as the entire wall of the gallery. It just seemed like such a big egotistical <chuckles> thing. And I thought, "I don't know that many women that really do that." And I thought, damnit <small fist pound> , I'm gonna do that, <chuckles> make this really big picture. So um, yeah, that was kind of part of it too. <chuckles>

42. Phyllida Barlow

*"The Physical, Terrifying Boldness of Phyllida Barlow Brilliant Ideas Ep.57,"* Bloomberg, YouTube, July 10, 2017, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U13vtixS52w&list=PLqq4LnWs3oUpaD8oXCF7llLkGBY7HFg&index=18>.

I'm not the slightest bit interested in big work. I think it's a kind of argument with the world around you know that if there are so many objects already in the world what distinguishes a sculpture? what makes it different? How can it be a different experience?

43. Sun You

Vimeo, February 18, 2018, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/256327445>.

I've been thinking a lot about 'cause I used to again did much more umm bigger scale, even when I was a painter too, uh well I am still a painter but like when I was specifically doing painting like I was ...doing large paintings and I think A) it's an educational umm hangover meaning that when I was in undergrad and grad school we were sup consciously and unconsciously taught you have to make large painting in order to be serious artists so there is and it gets worse in the sculpture in the conversation like, ya know umm ya when you look at Richard Serra, and all these...Stella like when you look at them, if they were making a small pieces they would never be who they are now so there's this kind of ya know uhh certain aggressive scale conversation that people when you make large pieces you are being considered important and serious that means you're invested. So when I was making a large painting there was this kind of ya know thing that I was like: oh and I'm also I'm a very small person like I'm barely five one and so I think there is a sense of compensation that was happening like I want to ...instead of doing this I want to do this, and you know that there...also I went to a private art school that for the first time I felt like there was this kind of like competitiveness...that I'm competing with a lot of male painters who were just doing large paintings and I just felt like I I feel like I had to do that.

44. Maggi Hambling

*"Maggi Hambling's Five Favourite Objects,"* VOGUE, VOGUEvideo, December 07, 2017, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.vogue.co.uk/video/maggi-hamblings-five-favourite-objects>.

When I was fourteen I uh went to stay with my art teacher from school to learn about oil paint, and she wandered across this field in Suffolk where I was trying to paint a landscape and I and insects, it was very hot, insects were everywhere they were on the painting they were on the brushes they were on the palette they were everywhere and I said " what am I going to do about these insects?" and she said "there is only one thing to do have a cigarette" and so from the moment oil paint was in my hands there was also a cigarette and there still is.

45. Sonia Boyce  
“*Sonia Boyce, Pioneer and Trailblazer* Brilliant Ideas Ep.60,” Bloomberg, YouTube, August 29, 2017, accessed January 8, 2018,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uslJWg5JirE&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7IILikGBY7HFG&index=15>.

I was always drawing and I never noticed that I was always drawing. Ya know all the margins of all my school books and any surface I could kinda find I would be drawing on it. And so when I was in my first year at Stourbridge I ...I was convinced that someone in a suit would come in with a clipboard and say: are you are you miss Boyce I'm sorry we've made this terrible mistake. Because I was I was really shocked that I was allowed to draw all day. I said to myself that's I want to do, that's exactly what I want to do I'm going to do fine art because I want to do work about life but also with a very kind of edgy political sensibility.

46. Pipilotti Rist  
“*Pipilotti Rist, Pioneer of Video Art* Brilliant Ideas Ep.55,” Bloomberg, YouTube, June 14, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCusgvPo5vM&index=20&list=PLqq4LnWs3olUpaD8oXCF7IILikGBY7HFG>.

My work was always colourful, but I think reality is as colourful as my work. And I remember in video class my teacher would say: noooo these colours you can't use its they are too primary and dah dah dah dah and that's true and then I even more used them because he didn't want them.

47. Susanna Heller  
“Susanna Heller, Feb 2013,” Vimeo, February 27, 2013, accessed March 27, 2018,  
<https://vimeo.com/60628028>.

...you know I went to a conceptual ...Nova Scotia College was completely a conceptual art school when I was there. So they were great at teaching you how to think, but not really good at teaching you how to paint or draw, I never learned perspective, I never learned figure drawing, and so I became a guard at the Met, that's actually was one of my first jobs, and from there I learned how to paint. That was very useful in learning how to paint. It was physically a very exhausting job, but you know you could pick your section and I would just I made my way through the whole painting section. So you know if you can go in everyday and just stand with a Cezanne. ... and there is like a group of guards who are artists, but they're young and they're all talking to each other and then there are a lot of older guards who ... everyone seemed to want something different too. Some like complete isolation and some like to be in the main hall and some are really bossy. I was just like the opposite. I would never bother anyone. You could be licking the painting and ...in fact it would make me happy that you were so involved. I never once told someone to step back from a painting. I would never do that! Cause I think you should be on top of that painting myself!

