



Materiality and Perception
in Contemporary Atlantic Art

TOM SMART

BEAVERBROOK ART GALLERY

Materiality and Perception in Contemporary Atlantic Art honours the legacy of Marion McCain by showcasing over forty works of contemporary Atlantic art. Focusing intently on the materiality of the objects themselves, these works ask viewers to look again, challenging their initial perceptions. Viewed together, the works embody the idea that consciousness is a flow and flux of singular sensations; as much as we view each work as an individual object, new meanings arise when we consider the collection of discrete objects holistically in a single exhibition.

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Deanna Musgrave, *A Conversation with Emma Kunz* (detail), 2019



Introduction

In addition to being an arts patron, benefactor, and advocate for art and artists (particularly from New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada), Marion McCain was an artist. As a student at Mount Allison University, she studied visual art and art history. This experience formed the foundation of a lifelong appreciation for the visual arts and artistic creation.

When my research for this exhibition began, I had the opportunity to look closely at two works of art Marion McCain made as a university student. One was a fine, intricately crafted ring, and the other was a decorative piece of furniture that included a delicate pattern incised in leather.

What struck me initially was that these objects reflected a creative sensibility that found expressive agents in different materials. In shaping and using these materials, Marion McCain was attuned to exploring their properties and potentials as artistic media. Materiality was an important artistic stimulus for McCain; things and matter inspired her, propelling her to follow the paths that opened up as she formed and combined materials when creating new meaning through art.

What soon became apparent to me was that, by combining different materials, she opened up new ways for me to view art and the world around me. The objects she created, while having a purpose as jewellery and furniture, were not limited to their functionality. The unique juxtapositions of form, matter, and media changed my perceptions.

opposite:

Deanna Musgrave (New Brunswick)
A Conversation with Emma Kunz, 2019

Through viewing Marion McCain's creative expression, I came away with an impression that the interaction of materials provides us with an expansive visual poetry, containing new ways to think about the world we live in. McCain reminded me that art has the capacity to arrange the ways we view the world. An exhibition like this exists in a symbiotic relationship with the most important questions in society; the act of viewing provides a lens to explore these issues, while at the same time being informed by these very same issues.

My experience of Marion McCain's art informs this exhibition. The works have been chosen from among the many submissions we received and augmented by selections I have made from studios. My purpose, prompted by her example, is to explore how material conversations affect our perceptions, and how we might manage to discover coherence in an arrangement of artistic objects in an art gallery.

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The idea of art carrying the individual away via moods and emotions is entirely encapsulated in the elegantly carved and delicately sculpted paddles by Timothy "Bjorn" Jones and the wondrously allusive photographs of James Wilson. While Jones states that his subject matter is the past, his finished works of art, based on the simple engine of conveyance through water that is the paddle, trace a conversation with Indigenous traditions (p. 64). Wilson's photographs prompt an awareness that a watershed is a living organism: a delicate, fragile ecosystem that is dependent on all elements, both natural and human, to interact harmoniously (pp. 56-57).

Jones and Wilson both explore personal relationships to land and water and the means by which artists engage with tradition and present realities. In the shape and weight of his paddles, in the turn of line, and in the iconographies engraved on the wood, Jones transports the viewer to a vast, uncharted place that is both the immediate present as well as something eternal and deeply resonant. In a similar way, Wilson's *Minister's Face* calls to mind a deep personal history blended with the people and animals that came before us on this land beside the water.

Gina Etra Stick's elegant porcelain vessels also capture what it is to be alive and present (p. 62). Stick wishes to incarnate the "life force" in her work, seeking to give it a form. Physical objects with spiritual presence, Etra Stick's vessels compel us to be attuned to their resonant characters, to how they can lead the eye, mind, and consciousness to a state of being she calls "unfabricated awareness."



List of Works

Carrie Allison (Cree/Métis/Nova Scotia)
Beaded Botanical 1 (allium tricoccum), 2018
Toho beads on linen
30 x 42.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Katie Augustine (Wolastoqiyik/
New Brunswick)
Psihqiminsok (strawberries), 2019
white ash, sweetgrass, fabric dye
25.4 cm round
Collection of the artist

Tracy Austin (New Brunswick)
Auric, 2017
hand dyed silk dupioni, wool, lace, seed
beads, ribbon, eyelets, rigilene, and tulle
50 x 40 x 40 cm
Collection of the artist

Edward "Ned" Bear (Cree-Wolastoqiyik/
New Brunswick)
Napeh Kaso yinew Kiskeyitan, 2018
butternut wood and horse hair
40.6 x 55.9 cm
Collection of the artist

Gerald Beaulieu (Prince Edward Island)
When the Rubber Meets the Road, 2018
rubber tires
Crow 1 (Cooper) 487.7 x 121.9 x 182.9 cm,
Crow 2 (Kelly) 487.7 x 487.7 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the artist
The artist gratefully acknowledges the support
of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Jared Betts (New Brunswick)
81, 2012
mixed media on canvas
76.2 x 101.6 cm
Collection of the artist

Beth M. Biggs (New Brunswick)
Host(ess) Monarch, 2008
Sterling, copper, enamel, and pearl
15.5 x 9.5 cm
Courtesy of Gallery on Queen, collection of
the artist, photography by Roger Smith

Yalda Bozorg (New Brunswick)
Not What it Seems, 2019
clay and wire
variable dimensions
Collection of the artist

Kim and Wayne Brooks (Wolastoqiyik/
New Brunswick)
Hat, 2018
25.5 x 31 x 34 cm
birchbark, eagle feather, and mixed media
Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery

Luc A. Charette (New Brunswick)
Abstraction 04:112017, 2017
acrylic on canvas
240 x 360 cm
Collection of the artist

Janice Wright Cheney (New Brunswick)
still from *The Lucivee*, 2019
mixed media and video
variable dimensions
Collection of the artist
Technical assistance: Tom Cheney &
Christina Thomson
The artist gratefully acknowledges the
support of the New Brunswick Arts Board.

