

MHCGallery Re-opening September 17

In-person opening in two time periods at 7pm or 8:30pm, 35 guests max at each time: sign up at <https://forms.office.com/r/t7sDqGxSqE>

two exhibitions

September 17 to November 13

Growing, Going, Gone Karen Cornelius Tree Patricia Eschuk

We are very happy that MHCGallery will soon open again for exhibiting and viewing artworks. We will be following governmental and CMU health protocols. All are welcome to visit the gallery during regular hours, with masking and physical distancing; for public indoor events, we will require proof of vaccination. Artists' talk will be made available online.

Growing, Going, Gone memorializes the abrupt ending of the one-hundred-year-old tropical jungle at the Conservatory in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park. In this work I address the larger human experience of grief, sadness, and loss, and focus our attention on the continued destruction of trees and forests locally, nationally and internationally.

I experienced an idyllic childhood growing up in the tropical rainforest in the Congo, where I developed a strong connection to the jungle environment, although this magical childhood was interrupted by political instability.

My strong memories of lush jungle vegetation from my childhood made the Assiniboine Park Conservatory a happy place of peaceful renewal. Comprised of plants from many tropical regions, this conservatory reflected the diversity of the many people who have made Canada home and provided enjoyment for everyone.

Once I was made aware that it was going to be destroyed, I enacted a daily ritual of bequeathing a form of immortality to these magnificent plants. I sat for hours absorbing the energy of these living things, documenting and recording them in preparation for the inevitable emptiness and void that followed the final closing of the doors, locking me out on that final frigid April evening.

I made many drawings on paper and directly onto my copper plates while sitting on a bench in the Conservatory. I applied an experimental electro-etching process to alter both the negative and positive plates using electricity, water and sulphate.



Karen Cornelius, Leafy Canopy

The positive plate produces a nuanced, tonally rich commemorative image while the negative plate presents a slightly out of focus, dark, brooding alteration of the image, mirroring a sense of vulnerability, grief, and loss.

I marked and stained the rag paper with the life-juice of plants and integrated yellow and lilac Japanese paper, reflecting the colour of bruising. I allowed the positive plate to speak to what was and the negative plate to represent the destruction of the place, while I drew into the paper to express my emotional connection to the place as I processed the finality of loss.

Towards the end of the life of the Assiniboine Park Conservatory, many people came to say goodbye. As I was drawing, often someone joined me on the bench. Inevitably they would share a story of how much the Conservatory meant to them.

Older folks who had been coming to the Conservatory for years were now bringing their grandchildren to say goodbye. Young couples and older couples came to honour the silent jungle trees that had witnessed their marriages. A young mother-to-be came to share the sense of peace and tranquillity with her unborn child, and people who hail from tropical climates came to experience a moment of connection through memory and physical sensation.

During the last days, people left messages and small sticky notes. As the final closing drew near, the notes migrated into the jungle, gently secured to branches and tree trunks, bearing messages of memory, sadness, and longing – reminders of not only the demise of this micro ecosystem but also of the importance of protecting our local forests, national rain forest and international tropical jungles.

Karen Cornelius

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS: The MHC Gallery relies almost entirely on donations from gallery supporters who undergird operating and project budgets — from office and exhibit supplies to salaries and everything between. To help keep the gallery growing, see the ways to donate at the bottom of the following page.

Tree is not just a body of paintings; it's a journey, my journey, over the last three years. This exhibit shares my deep love and fascination with the natural world and paint. Using the natural world as a muse I explore my experience of life. The highs and lows. The beauty and ugliness. The joys and sorrows. The peace and the pain.

This journey began in the forest. This is typical for me as I have immersed myself and painted in the forest for many years. In the past, I focused more on the general landscape of the forest. More recently, I have begun searching for a way to push my work further and to find a more intimate connection with the trees. I gradually turned my attention to the trunks of individual trees. Painting on long narrow canvases, I focused on the textures and colours of the bark and its markings, and the moss and lichen that grew harmoniously on its surface. I noticed the different wound marks on the trunks and how the tree attempted to heal these wounds, a process that often resulted in beautiful scar patterns full of deep rich colours. Colours and shapes that I observed on the bark of the trunks also shifted and changed as the light and shadows changed with movement of the sun. The trunks became living, moving tapestries, sharing their life stories with me. I was entranced by the wordless connection created by these observations and translated them into a visual language of vibrant marks and colour.



Patricia Eschuk, Tangled Garden

Outside of this ethereal realm, I, like the rest of the world, attempted to navigate the confusion, fear, chaos, loss, and often painful life experiences of the current pandemic. Coping with these challenges often took me away from the studio. During these periods away from my easel I began to research other expressionist artists who turned to their inner worlds in search of truth when their outer worlds began to crumble. Reading about the experiences of these other artists inspired me to find and express a deeper connection with myself as I continued to use the natural world as a muse. The expressive visual vocabulary and conversation that had begun with the trees provided me with a springboard to again push my artistic practice deeper.

The "Purple Rain" series and the mural entitled "Passage" are a result of this recent pursuit. The organic shapes and marks within these works seem to be in the process of forming and dissolving. I feel they not only reflect the shifting and changing world within myself but the world around me. There is also an openness and airiness about them that surprised me, considering the continued chaos

of the world outside my studio door. This lightness within them, I think, reflects the hope and prayer that I carry for the salvation of our natural environments, and most especially for the trees that are dear to my heart. I hope that my sharing of this exploration with you will offer inspiration to continue to deepen your connection with the magic, beauty, and wonder of the natural world and yourself.

Patricia Eschuk

CELEBRATE WITH US: MHC Gallery annual Fundraisers are always wonderful events. This year will be no exception, because we will be **celebrating and honouring Ray Dirks**, gallery founder and curator for the Gallery's 23 years. Ray has retired, but his vision for the Gallery will continue. **Stay tuned for a date this fall.** Details to come.

NEXT: Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence², an exhibition first shown briefly at the WAG in 2019, was set to run at MHC Gallery in March of 2020, when everything had to shut down. We are pleased to be offering this exhibition, and are looking for 15 new artworks, **opening November 19.**

Call for Submissions: Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence². Submit up to a maximum of two artworks for consideration. Deadline October 31. INQUIRIES: Isabel at isabelcheer@gmail.com

Exhibitions

The gallery generally hosts six exhibition times per year — either one exhibition using both levels or, most often, different exhibitions on each level. Contact Selenna Wolfe at swolfe@cmu.ca for exhibition information.

Mailing list

To receive information on all upcoming exhibitions join our mailing list by contacting Selenna Wolfe at swolfe@cmu.ca or 204 487-3300, ext 344.

Thank you

To all who make donations, large and small, we thank you for helping this unique gallery continue to thrive and make a difference.

DONATIONS

The **MHC**Gallery is a program of Canadian Mennonite University. It is 100% funded, from hammers and nails to salaries, by donations. Your support is what keeps the gallery alive.

donation options:

- by cheques payable to Canadian Mennonite University, **MHC**Gallery on the memo line, mailed to 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2
- online at cmu.ca/donate (by credit or debit card) See drop down tab to designate the gallery.
- make a monthly commitment using the online portal or by contacting Selenna Wolfe at swolfe@cmu.ca or 204 487-3300, ext. 344
- bring a donation when you visit the gallery in person