

Uncommon

"Here, we have a gathered pluralism that reveals the intricate textures of a community brought together by circumstance."

Anna Maria Carlevaris

The quote I have selected from Anna Maria Carlevaris is from the text "Primary Lesson" for *Le Collège comme lieu de création/The College as a space of creativity*, an exhibition of Dawson College Fine Arts instructors. The exhibition took place 10 years ago at Maison de la culture Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal and was curated by Julianna Joos, a faculty member of the Fine Arts Department. The exhibition investigated what the role of an artist/teacher is, and what the results of this practice are or can be. As a teacher, theories and techniques are studied and disseminated; as an artist, the space for the unique, and for breaking rules to arrive at an alternative point, reading or view are presented. The qualities of art are elusive, allowing teaching, learning and making to become intertwined and ongoing.

Many questions are raised about the value and meaning of art both in the classrooms and in the art works produced by the artists in this exhibition, yet not necessarily for answers. How can art reveal a delicate struggle between personal and public relationships? What is the beauty of chaos? These challenges are put forward both in the classroom and in the presentation of art. *Uncommon* is a collaboration that addresses these challenges and demonstrates how a diverse group of artists can create a dynamism that engages an expansive audience.

A dedication to art practice and pedagogy has remained a constant at Dawson College. There have been biennials of faculty work for the past 25 years, and student exhibitions at the end of the year, introducing opportunities to see and share works and ideas. These exhibitions, rather than creating a closure or ending, seem to spark further investigations. *Uncommon* at the John B. Aird Gallery is another example of this group's reflections on their identities as artists/educators; a combination that does not fit into a compact mold, but intersects to reveal the uncommon as part of our social network.

Natalie Olanick

"Another certainty is that art must be seen. Whatever their accomplishments and inclinations, at opportune times artists must show their works. The solitary self-mindedness of the studio space must give way to public display, to judgments and comparisons, whether deserved or not, pronounced by audiences of all kinds."

Anna Maria Carlevaris



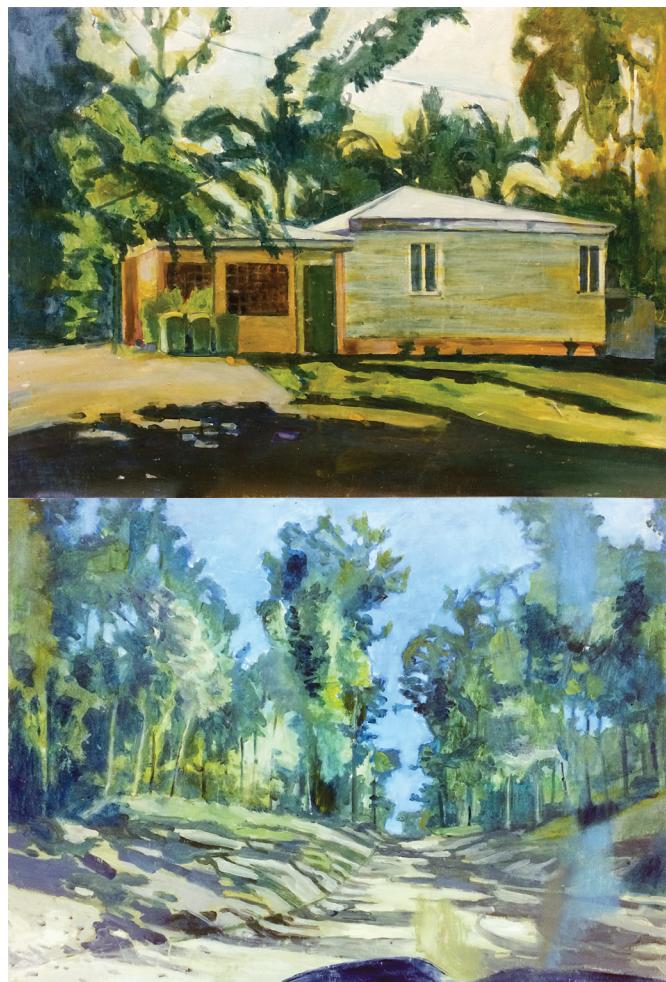
Top to bottom:

- 1) Faculty and Students at the Graduating Exhibition opening.
- 2) Opening at the Warren G. Flowers Gallery of Dawson College
- 3) Work by David Baumflek (centre), Kate Hutchinson (left), David Hall (right)
- 4) Work by Giuseppe Di Leo (left), Andres Manniste (right)

Do, Make, Write, Create

In a world where it is easy to be a bystander – observing social media one hand-scroll at a time, and having endless knowledge available at our fingertips – it is more important than ever to *do*, to make, to write, to create. The artists involved in the *Uncommon* exhibition at the John B. Aird Gallery are do-ers. We are practitioners and instructors. We make and we teach. By pursuing our own projects and enquiries, we are better able to serve our students, to answer questions based on personal experience, to demonstrate our own trials and errors with material and approach. By teaching, we expand our own knowledge by being around young energy and enthusiasm, ideas and investigations. It is a world that is as beneficial to the students as it is to the teachers. We learn, we teach, we experiment, we create. And the cycle continues. In this exhibition, there is Jacquard weaving and etching; acrylic or oil on canvas and plaster; charcoal, text, and digital images. Through close scrutiny of the sixteen works presented, four themes became evident: Nature; Memory; Making/
Experiencing; and Desire.