48. Dorothea Rockburne  
"Dorothea Rockburne: Drawing Which Makes Itself," The Museum of Modern Art, YouTube, September 18, 2013, accessed September 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN2DJxMLF0w>.

I lived on Chamber Street. I was working all kinds of jobs at once, plus I had a child I was raising, and I didn't have the money to buy art supplies; they were expensive. So I went across the street to the hardware store, and I bought crude oil, gallons of crude oil. People look on the crude oil as a big insight into material. Believe me, it was not. It was accident (laughs). But I also, you know, had done some tests and I knew what it would do and I knew that it had incredible properties. And colour wise it fell right into my Beaux Arts training. Because this was a natural in the earth material and to me it has a lot of colour.

49. Jamian Juliano-Villani  
"Jamian Juliano-Villani Gets to Work," Art21, October 6, 2017, accessed December 2, 2017, - <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/jamian-juliano-villani-gets-to-work/>.

I was growing up in the middle of nowhere New Jersey. And I just wanted to get out of New Jersey and get to New York immediately. New York is where it seemed like all the artists went to be artists. I was watching the "Painters Painting" – Stella and uh Rauschenberg, and blah blah blah, and they're all in New York, you know – sitting on like ladders covered in paint. For me as a teenager, it was amazing. That's – That's it ya know? Now I romanticize it less, cause coming to New York and starting to be in the art world thing—its insane! I had a million shitty jobs. Overnight shift diner waitress. I worked at a group home. Taught gymnastics. Kindergarten teacher. I organized books for ugh a like a marine who was like obsessed with like ships. I was commuting back and forth from working in a restaurant in New Jersey. So I could get my first apartment in New York. I was basically painting on top of my bed, staying up every other night to paint. Slowly, I got a slightly bigger room.—and then I got a slightly bigger room. Three years ago, I actually got my first real studio ever. That was like Christmas, every day.

50. Cindy Sherman  
Cindy Sherman in "Transformation", Art21, October 21, 2009, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/cindy-sherman-in-transformation-segment/>.

These were not really done in any kind of referential way towards art history. If anything, I was showing how – not little I care about it, but how it's just another thing that can influence me along with television and along with cheap magazines. It's not any more uhhhh relevant to my time than any of that other stuff.

51. Aki Sasamoto  
"Aki Sasamoto is Feeling Stretched"| Art 21 "New York Close Up", YouTube, March 14, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/3>.

I never know where the project starts, but maybe it started when I realized that I want to put trampoline in a dumpster. But I don't know if the

dumpster came because of the trampoline, or just because all I wanted to do was jump in and out of the dumpster. I wanted to experience right here, between underground and aboveground. Whenever I try to say this piece is about this or that, that's when it starts to feel like I'm a liar. I almost feel like I'm performing to find out answers for my own questions. Lately, I notice that I'm being super stretched and ...tired –trying to do a day job and trying to do the art –so I was interested in how much one can push yourself. That's why I went to thinking about elasticity and testing that limit. I'm interested in the deformation that happens.

52. Suzy Lake

Art Gallery of Ontario AGO Talks, SoundCloud post, March 2015,  
<https://soundcloud.com/agotoronto/2014-podcast-suzylake-agotalk>.

...all my work actually is interested in, uhh my aesthetic is based on performance, and I happen to umm umm put my work in the form of photography but it's about performance. And audience performer relationships and the information that I'm looking for, I want the audience to kind of understand, and trigger like their own experience to these issues.

53. Marina Abramović

"Singing Lesson, Marina Abramović," Art21, December 13, 2013, accessed March 26, 2018,  
<https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/marina-abramovic-singing-lesson-short/>.

you know, I have lots of issues as a child, and uh lots of fears. I was incredibly self-conscious. So when the moment I was dealing with performance, I really wanted to actually overcome my fears, number one. And number two, push my physical limits as far as I can go, you know, to see that that actually that umm you have this power of the mind over the body. - -- when I do my performances I'm in complete control. But when I come to the life, I like to give up control. And give up control is one of the hardest thing an artist can do in his lifetime.

54. Rebecca Belmore

"Global Feminisms: Rebecca Belmore," Brooklyn Museum, YouTube, April 28, 2010, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhWkrHDZue4>.

So I think for me performance is very much about...it's personal. Ummm It's personal because it's my person, it's me, it's my body and I think that uhhhhh with my body I can address history. I can address the immediate. I can address political issues. So for me, performance is deeply personal because it's my way of speaking out.

55. Sally Ross

"Sally Ross: Materials and Procedures at Fergus McCaffrey," Fergus McCaffrey, YouTube, January 31, 2018, accessed February 15, 2018,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk3mD89exXM>.

