Art that Inspires

ISOLATION ART: RESPONSES TO COVID-19

Detail from Search to Release by Meghan Noonan
This exhibition is a showcase of artifacts created by Faculty of Education students, staff and faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The *Isolation Art* exhibition includes pieces created to respond to the personal, local and global impact of the pandemic, keep busy, provide a distraction and/ or make meaning, find beauty and cope during difficult times.

Lindsay Brant
Megan Brasz
Youtong Fang
Jessica Kim
Kate Malenfant-McNeice
Lindsay Morcom
Alyssa Nascimento
Meghan Noonan
Amie Pilgrim
Liv Rondeau
Lindsay Brant

Untitled

Paint on Hide Drum

My name is Lindsay Brant and my Mohawk name is Kawennenha:wi which means she carries the words. The 2020 isolation period due to the Covid-19 pandemic has inspired me to reconnect with all my relations.
Lindsay Brant

*It’s not equality we seek, but oneness.*

I have been reflecting on the state of the world, the nature of the human spirit, and my connection to both physical and spiritual realms. I have spent much time writing and creating visual arts through painting and photography to accompany my words.

“It's not equality we seek, but oneness.

We are one in our own experience. We need to respect that each of us is unique. As beings of Creation, we all matter, and not one of us gets to decide how we matter or why. It's not about us. It never has been. We aren't the ones that get to make that judgement.”

— Lindsay Marie Brant
It is through these deeply reflective moments of peace-seeking and meaning-making that this art has arisen. It has been like beautiful medicine for my soul and has uplifted and moved me in ways that I couldn't possibly even begin to describe.
A Rich Mind Swims was created in response to the impact of COVID-19 and the emotions that it has inflicted on the minds of many. Over the course of isolation many, including myself, have been experiencing a widespread inability to process and express their emotions in a healthy fashion. This metaphoric suffocation of unprocessed emotion thus became the inspiration and focus of the piece. The act of creation forced deeper personal exploration of feelings I had lacked to consider or altogether ignored in response to the unfamiliar situation. The opportunity to create rekindled a passion for art that I had forgotten in the routine of surviving and in turn opened my eyes to the importance and possibility of hope for the future, inspiring the title A Rich Mind Swims, as it not only highlights the importance of passion in times of need but juxtaposes the anguish represented within the piece.
On May 29th, my best friend gave me a surprise that she came to Kingston to visit me without telling me in advance. She lives in Toronto, so we have not seen each other since March due to Covid-19. It has been three months. I happened to want to create something in the morning on May 29th, so went to Instagram for some inspiration. I was inspired by 5xSnailStudio and finally drew this view: wild sky and sea, soft-colored flowers in some recycle bottles, which makes me feel peaceful and clam. Then at about 9 p.m. my bestie called me, telling me that she was on the way to Kingston. I was so surprised and happy! While waiting for her arrival, I decided to name this art – “Maybe It’s Fate”.
The collage is inspired by the current situation that began with the outbreak of COVID-19. The whole world has turned upside down as this pandemic influences the daily lives of people all around the globe. I was not the exception, and a lot of things indeed have impacted my own life as well. By creating the collage with the elements that are placed all over the paper, I wanted to express how I feel nowadays; Chaos.

The visual elements used on the collage represent the various thoughts and feelings that continue to visit me these days. These all worked together to create unity and deliver the message of the seriousness of COVID-19. I flipped the picture of a city and placed it on the bottom of the collage, as I feel like standing on the upside-down village even though I am still living in the same place. The dreamlike colours on this picture make it feel like a virtual world that is long gone in the past before the pandemic. (continued next slide)
Many changes occurred unexpectedly after the WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic. I often feel discouraged as I hear the news of people dying every day. The silhouetted figure in the centre of the collage thus represents the depressed self. I chose to use the colour black to depict the sadness and hopelessness of the current situation. The figure is reminding herself of the things that will help prevent the spread of the virus. These illustrations were purposely torn off with hands to create the irregularly shaped outline of thought bubbles. Each of them communicates that we should avoid contacting those who are showing symptoms such as fever and coughing, wash hands thoroughly, cover mouth when coughing, wear masks when visiting hospitals, and not to touch the face with unclean hands.

There is also a section for the thankful people who are trying their best to save people’s lives. I gave them a thumbs-up through the famous Korean figures on behalf of myself. This is also the time that we all should take care of mental health. As I stayed home all day long for the last few weeks, I realized that I am spending most of my time on computers and social media. I don’t blame that it is bad, but I found it more helpful to have a healthier routine to cope with the situation by eating healthy food and exercising regularly. I feel less depressed, and now, I hope to feel better to live through this time.
Kate Malenfant-McNeice

Parent’s Home
Cyanotype 12.7cm x 17.78 cm
5” x 7”

*Parent’s Home* is created as a method to bring myself back to a creative practice after a period of loss of access to previous facilities and opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By using a medium that is new, cyanotype, and stems from my unfinished experience working with silk screen, I am allowing myself to create without the print studio, or my paint studio that I cannot recreate at my parent’s home this summer. This allowance is the start of returning to my practice, and exercises my creative brain, and the skills I use in my art making that is not directly painting onto canvas or pulling ink through my screen. Sitting in the grass waiting for the sun to expose my acrylic drawing opened the door to making a makeshift studio in the backyard, where I am now planning to put up a small easel to paint.
Lindsay Morcom

Nimise (‘My Older Sister’)
Glass seed beads; Nylon thread; created using a bead loom

During isolation, beadwork has been a way that I have found time to concentrate, reflected on my relationships and my loved ones, and processed some of the events of the past few months. Most of the pieces that I make are for friends and family members. Making things for people, bead by bead, slowly over time gives me a change to reflect on the important people in my life in a loving way. Our teachings tell us that this type of art is sacred, and because others will carry it, it is important to put good thoughts and kind feelings into it.

