

Video Transcripts

# **BMO 1st ART! 2021**

**Celebrating Canada's New Artists**

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**Art  
Museum**

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## Anna Kuelken – NSCAD University

[Titlecard: How do you feel the materials and medium you chose connect to you personally?  
How do your personal experiences inform your decisions in medium or materials?]

They say write what you know.

[Hand pets a cow. Cut to a child crying into her father's arms]

The farm is what I know best.  
This is where my storytelling begins.

[The child helps remove fat from an animal]

I wanted to show how I experience being at home. How my niece and nephew connect to their environment. How my dad and brother work together. And a death of an animal.

[A fully skinned animal hangs in front of a red barn]

I didn't want to show things as its whole, but in the stillness of it all. Documentaries tend to be talking heads, but this is a portrait of life on a small family farm. Only touching on much broader subjects through individuals. This documentary is an extension of me.

## Kev Liang – University of Alberta

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

It all started off originally through video, where I began this idea of continuing an archive of video recordings involving myself interacting with different non-blood related individuals through various activities ranging from mundane to exciting; and thinking about my search for kinship as a homosexual or queer body, and perhaps my inability to do so through such short term and ephemeral companionships. Capturing special moments from all this footage, a photo sequence was created to communicate this sense of loneliness and the concept of kin or family being at stake for me.

I eventually had the opportunity to contextualize this work through installation, and the blue tarps really inspired me as I originally saw an industrial quality to the material that, for me, reflected ideas of the blue collar workforce and labour focused reality that we are in. Which is a constant anxiety inducing reminder for me, to find wealth, success, and a sense of prosperity as a second-generation Chinese Canadian. Working more with the tarps conceptually, I also grew to understand that the tarps were a material to establish and claim a space. Whether it is a safe space for myself and others to interact and build kinship, or a space for self-reflection.

Later on, I tied everything together by imprinting my grasp of my diasporic identity onto the tarps in the form of Chinese design motifs derived from Chinatown structures. Other printed materials such as the bamboo chopsticks had documentation of performative processes involving the digestion of rice lasercut onto them, in a scroll formation. And its own packaging, with the concept title and important subtext printed were created.

## shannon pahladsingh – University of the Fraser Valley

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

[Artist sits in front of desk, gently lit by the open window]

Hi, my name is Shannon Pahladisingh and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I am a queer and non-binary artist joining you from the beautiful and currently rainy territory of the Stó:lō people.

My spoken word poem *oh, thank goodness* actually began as a political science essay and then morphed into a narrative short story, and then a philosophy essay on feminism before it finally took the form of a poem.

I've been writing poetry ever since I was young, but I never felt comfortable publishing, or much less performing my works because I didn't feel like it "fit" the standards of poetry that I was learning in school.

After I found a community of poets who are Indigenous, Black and people of colour (BIPOC) I realized that I never "fit" into the standards I was learning in school because the poetry I was reading was meant for a white audience. So when I was writing *oh, thank goodness* I made sure to intentionally centre an IBPOC audience. This poem completely does not centre a white audience.

Something I learned from the spoken word poetry movement, led by IBPOC, is what it means to give voice to your experiences without leaving space for the viewer to interpret, but rather leaving space for the viewer to empathize. With written word poetry, or even visual arts, there's always space left for the viewer to interpret what you're saying, or trying to say, with your piece. But since my poem is about my lived experience with covert racism, I wanted to use a medium that would be wholly and completely mine.

## Tayler Buss – University of Manitoba

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

[Artist sits in front of camera with a plain white wall behind]

I began by choosing the objects I wanted to use in the sculpture, and I knew I wanted to use blonde hair so I started thinking about other physical objects that I could put the sculpture together with, that also added another visual layer and conceptual layer to the piece.

Once I had my objects figured out and my materials, I then started thinking about ways of putting the piece together physically, and how it was going to sit in the gallery itself. And that took a lot of trial and error. But eventually I kind of landed on the idea that I wanted the piece to act as a towel rack and a curtain in the same piece.

And then once the form was figured out, I started thinking about the conceptual layer of the piece. So, asking what these objects mean to me, but also what they represent in society and the stories that they tell. And there's a lot of different elements in the piece, and very different objects that don't look similar at first glance, so I had to make sure they were all interconnected together to make one cohesive piece and conceptual idea.

## Alana Morouney – Mount Allison University

[Titlecard: How do you feel the materials and medium you chose connect to you personally? How do your personal experiences inform your decisions in medium or materials?]