In general, what I'm doing in the studio is I'm sort of reinventing what painting can be but on my own terms. I'm sort of reinterpreting in my own kind of constructing way, the canvas. What the canvas could be. And also how I can get the paint on the canvas. I'm doing this through the materials

and the procedures that I'm enacting for for each piece, it's kind of simple, the overarching thrust of what I'm trying to do. What can a painting be?

56. Abigail DeVille

"Abigail DeVille Listens to History"| Art 21 "New York Close Up", YouTube, March 14, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://art21.org/playlist/the-future-is-female/#/2>.

There's something that, if you're quiet enough and you listen, you're being guided or directed to uncover specific bits of information. There's always this act of digging, kind of like resuscitating life back into those lost fragments. The materials that I choose are already speaking –speaking to the past through internal intuition. History is deep. It's dark. It affects everything that's happening, even at this very moment. It's like a rock. You can try to tease out little bits in trying to make your way through the material or make a way through space.

57. Frida (of the Guerrilla Girls)

"Guerrilla Girls Talk The History of Art vs. The History of Power," The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, YouTube, January 14, 2016, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxBQB2fUlg>.

Well I mean, every decision, aesthetic decision has a value behind it. And if all the decisions are being made by the same people, then you know the art will never look like the whole of our culture. And right now, the art world is kind of run by, you know, billionaire art collectors who buy art that appeal to their values. And we say art should look like the rest of our culture, you know, unless all the voices are in the history of art, it's not really history of art. It's a history of power.

58. Nancy Spero

"Nancy Spero in "Protest", Art21, November 04,2007, , accessed March 26, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/nancy-spero-in-protest-segment/>.

I'd like to think that I have all layers of uh conceptual in the art, that it --its easily read. But on the other hand, I do hope that its more complicated, and that it's not just one easy read and then that's it.

59. Cornelia Parker

"Artist Cornelia Parker Questions the Rules That Govern Us Brilliant Ideas Ep.2," Bloomberg, YouTube, May 26, 2015, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGtS2oX-Rao>.

I like to make work that can be easily read on one hand but it also can be, it can pose a question so it's a kind of a question mark really. And I think that means it's still active it's still continues to to accrue umm ideas. Most studio based artists ya know who who plough a more particular furrow, ya know I really admire ya know I wish I could be like Rachel Whiteread or Antony Gormley and have this very particular honed practice but it's it's not something I can achieve so I have to allow myself to be who I am which is a grasshopper minded person. <laughs>

60. Agnes Martin  
Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World, dir. Mary Lance (Corrales, NM: New Deal Films, 2003), DVD.

I wasn't satisfied with my paintings, for 20 years, I was not satisfied with my paintings and at the end of every year I had a big fire, burned em all.

61. Cindy Sherman  
"Cindy Sherman in "Transformation", Art21, October 21, 2009, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/cindy-sherman-in-transformation-segment/>.

I didn't want to make what looked like art, in terms of painting. I just thought, " No, I want to make something that looks mass-produced." And I didn't want it to have anything to do with Art Theory. And I wanted it to look like, you know, anybody would understand it, because it's – you know it looks like it's from a movie, and maybe I saw that movie.

62. Jamian Juliano-Villani  
"Jamian Juliano-Villani Gets to Work," Art21, October 6, 2017, accessed December 2, 2017, - <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/jamian-juliano-villani-gets-to-work/>.

I have a sense of humour and a really light way to approach something. Just come up with a joke, and then from there, how can you offset that, so it's like psychological or personal? It's like ping pong, back and forth, back and forth, until it's just all these things going like this , negating itself. A lot of weird decisions happen here by myself in the middle of the night. But a lot of it is just talking to other people. If you have all these different voices coming in, its less of a one-person lecture.

## IMAGES

All photos courtesy of Angeline Simon unless otherwise noted.