My first piece, a hairclip, is entitled nimise. Nimise means ‘my older sister’ in Anishinaabemowin. I created this piece for my sister, and its style reminds me of her. My sister is a beautiful woman, the kind of woman that everyone notices when she enters a room. And yet she never puts on airs. She is amazingly humble and tends not to show herself off. When I asked her what I could make for her, she requested something fairly simple. So, I created something for her that was intricate, delicate, and humble yet beautiful, just like her.
Glass seed beads; fishing line. Created in Brick Stitch.

My second piece is entitled *Niijikwe*. It is a set of matching butterfly pendants. They are similar, and yet each is unique in shape and colour. I created one for an old friend, and one for myself. A gift of this pandemic has been time to really sit and consider who matters in my life, and to reconnect with old friends now that distance seems less of a barrier. One pendant is for an old friend from graduate school who I am grateful to have spent time with in the last months through Zoom. We had a group of friends during our doctorates who were supportive and loving, and we have all reconnected in various ways. These pendants remind me that while we have grown and our lives have taken different courses, we are still connected to one another. It has been a gift to get the time to reflect on that.
My third piece is entitled *Giganawendininim*, 'we take care of each other'. Pride and National Indigenous People's Day were both overshadowed by the pandemic this year, and yet at the same time a conversation has grown out of tragedy surrounding the realities of inequality in our country and our world. This piece reminds me that we need to think intersectionally about rights and equality. We need to care for each other, and realize that dismantling systems of oppression frees us all.
I had the joy to see Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night* during a trip to New York some years ago. My time in isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic heightened my focus on my hobbies of knitting and embroidery. The legal restrictions made me realize my next opportunity to travel might be very far away, but in the meantime, I can relive my past journeys. I bought a postcard of *Starry Night* from the Museum of Modern Art gift shop and I have never grown tired of looking at the image. I have attempted replicating van Gogh’s masterpiece in various mediums, but I never had the ample sitting time required of embroidery until the pandemic. In a way, I used the time to forget the worries and fear everywhere I looked and could simply focus on my work.
Meghan Noonan  
*Search to Release I*

Acrylic Paint on Canvas  
20” x 20”

Meghan Noonan (b.1996) is a self-taught artist living in Toronto, Canada. Meghan describes herself as an intuitive artist, whose main style of painting is abstract expressionist. Meghan’s interest in painting sparked during her second year of university when she felt her worldview changing. During this time, the process of creative painting provided her with the space to practice healing and self-love. She came to learn that creating represented a passage for her to enter the now and connect with her deepest emotions and let them flow.

“I truly believe that art has the power to connect us all to what it means to be human, it touches the parts of us that cannot be reached with words”. Her goal as an artist is to create pieces that promote the importance of engaging in self-compassion, creativity, and acceptance.
Meghan Noonan
*Search to Release II*

Acrylic Paint on Canvas
20” x 20”

Meghan paints for the joy of the creative process; it is her emotional outlet and place of peace. For Meghan, the process of painting is very free flowing and unattached to an end goal. Meghan feels she has succeeded when her paintings make her viewers feel something deep within. Meghan’s art has been displayed on various sized canvases and prints with rich acrylic colours and has been shown in multiple art exhibitions within her local community. She hopes that you will find something of your own in her paintings!
Meghan Noonan
Two Worlds Meeting

Acrylic Paint on Canvas
25” x 30”

Short Description of Creative Process:

Each of my pieces represents a deep journey within the self, they are representations of my vulnerability and exploration to dive deeper into my feelings during these times. These abstract pieces are connected to the idea of exploration and seeking our deepest desires and emotions. I truly believe that when human beings have the ability and time to be vulnerable and self-reflective with their emotions and desires, they are more likely to accept what is happening in front of them and be eager to make the drastic change that is needed in their lives to live to the fullest. I hope my art offers you some light during these unprecedented times and speaks to the truth that humans are resilient and powerful beyond measure.
Though I have walked this path many times before, this time after over two months of not going out felt lonely yet peaceful and refreshing at the same time. It was far from busy, but I had a small family slowly walking behind me “pushing me” to keep going and another couple that passed along this spot. The couple and I ventured off the path to create distance... a new concept that seems so far from our human instincts.
Nestled between homes in suburbia, I continued along this path. Though I knew where I was heading, I thought about how mysterious this space looked, and how one may hesitate these days to explore it unsure of space and surroundings and where it may lead.
After months of not really going out, I picked up my camera hopeful to find some beauty I had only read about for weeks. Such a quiet walk on a trail that would usually be buzzing, I found the spring blossoms drawing me in. I literally stopped to smell the flowers and take in the beauty that I had been missing.
Forms of beadwork have existed since time immemorial. Beadwork holds traditional and distinct cultural teachings from Nation to Nation.
Beadwork has and continues to be significant in representing Indigenous resiliency and has changed and in some instances, become ‘modernized’ over time. You can see this reflected in my beadwork with the use of seed beads, cabochons, and especially the Baby Yoda earrings.
Olivia Rondeau
*Pride Earring*

I was taught how to bead by my Grandmother. She taught me to always bead with a good mind and a happy heart. This means putting positive energy and thoughts into everything you create. This has really helped me through COVID-19 as it has encouraged me to carry positive energy and has helped keep me grounded and connected to my culture.