



Body and Water

Paxsi
Jaime Black
Hannah Claus
Lindsay Dawn Dobbin

CURATED BY
Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective





Body and Water

ARTISTS

Paxsi, Jaime Black, Hannah Claus,
Lindsay Dawn Dobbin

CURATORS

Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective

EXHIBITION

3 September – 2 October, 2021

EXHIBITION ESSAY

Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective

CATALOGUE DESIGN

KeikoCreative

PRINTER

Hall Printing, 2021 (Canada)

ISBN#

978-1-7774428-4-2

Cover Image

Transitory Fish, 2021, Lindsay Dawn Dobbin
Performance, Bay of Fundy

OXYGEN ART CENTRE

Based in Nelson BC, Oxygen Art Centre is a rural artist-run centre that provides space and programming for artists and the public to engage in the creation, study, exhibition, and performance of contemporary art. Founded in 2002, Oxygen is an integral and long-standing cultural hub for artists of all disciplines. Oxygen's annual programming includes an Exhibition & Residency program and Education program, as well as events, presentations, readings, and workshops.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS + GRATITUDE

Oxygen Art Centre acknowledges with gratitude that we are located on the tum xula7xw/ traditional territory of the sriʔay̓ckstx/the Sinixt People. As uninvited guests we honour their ongoing presence on this land. We recognize that the Sinixt Arrow Lakes, Sylix, and Yaqaṇ Nukij Lower Kootenay Band peoples are also connected with this land, as are Métis and many diverse Indigenous persons.

We are grateful for the financial support we receive from Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, BC Gaming, Province of BC, Government of Canada, Vancouver Foundation, Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, Columbia Basin Trust, United Way, Osprey Community Foundation, Nelson Lions Club, and Nelson and District Credit Union.

We offer thanks to Elephant Mountain Literary Festival and other key partners including Hall Printing, Speedpro Signs, and Selkirk College for their support.

We especially thank all of our volunteers, donors, and members.



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ARTIST STATEMENTS

We used to skip rocks together. Whenever we went out, you wore your big brown hiking boots, a denim button-up, a t-shirt from the local marathon, and those khaki zip-off short-pants with four giant pockets down the sides. Your hair was always long, kept in a neat braid that Mumma made after your shower, and usually topped with a khaki bucket hat (before they were cool). We would crouch down by the edge of the water, and we would pick and pick and pick and pick, sifting through piles and piles of rocks in search of the good ones, digging into the sand to see if this one or that one might be better. You taught me that the perfect skipping rock is smooth, thin, flat, and fits neatly in the palm of your hand. After finding one, I'd watch you stand, stick your tongue out (you always do this when you're focusing), draw back your arm, and send that perfect rock dancing across the water. One, two, five, six, ten skips! Year after year, you tried to teach me how to skip rocks, but I never got the hang of it. It always seemed like magic to me. After many tries and only one or two skips, I would usually end up frustrated that my body wouldn't do what your body did with ease. I've never been good at being bad, so instead, I made it my mission to focus on rock picking. I would pick and pick and pick and pick until I found all the rocks that I thought were the most special. Of course, if I came across a perfect skipping rock, I'd hand it over to you. Each rock I picked was unique: some were chosen because of their colour, some because they looked like animals or faces, some because of the way they transformed when they were wet. When it was time to go, I would carefully hand you my pile of rocks to keep safe in your zipper-pant pockets until we got home, where I could add them to my ever-growing rock collection. You would fill your pockets to the brim, and then, when not another pebble could fit, I would beg you to add just one more in the breast pocket of your button-up. You still tease me about it, taking every opportunity possible to complain about how much harder the walk home was with pockets overflowing with rocks. I know you miss the mountains; I know you miss home. I want you to know that I miss skipping rocks together, and I miss you, too.

— Paxsi

*Aymara-Welsh-Irish
Amiskwaciywâskahikan [Edmonton], AB*

all this was once covered in water is a closeup of river water on a sunny day with many sparkles on its surface; the water turns progressively bluer and darker, so that the sparkles become suggestive of stars or constellations in the night sky. The video is a reflection on the lower world of the waters and the upper world of the stars, as relates to their roles as guides in this world. It is also a reminder of interior worlds: where we came from and the connection to where we will return.

— Hannah Claus

Kanienkehá:ka-English
Tiohtià:ke [Montréal], QC

Over three hundred million years ago, the bodies of some fish began to transform, enabling them to walk on land. The bones in those earthbound fish fins resemble our human hands today. These are our distant ancestors, whose journey out of the water links our human bodies to the fluid world.

The Bay of Fundy, located on the Atlantic Ocean, has the highest tides in the world. Rhythmic waters erode the land basin that holds them, revealing the ancient past in mineral and fossil form. Here, remnants of tetrapods have been found—early animals lineaged from those transitory fishes—telling the story of our collective movement from ocean to land.