I make things for lots of reasons, and one of them is that it's nice to space out and let my mind wander. You can do this when you're washing the dishes or driving home from work, but working in the studio let's me do it in a playful way. The body movements in weaving, knitting, sewing and needle felting are very repetitive. So my hands stay busy, while the bright colours and the feel of it on my skin suddenly redirect my thoughts and help me let go of any frustration and anger from the day that I've been holding.

When I'm problem solving creatively in the studio, it's easier to bring that creative thinking into other parts of my life. So when I'm working through times of stress and conflict, I'm able to sit at my desk, relax my body, loosen my grip on anger. This helps me shift where I can find new solutions to problems that don't carry residual anxiety or resentment. Textiles bring play and meditation in my life, and I think it brings some of that playfulness when it goes out into the world to be seen and touched by other people. It's hard to resist touching the sleeve of a friend's soft sweater. And that pull of the hand to touch and to feel is something I like to bring into my art.

## Bethany Mackenzie – Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland

[Titlecard: How do you feel the materials and medium you chose connect to you personally? How do your personal experiences inform your decisions in medium or materials?]

When I was young, I went through the phase that many girls do when they start to confront their relationship with the patriarchy and their gender.

I started to reject the things I perceived to be feminine, thinking that I was being revolutionary in my disdain for skirts, makeup and the colour pink. My ten year old self didn't have the tools to be critical of this line of thinking, and it wasn't until many years later that I realized that this was another manifestation of the patriarchy affecting my perception of what femininity was. I should have never been disgusted with the feminine and masculine aspects of myself, or made to feel uncomfortable in identifying with them.

Looking back now, the rejection I practiced when I was ten was oddly centred around the material aspects of gender and what it physically looked like – how I changed or didn't change myself to fit into this definition. I believe my practice still grapples with this reality. My material explorations aim to question how I see and feel towards certain subjects. Why does this material make me feel uncomfortable? Or how do these things make me feel in relationship to my body? How much of the perception of these subjects has been shaped by not only my personal experiences, but the culture I had grown up in?



## Max TS. Yang – NSCAD University

[Titlecard: How do you feel the materials and medium you chose connect to you personally? How do your personal experiences inform your decisions in medium or materials?]

Clay has a very special place in my heart. I was trained as a potter from the beginning of my artistic journey. Even though now I'm making less functional works, pottery-making still influences me in seeing and expressing the worlds around me.

In the work *A Family of Ill*, clay, and, in turn, ceramic, plays a big role in situating myself into the narrative I want to illustrate. The ceramic chains in the work are the only fabricated component by me, and I see it as a form of self-portrait. The intricate design on each chain loop; the multiplication from one single form into hundreds; and the labouring process of constructing a solid structure using inherently flexible components represent me as a person, a maker, and an artist. Additionally, the fragile yet enduring qualities of ceramic further strengthen the narrative in depicting a child's role in divorce: a powerless position which cannot determine the outcome, yet an unbreakable bond of blood holds what is broken, together.

Although I do not express my creative freedom through the primary material I work with, clay functions as a nucleation site that I can ground my imaginations into realities. I am able to infuse narratives and artistic expressions into my work through this process of condensation.

## Erin Faulks – Nunavut Arctic College

[Titlecard: Has going through a global pandemic impacted the way you approach or view your art practice?]

Creating art throughout the Covid pandemic has completely changed the ways in which I am inspired, my material choices, the subject matter of my projects and the way I am able to present and share what I produce.

Pre-pandemic, my art was much more interactive. Creating with clay, wood, bone, fur and fabrics, resin and flowers, my creations were much softer, natural and tactile. It had movement, multiple dimensions and materials that appealed to more senses. Being at exhibitions, shows and sales allowed customers to touch, feel, hear or smell something through each piece that triggered nostalgia or excitement. Watching them enjoy my odd art inspired me to push further artistic boundaries.

Since the pandemic has begun, my material selection has become harder, less malleable, smooth and reflective with glass, gemstone and semi-precious metals. Our new virtual existence prevents the audience from fully experiencing what I've meant for them to see, feel and take away from pieces I've made, as photographs can't express everything of myself that I've poured into a creation. But these isolated and impersonal months have caused inspiration to climb out of places I would have never noticed it hiding before. Beautiful things still find their way to dark times and help us through them.

## Allysha Jacque – York University

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

So for this painting, I had started off with the theme of identity. I wanted to delve into an exploration of my culture and how it has changed as I get exposed to a more Westernized way of living.

I grew up in a very small town in Newfoundland and Labrador known as Postville, which at the time, had maybe 250 people or so. While living there, I spent a lot of time out on the land just soaking up everything I could about my culture and way of life.

When I had gotten older, I eventually moved away to a larger town and then eventually Toronto, Ontario. Even though I was within the same country, it was a big culture shock to me. Something so simple as a large grocery store, or vending machine, was a newer experience for me compared to the tiny grocery stores I grew up with, along with eating off the land.