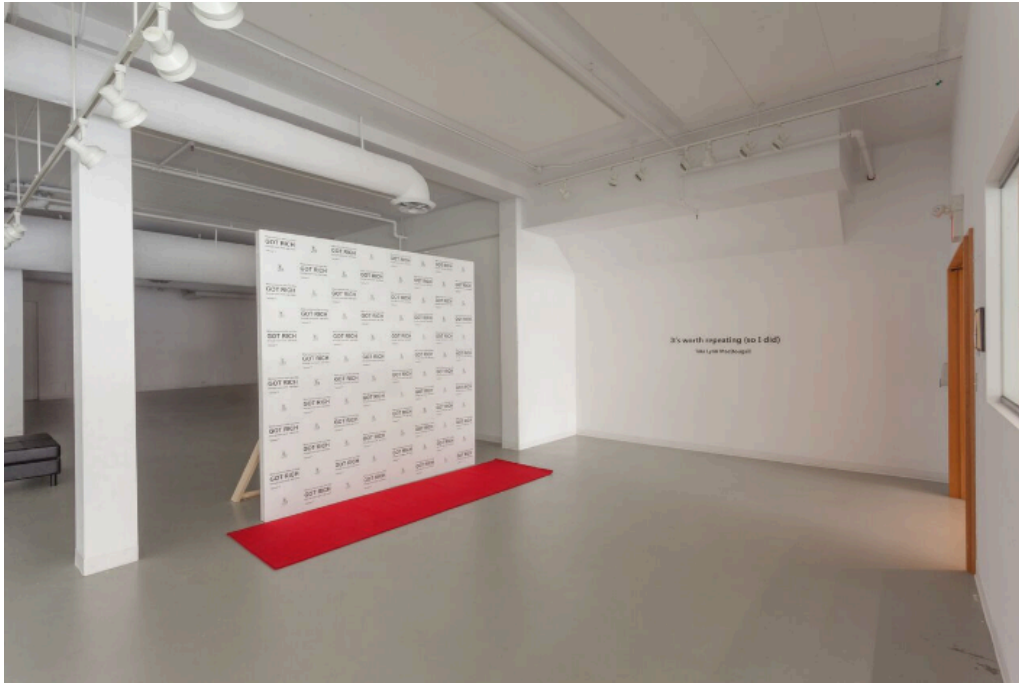


Image 1: *If someone tells you they Got Rich* and Exhibition Title Wall



Image 2: Exhibition Installation



Image 3: *Meet me in the Middle*



Image 4: *Meet me in the Middle II*



Image 5: *It's worth repeating (so I did)*



Image 6: Installation shot of *Seven Strategies for Happiness and Pedicure as a cure for what socially ails you*



Image 7: Still from *Pedicure as a cure for what socially ails you*



Image 8: Still from *Seven Strategies for Happiness*



Image 9: Installation shot of *I'm still unpacking these thoughts...*  
(Painting series)

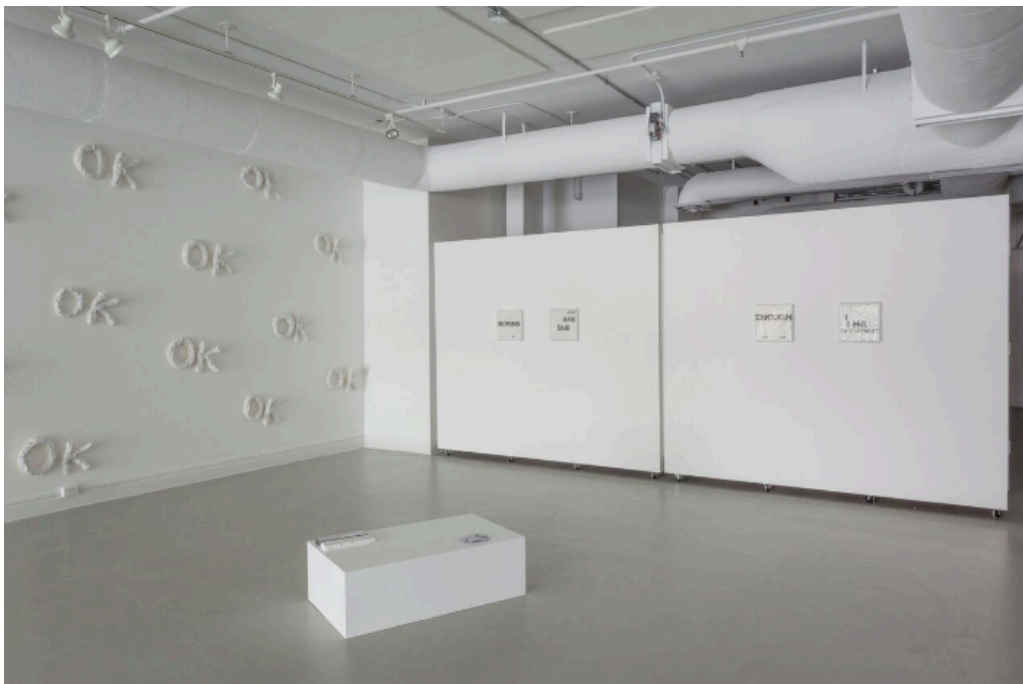


Image 10: 2<sup>nd</sup> Installation shot of *I'm still unpacking these thoughts...*  
(Painting series)



Image 11: Detail of *Never* and *Some Lose* from the series *I'm still unpacking these thoughts...*



Image 12: Detail of *Make Me* from the series *I'm still unpacking these thoughts...*



Image 13: *Kelly Mark Broke My Heart: I Really Should... get over it*



Image 14: *OK OK OK OK OK*



Image 15: *Flags are the New Neon (Thankfully flags are affordable)*  
Photo by Tyler Muzzin



Image 16: Activation of Step and Repeat at Closing Reception.  
Photos by Dagmar Dahle