Transitory Fish is an honouring of our aquatic origins by following the continuity of body and water. Rhythmic and open gestures dissolve boundaries, revealing the malleability of flesh, the constancy of bone, the receptivity of water and the transmission of vibration. This performance is part of an ongoing Water Drumming practice, where I approach water as a responsive medium for the expression of rhythm and sound—allowing our relationship with water to speak.

When my body is touched by water, immersed in water, a resonance and transfer of information occurs. I feel the continuity of all relations and held in a space of reciprocity. I feel known in the unknown, and open to a journey of learning, transformation, emergence and return. As I witness water flow through my hand, I re-member our collective transcestors, who are in my present body and future bodies, following a tidal pulse as I touch life.

— Lindsay Dawn Dobbin

Kanien'kehá:ka-Acadian-Irish
Bay of Fundy, Wabanaki Territory

let me slip
between
worlds

the place we came from

liquid stars suspended
mercurial
shifting shapes loosening
into waves
the quickening of a current
moved by moon

— Jaime Black

Anishinaabe-Finnish
Winnipeg, MB

EXHIBITION ESSAY

A path to the water

Halie Finney with Becca Taylor

You're going to the water tonight.

Everything is purple and blue except for the pieces of bright orange that are being reflected in the water from the last bits of sun on the horizon. The air feels cool, soft, and still. Everything is still, except for you.

As you make your way down the pathways, the gravel road crunches from your footsteps and breaks up the silence.

Crunch

crunch

Crunch,

Crunch

Making it to the shore is a relief, these rocks dampen your sound a bit not invading the silence quite as harshly, it becomes less obvious that you're even here. If you are still you can disappear, blending in with the colours around you and sit as quietly as you like among the palm-sized stones as you watch the water slowly lap at them.

Slow breathing, the water is slowly breathing with you. You pick up a stone and hold it in your hand, it's flat and smooth and cold. You take a good look, these rocks are purple and blue too.

~

Looking out, you watch as the warm bits of sun turn to white stars, leisurely dancing on the water's surface, a memory of where it has been before. Reflecting histories and connecting worlds. The water is the link, cycling within the atmosphere linking us with exterior and interior worlds moving through interconnected time.

The water laps over in stillness reminiscent of a large blanket that extends into the sky covering you and inviting you deeper in. You carefully stand up from your spot and move closer to the edge. Crouching with one arm wrapped around your knees you extend the other arm out cautiously, dipping your fingers in and resting them amongst the wet stones.

~

When you hold hands with the river your fingers feel it first. Their grasp is cold and indifferent at the beginning but they slowly warm up to you. The tenseness in your hand begins to ease and it becomes easier to feel the small ebbs and flows of the waters grasp. Gentle caressing your fingers encourages them to open and dance along the current.

Have you wondered how the fish feel in the water? Do they experience the same sensations?

Ripples around your wrist encourage you to come in deeper. It doesn't feel cold anymore. You stay there a little longer, enjoying the warmth while your other hand holds you steady as you crouch.

Moving at your own pace. Slow strides to not make waves. Careful steps to avoid slipping on the rocks. Your hands are at your sides, fingers stretching toward the water. You watch as your ankles, and legs are slowly immersed. It's starting to get colder now. At just above mid-thigh your fingertips and the water are reunited.

~

Look at how tense you've become, curled toes, pink skin, your legs are now icy to the touch while your core is warm and soft. Take another step and relax your shoulders, take another step, loosen your stride, take another step, your arms move away from your body swaying in the water on their own.

The water is too cold but you came out here to swim. To move forward you must plunge your whole self into the water. Icy fingertips reach up to plug your nose, the other arm reaches across your abdomen and grips your side.

Suddenly this quiet night is holding its breath for you.

Silently counting down

one

two

thr!

A loudness, a shocking coldness, softly crashing, the water envelops you.

Sitting in the embrace allows everything to become temperate, the sounds settle and become deep and vast.

The air is now cooler than the water. So you stay cocooned. All of your skin is cold to the touch but you feel warm and comfortable moving through the water. Floating, dancing with the current, letting go allowing your body to be moved by water and moon.