A number of artists in the exhibition explore the theme of **Nature** by honing in on the environment, plants, animals and landscapes. David Hall explores ships in expansive and awe-inspiring settings that denote the sublime. Amanda Beattie writes about artist Dana Velan's works, which tackle the



vastness of the universe and the macrocosm, while Julianna Joos focuses on the microcosm of a caterpillar transforming into a Monarch butterfly in a swamp milkweed that lives in her office. Harlan Johnson's oil paintings chronicle his travels through the landscapes of Queensland, Australia, with an interest in a figurative and faithful approach, while Lynn Millette's acrylic work focuses on an exploratory imagining of a landscape in distress that is closer to home; the route to the Mégantic tragedy.



It was the memory of Millette's family visit to the Mégantic site that was the inspiration for her large scale painting.

Memory can often serve as a catalyst for creation. Memory is present in Natalie Olanick's work through a relationship to her former self, as she revisits and responds to a work completed twenty years ago. The aesthetics of Antonietta Grassi's work are of geometrical abstraction, but the idea behind her formal exploration of colour and shape are based on memories of her childhood home and the process of dismantling that personal space after her parents' passed away. Naomi London uses sketches made by her late mother to create her sculptural works. There is a sense of nostalgia in her approach, honouring her mother. David Baumflek's work examines a false nostalgia in current US politics by focusing on found and altered images shown in a slide projection accompanied by spoken word and poetry.

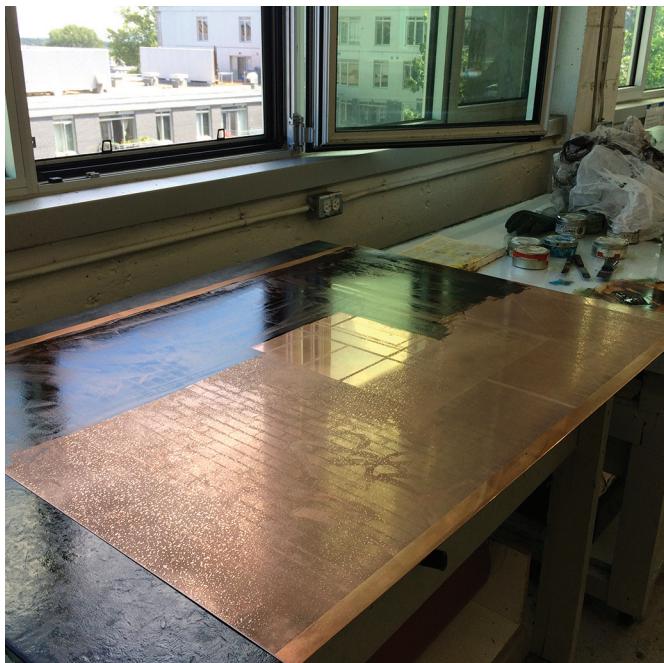
Baumflek's multi-disciplinary approach is common in the practice of many of the participating artists, and can be seen in some of the works that explore **Making and Experiencing**. For Lise-Hélène Larin, making is engulfed in computer systems where she tests new ways of creating sculpture as "mathematical objects" using her digital images and her 3D animation program. Similarly, Claude Arsenault works with a multidisciplinary approach as she combines printmaking with installation. For her, there is a physicality involved with manipulating the medium. Andres Manniste speaks to his

Bottom left:
Harlan Johnson
Noosa to Maryborough, 2016
Oil on panel, 30 x 148 cm

Top right:
Lynn Millette
Road Trip (Mégantic), 2016
Acrylic on canvas, 127 x 251 cm

ability to make his work both in and out of the studio thanks to the Internet, and is more interested in the experience of his work than the object itself.

Giuseppe Di Leo is interested in experience as it pertains to a ***Desire***, in this case, between music, drawing, voices and bodies. Di Leo's inspiration for his work initiated with an a cappella chant and culminated in a drawing that explores the relationship between colour, rhythmic lines, and two figures. Kristi Ropeleski introduces confusion between desire and illusion with hyper realistic paintings that leave the viewer feeling confused and intrigued at once. Our connection to objects is studied by Lorraine Simms as she blurs the lines between desire and detachment, with a wink to the traditions of *trompe l'oeil* and still life. Similarly, desire and a kind of fetishization of objects becomes complicated and layered in Joe Becker's work, as childhood icons and games, characters and trading cards, are bound together in an enjoyably incoherent surge of thoughts and colours. And finally, Frank Mulvey's work unravels the roots of desire by speaking to hope and inspiration.



Through myriad media, approaches, formal analyses and exploratory thoughts, these sixteen artists, writers, thinkers and teachers bring forth an array of topics for discussion and debate. We invite you to embark on the journey of this exhibition with all of your senses open to the experience.

Amanda Beattie



FRANK FITS IN SOMEWHERE

ANTONIETTA IS SENDING A NEW
PIECE





Acknowledgments

Participating artists:

Claude Arsenault, David Baumflek, Amanda Beattie, Joe Becker, Giuseppe Di Leo, David Hall, Antonietta Grassi, Harlan Johnson, Julianna Joos, Lise Hélène Larin, Naomi London, Andres Manniste, Lynn Millette, Frank Mulvey, Natalie Olanick, Kristi Ropeleski, Lorraine Simms

Gratitude and Thanks to:

Andrea Cole - Dean of Creative and Applied Arts
Diane Gauvin - Academic Dean
Dawson Teachers' Union

Extra thank you in the organisation of *Uncommon*:

Claude Arseneault
Carla Garnet
Frank Mulvey

Graphic Design:

Andres Manniste

August 7-31, 2018

An exhibition organised by Natalie Olanick for the Dawson College Fine Arts Department

John B. Aird Gallery
900 Bay St, Toronto, Ontario

© 2018
Dawson College
3040 Sherbrooke Street, West
Montreal, Quebec
H3Z 1A4

