

SUMMA 2023
Curatorial Statement
Mosa McNeilly
3/23/2023

Where We Intersect: Identities, Environments, Activisms

The promise of any artwork is that it can hold us - viewer and maker - in a conflicted or contestable space, without real-world injury or loss.

— Kara Walker

Where We Intersect: Identities, Environments, Activisms is a group exhibition featuring the work of graduating Studio Art students in the School of the Arts at McMaster University. The exhibition represents a diversity of artistic and thematic explorations from a compelling cohort of undergraduate students. Featuring new works including drawings, paintings, photography, installation, printmaking, sculpture, projections, and sound, these art students interrogate themes ranging from self-actualization to political activism; from concerns about the environment to reclamations of cultural identity; from critiques of consumerism to futurist imaginings.

The title of the exhibition speaks to a collective impetus to find points of connection within a heterogeneity of approaches, perspectives, identities, and motivations. It portrays a new generation's evolution toward integrating an intersectional ethic in their relationships with each other and in their analyses of their positionalities considering intersections of race, place, ethnicity, gender, ability, spirituality, and sexual orientation. It gestures toward a decolonizing of institutional definitions and narratives in the framing of the artist and art making, and in the presentation of art in galleries and museums.

Within a scope of media and thematic orientations present in this exhibition, there are resonances and parallels to be found throughout. Painting and sculpture works by Olivia Maletić and Ariella Boltinsky shed light on coping with personal and intergenerational trauma, using their arts practice as a therapeutic practice. Wren Breeze's installation work speaks to navigating queer identity and cultural perceptions around living with autism; Sean Ross's painting rethinks constructs of masculinity; and Breezy Nepitali's drawing explores body image issues centring and validating the voluptuous female subject. While all reflect upon challenging intrapersonal themes, they share a propensity for seeking a healing way forward.

Paintings by Jessica Nguyen and Raechell Brory delve into the reclamation of marginalized cultural identities through a depiction of Vietnamese, Thai, Malaysian, and Chinese cuisine. Referencing Nigerian family photos, Lano Aluko's paintings counter dominant narratives of the Black family. Tanisha Bryan's sculpture and projection and Mary Faith Wilson's drawings confront the complexities of Black identity and anti-Blackness through tender representations

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of vulnerability, childhood trauma, and queer love. Pauline Halsey's sculpture looks at western consumerism, functionality, and the hierarchy of value through a feminist lens. Linah Hegazi's ceramic sculpture tackles the Palestinian experience of apartheid, expulsion, and genocide, petitioning the viewer to consider their complicity. Each gazes upon personal, racial, or cultural histories, either through a lens of nostalgia, through an imperative of self-determination, or a call for social justice.

Ceramic and 3D printing sculpture by Ben Cummings investigates the dichotomy between urban and natural environments with a hopeful futurist gaze, while Eden Griffin's repurposed found object work contemplates a post-apocalyptic future. Tristyna Gayle's sculptural work portrays an imagined shelter and rainfall, drawing inspiration from Japanese Sandogasa hats. Amy Trakalo and Gabriella Gyorgypal incorporate crocheting, found materials, and projections in a collaborative installation that thinks through the intricacies of women's textile-based work and the delicacy of nature. Each ruminates on the pairing of the human and the environment in a distinct manner.

Sculptural and lens-based work by Nadia Woodside animates fictional characters inspired by childhood memory, while mixed media painting and printmaking work by Joseph Soldo Mirkhai draws on pop culture references from his childhood. Lithographs by Mariana Ardila Ossott and paintings by Kenzie Robichaud dwell on an exploration of medium and technique, both sharing a curiosity about visual literacy and materiality.

Where We Intersect: Identities, Environments, Activisms portrays a rich palette of thematic and material convergences and intersections. The spectrum of expressions is indicative of a group of emerging artists wrestling with making sense of a contemporary moment defined by a global pandemic, by senseless violence, astonishing waste, environmental devastation, and existential angst. Through making art they strive to make meaning for themselves, while offering to their audience a portrait of a particular generation. Their works convey a sober yet hopeful collective inquiry into cultivating resilience in turbulent times.