Brigitte Clavette (New Brunswick)
Wasted - 1861 Grams Sterling Silver, 2017
sterling silver
66 x 27.9 x 15.2 cm
Collection of the artist

Carol Collicutt (New Brunswick)

In the Garden, 2018

mixed medium composite photograph
on paper

200 x 87 cm

Collection of the artist

Raven Davis (Anishinaabe/Nova Scotia)

Child's Play for Them, Murder for Us, 2017

pipe tobacco, wild rice, beans, cotton, wood,
MDF, acrylic

88.9 x 121.9 cm

Collection of the artist

William Forrestall (New Brunswick)

The Red Bug and the Flyer (two vehicles), 2018

mixed media

variable dimensions

Collection of the artist

Marie Fox (New Brunswick)

Monument, 2018

oil on panel

106.7 x 233.7 cm

Collection of the artist

Francine Francis (Mi'kmaq/New Brunswick)

Mimikej - Monarch Butterfly - Papillon

Monarque, 2018

acrylic on canvas

102 x 102 cm

Collection of the artist

Charles Gaffney (Wolastoqiyik/

New Brunswick)

Qsihkawk, 2018

butternut wood, leather, cattail grass,

Varathane

55.9 x 30.5 cm

Courtesy of Gallery on Queen, collection
of the artist

Emma Hassencahl-Perley (Wolastoqiyik/

New Brunswick)

Creation Story II, 2018

acrylic on canvas

91.4 x 152.4 cm

Collection of the artist

Suzanne Hill (New Brunswick)

Warm Up 3, 2018

charcoal, mylar, and acetate on brown paper

52 x 77.4 cm

Collection of the artist

Stephen Hutchings (New Brunswick)

Now and Then, 2017

oil and charcoal on canvas

40.6 x 81.2 cm

Courtesy of Galerie St. Laurent + Hill

I-Chun Jenkins (New Brunswick)

Transcending Through Life, 2019

recycled paper products

45.7 x 101.6 x 10.2 cm

Collection of the artist

Ursula Johnson (Mi'kmaq/Nova Scotia)

ITHA Shopping Network, 2017

video and mixed media installation

Variable dimensions

Collection of the artist

Timothy "Bjorn" Jones (New Brunswick)

Aeti, 2018

cedar, charcoal, and Varathane

149.9 x 22.9 x 5.1 cm

Collection of the artist

Vicky Lentz (New Brunswick)

Where the Trees Meet the Stars, 2018

aluminum bar, hot glue, glitter, sequins

152 x 122 cm

Collection of the artist

Brian MacKinnon (New Brunswick)

Merge, 2019

melted plastic on steel car door

121.9 x 91.4 x 15.2 cm

Collection of the artist

Dawn MacNutt (Nova Scotia)

Soul Within, 2018

twined willow, paint

190 x 50 x 40 cm

Collection of the artist, photography by

Bruce Murray/Visionfire

Ann Manuel (New Brunswick)

Weed Species, 2014
aluminum ladder, birch trees, steel plate
254 x 127 x 272 cm
Collection of the artist; prototype for "Weed Species," New Brunswick Art Bank collection, photography by Oliver Flecknell

Teresa Marshall (Mi'kmaq/Nova Scotia)

Mi'kmaq Bolero Regalia, 2014
mixed media and fabric
size 12-14
Collection of the artist

Alexandra McCurdy (Nova Scotia)

Black Box with Shells, 2018
porcelain
15 x 15 x 15 cm
Collection of the artist, photography by Steve Farmer

David McKay (New Brunswick)

Swaying with the Wind, 2019
egg tempera on panel
45.8 x 116.8 cm
Collection of the artist

Margot Metcalfe (Nova Scotia)

Rock Formation, 2016
edition 3/10
archival image printed with water based ink
on Hahnemühle 100% cotton rag paper
30.4 x 45.7 cm
Collection of the artist

Deanna Musgrave (New Brunswick)

A Conversation with Emma Kunz, 2019
acrylic on canvas
119.4 cm tondo
Collection of the artist

Freeman Patterson (New Brunswick)

Monet Willow / Un saule de Monet, 2017
AP 1/2
photography (digital capture, ink jet print)
40.6 x 61 cm
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Paziienza (New Brunswick)

Sorella I, 2019
oil on canvas
75 x 75 cm
Collection of the artist

Sarah Petite (New Brunswick)

Cosmo, 2018
encaustic on wood
83.8 x 83.8 cm
Collection of the artist

Laura Roy (Nova Scotia)

What the Mirror Doesn't See, Coping with Chronic Illness, Part 1 - 2014-2016, 2014-2016
cotton floss on stretched unbleached cotton
96.5 x 71.1 cm
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Stead (New Brunswick)

A Forest, 2015
charcoal on Stonehenge paper
127 x 127 cm
Collection of the artist

Gina Etra Stick (Nova Scotia)

Vase with Flower Medallions, 2017
press-molded Jingdezhen porcelain, gucai overglaze, 24k Roman and German gold
37 x 10 x 10 cm
Collection of the artist, photography by Marvin Moore

Alan Syliboy (Mi'kmaq/Nova Scotia)

Brain with Headdress, 2018
steel, glass, acrylic, and birch
121.9 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the artist

James Wilson (New Brunswick)

Minister's Face, Kennebecasis River, New Brunswick, 2014,
photographic print on archival paper
71 x 152.5 cm
Collection of the artist