It inspired me to really try and convey the sense of interaction between both of these very different cultures, which was my biggest challenge. I remember I took a trip to Ottawa. I went downtown and I saw a scrawny little fox in the street. I wondered: "How in the world did you get all the way over here? How are you surviving?" We have many foxes where I grew up as well, but they lived off the land. To me, this was really a display on how it wasn't just me experiencing the force of Westernization, but my entire culture as well. Including the wildlife which is such a huge part of it.

## Donald Price – Holland College

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

My process for making this work was pretty simple. I drew a rough version of it, about eight inches large, just in my sketchbook. Then I scanned it into the computer and jazzed it up a bit. Tried on a few different colours, kind of figured out what I wanted the end product to look like. That wasn't super finished or anything.

And then after that, I projected it. The size which is about four feet by four feet onto the MDF board that it's made on. Trace that out really simple with just a pencil and then after that I went through. And I filled in all the painted parts with acrylic paint. Then after that I just did all the lines with Indian ink in a couple different brushes.

And then finally at the end I filled in a few things with pencil just little details and stuff like that. When it is all done, I just sprayed it down. Just hairspray to fix everything in place. And then probably the toughest part was trimming the ends of it out to match the shape of the image. I didn't have any power tools so I just use the utility knife so I was a bit of a headache but to get the job done in the end.

## Maggy Hamel-Metsos – Concordia University

[Titlecard: Has going through a global pandemic impacted the way you approach or view your art practice?]

It was directly inspired from the walks I was taking at the beginning of the pandemic. And although this is the origin of the work, I don't think this is the only reading. Now when I look at it, I see many different things.

But one thing that I noticed were houses' windows and how the curtains were sealing off these entry points. Just like our breath was sealed. Just like our bodies were sealed. And so the curtains became very interesting and not only that but seeing the back of the curtains gave me an indication of where my body was in space.

So it meant that I was outside and it meant that I was in the position of vulnerability being on the streets. Although it can be the opposite, other cases, such as in the theatre when you see the back of the curtain, you are in a position of security. In the front, you're in a position of vulnerability.

So it became about perception but also I think that the pandemic revealed how bodies in the political landscape and endurance itself have different accessibility, mobility, and power depending on where they are situated, what is their standing point and so the curtain sort of became a metaphor for that. Not what are you looking at but what are you looking at that from.

## Holly Aubichon – University of Regina

[Titlecard: Can you briefly describe the process in making this work?]

Healing and reconnecting is a significant part of my process and specifically for modern medicine because this painting represents such a powerful turn in my life and in my dad's life and in my brothers lives for many reasons and there are many narratives displayed in this piece because these relationships that I have and I am trying to understand in my life and my upbringing in us all growing up together has been heavily influenced by intergenerational trauma.

And so this painting and the conversations had to encapsulate this idea of consolidating my shared familiar experiences. But I've made sure not to withhold the impact of the way that my family members have shared their experiences of situations that have maybe hurt me more or I retained in a different way or interpreted differently.

And I want in the process I wanted to make sure that that sense of tension or sense of separation was there but maintaining in this very home family gathered space doing a very family based activity.

## Juliet Di Carlo - Yukon School of Visual Arts

[Titlecard: How do you feel the materials and medium you chose connect to you personally? How do your personal experiences inform your decisions in medium or materials?]

[Digital collage of artist typing furiously into a laptop, within the laptop screen is the artist reading out their statement]

My main materials are virtual images and intangible experiences. I use them because I find the distinction between my real life and my digital experiences are becoming more and more blurred.

I've grown up being heavily influenced by digital content and spaces. Using social media, I have projected idealized versions of myself. There is an obvious line between my self exploitation and me being exploited by multinational corporations.

In a consumer way that makes it look authentic. I used publicly available code and deepfakes.com to create deep fakes of my own face superimposed on the bodies of other people. Deep fakes got their start in porn. People would superimpose the faces of celebrities on to someone else having sex.

Even today most deep fakes are used in porn for malicious nonconsensual purposes. In this piece I'm using deepfakes to project my issues around consumption onto Mukbangs. Mukbangs are videos of people eating large amounts of food.

Although they originated in Korea, they have become extremely popular in North America. I think Mukbangs are catching on because people are looking for a digital substitute for the connection they used to get when they would come together to share a meal.

With their intense overconsumption and false cheerfulness, Mukbangs act as a metaphor for the roles tech corporations seem to want us to play. When there's so much pressure to consume. Can it ever be authentic?

Art Museum  
University of Toronto

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