Exhibition

Photography by
Thomas Nowaczynski, September 2021
unless otherwise noted



Transitory Fish, 2021, Lindsay Dobbin, Performance, Bay of Fundy





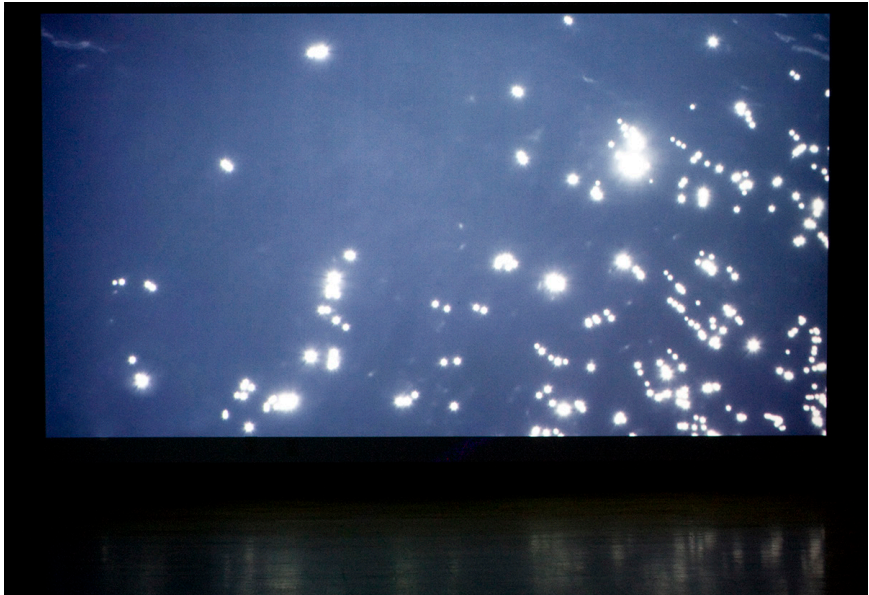
Transitory Fish, 2021, Lindsay Dobbin, Performance, Bay of Fundy





all this was once covered in water, 2017, Hannah Claus
looped video projection on wall (00:03:30) (Edition of 3)





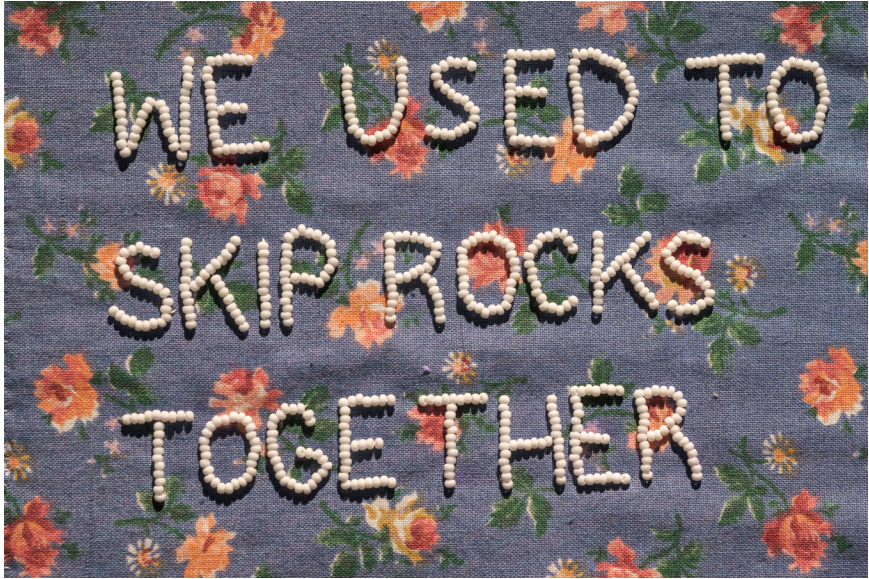
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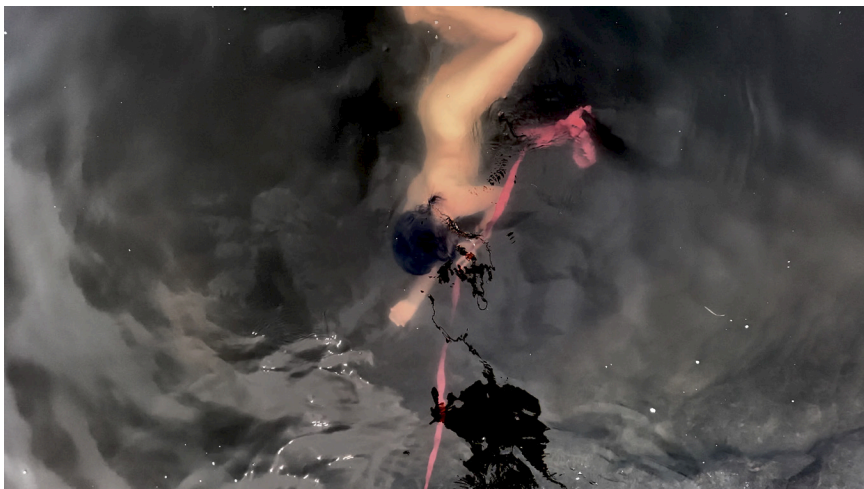
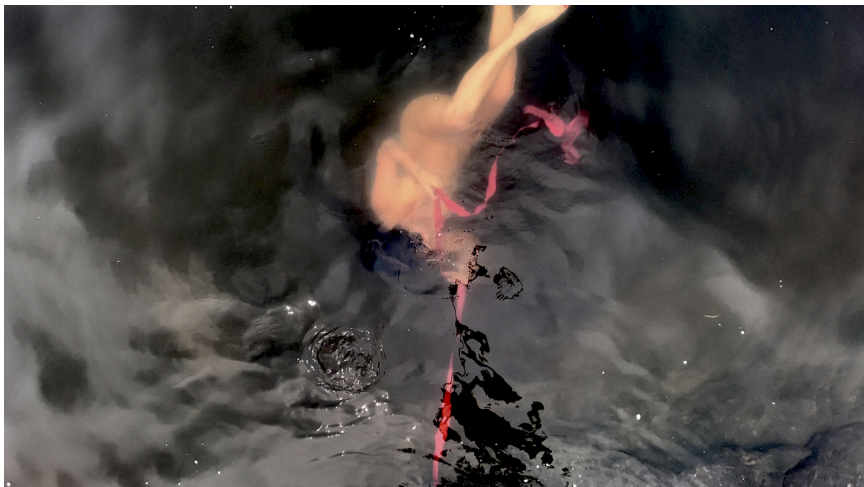
The Perfect Skipping Rock, 2021, Paxsi, Czech seed beads, fabric, chain, denim, felt



The Perfect Skipping Rock, 2021, Paxsi, Czech seed beads, fabric, chain, denim, felt



Bundle, 2021, Jaime Black performance still, digital photograph
photo credit: Niklas Konowal



Bundle, 2021, Jaime Black performance still, digital photograph
photo credit: Niklas Konowal

ARTIST + CURATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Paxsi (they/jupa) is a queer, disabled Aymara and Welsh-Irish multidisciplinary artist based in amiskwaciywâskahikan. Drawing inspiration from folk icons such as Buffy Sainte-Marie, Joni Mitchell, and Violeta Parra, Paxsi's songwriting echoes folk revival with an alternative twist. Alongside their career as an emerging singer-songwriter, they create energy-informed beadwork which embodies Indigiqueer celebration and resistance. Paxsi uses their art, music, and writing as a means of connection and self-discovery, holding space for both healing and celebration. They hope to share this tenderness and joy with others in all that they do. You can find their work and more on their Instagram, @paxsi___.

Jaime Black is a multidisciplinary artist of mixed Anishinaabe and Finnish descent who lives and works in Winnipeg. Black's practice engages in themes of memory, identity, place and resistance and is grounded in an understanding of the body and the land as sources of cultural and spiritual knowledge. Through her art practice, Black creates space and time to connect with and enter into a relationship with the land in which she works, creating images and impressions from a space of connection.

Hannah Claus is a Kanienkehá:ka and English visual artist who explores Onkwehonwe epistemologies as living transversal relationships in her transdisciplinary practice. A 2019 Eiteljorg fellow and 2020 Prix Giverny recipient, her installations have been included in exhibitions across Canada, including Àbadakone: Continuous Fire at the National Gallery of Canada in 2018, Des horizons d'attentes at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 2021, and Written on the Earth at the McIntosh Gallery in 2021. She is a board member of the Conseil des arts de Montréal and is a co-founder of daphne, a new Indigenous artist-run centre in Montreal. Claus is a member of Kenhtè:ke, next to the Bay of Quinte in Ontario. Having grown up away from her grandfather's community, she is privileged to live and work in Kanien'kehá:ka territory, in Tiohtià:ke [Montréal].

Lindsay Dawn Dobbin is a Kanien'kehá:ka - Acadian - Irish water protector, artist, musician, storyteller, curator and educator who lives and works in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of Lnu'k (Mi'kmaq). Dobbin's relational and place-responsive practice is a living process—following curiosity rather than form, the way of water, with the intent of understanding and kinship. As a human being with intersecting identities as well as personal and ancestral displacement and trauma, their practice honours direct experience as a way of coming to (un)know while listening for the shared beingness, health and resilience in meeting waters. Their transdisciplinary work in sound art, music, performance, sculpture, installation, social practices and writing places wonder, listening, collaboration, play and improvisation at the centre of creativity, and explores the connection between the environment and the body, engaging in a sensorial intimacy with the land and water. Dobbin aims to bring attention to the natural world as witness, teacher and collaborator in learning—making visible and audible our interdependence with the larger web of living beings and systems in which human life is embedded.

OCICIWAN CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTIVE

Based in the region of amiskwacîwâskahikan [Edmonton], Alberta, Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective supports the work of Indigenous contemporary artists and designers and engages in contemporary critical dialogue, valuing artistic collaboration and fostering awareness of Indigenous contemporary art practices.

www.ociciwan.ca







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