

WINTER 2008



Spectacle + Artifice

January 31 to March 30

Spectacle + Artifice engages contemporary photo-based practice through the work of established and emerging Canadian artists Robyn Cumming (Toronto), Janieta Eyre (Toronto), Natascha Niederstrass (Montreal), Carlos & Jason Sanchez (Montreal), Reece Terris (Vancouver), and Elena Willis (Montreal). Once used for impartial documentation, today the camera is a tool of manipulation where truth and fiction mingle, where narrative structures are nuanced and reflected back through the aesthetics of performance. The exhibition

^ Carlos & Jason Sanchez, *Crematorium*, 2006
(inkjet print, 30" x 85")
Courtesy of Caren Golden Fine Art, New York.

features works by artists who engage new technologies, traditional photographic practice, and elaborate staging to achieve imagery that is for some outrageous and for others extraordinarily subtle.

Through the inclusion of multiple works by each artist, a dialogue is constructed within their individual practices and across the spectrum of their shared discipline. Although distinguished by content and aesthetics, these artists invoke spectacle (singularly impressive, unusual or disturbing events) and artifice (a clever trick or deception). Where their works intersect and diverge — what is literally depicted and what is perceived as real — is punctuated by what is explicitly captured by the artists' lens.

Robyn Cumming's hyper-real compositions are a foil for the quiet performance of her subjects, who are posed as on a proscenium stage, their actions muted by the busyness of pattern and colour. Cumming uses the curtain as a motif to shorten the performance space, effectively upending the depth afforded by her camera, to reinforce the construction of each image. The viewer is seduced by the high definition of the scene, mesmerized by the odd actions of its players, and stopped short by the bold artifice of Cumming's composition. Equally intoxicating are Janieta Eyre's seamlessly integrated double

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3]

Aggie Beynon Wabi: Imperfect Beauty

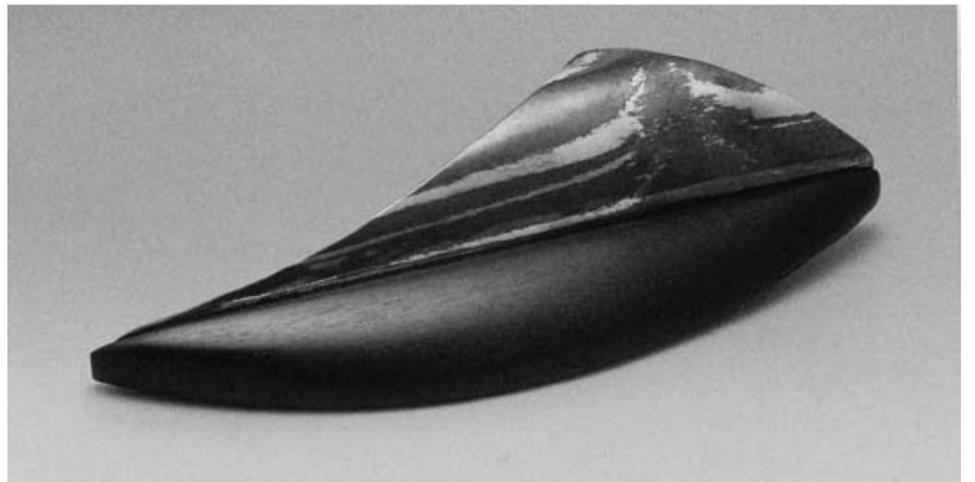
January 24 to July 20

Wabi-sabi is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is the beauty of things modest and humble. It is the beauty of things unconventional.

— Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi: For Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*

Wabi: Imperfect Beauty is a retrospective exhibition of metal and mixed media works by Waterloo artist and metalsmith, Aggie Beynon, RCA. It is a body of work that reveals the depth of Beynon's experimentation, innovation and achievements over the past 20 years. The exhibition features 51 jewelry pieces and vessels, including two *Perfume Bottles* from the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre's collection of contemporary Canadian works in metal.

Ann Roberts, in her catalogue essay, defines Wabi as "a word first used by Japanese Zen Buddhist tea masters, priests and monks whose practice emphasized direct, intuitive insight into transcendent truth beyond all intellectual conception." This ancient philosophy is embodied in Beynon's work: irregularity, simplicity, unaffectedness. Central to her practice is her technique of powder metallurgy through which she achieves a relationship between her materials and the rock formations that inspire their transformation. From powdered metal to



^ Aggie Beynon, *Untitled (Brooch)*, 1989
(polished powdered metal (pure silver, copper) and sterling silver formed to clasp carved ebony, Rokusho patina, 10.0 x 6.0 x 2.5 cm)
Collection of the Artist

jewelry or vessel, many of Beynon's pieces transcend functional object to sculptural form.

Aggie Beynon achieved a BA in English from the University of Waterloo (1975), a BFA in Design from the University of Kansas (1982), and developed a patentable metal process with Ken Rose, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Kansas (1980-84). In 1987, Beynon founded Harbinger Gallery Inc. in Waterloo where she is a leading figure in the growth and development of the arts community.

Wabi: Imperfect Beauty was curated by Suzanne Luke for The Robert Langen Art Gallery, Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo). The exhibition toured to the Anna Leonowens Gallery at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (Halifax) and the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta College of Art & Design (Calgary).

Artist Talk with Aggie Beynon followed immediately by a wine and cheese reception for *Wabi: Imperfect Beauty* Wednesday, January 30 at 7 PM

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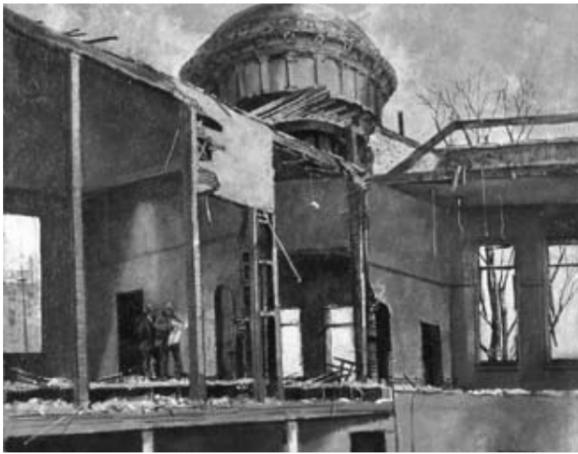
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Special Exhibition Preview

Evan Macdonald: A Painter's Life



^ Evan Macdonald, *The 1965 Demolition of the Guelph Public Library*, 1965 (oil on canvas), Gift of the Guelph Creative Arts Association, 1980, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection

The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre is pleased to collaborate with the Tom Thomson Art Gallery on a major retrospective exhibition in recognition of the career accomplishments of Guelph artist Evan Macdonald (1905–1972). *Evan Macdonald: A Painter's Life*, opens on Thursday, May 8 with a public reception, remaining on view to July 20. Trained in the British academic tradition, Macdonald was a prolific artist who produced countless oil sketches and preparatory drawings of landscapes, individual trees, buildings and streetscapes, the Guelph farmers' market, and patrons reading in the public library. His watercolours show a fresh palette and a master's hand with this difficult medium. He received an honorary degree from the University of Guelph in 1970, the first to be received by a Guelph resident.

Macdonald's daughter, Flora Spencer, spent many years researching, locating and documenting his art works, resulting in a perceptive and thoughtful essay about her father's art and life which will be published in the exhibition catalogue (Wilfrid Laurier University Press). The MSAC acknowledges The Guelph Community



Foundation's Musagetes Fund for their generous sponsorship of this project and for their commitment to supporting scholarship in Canadian visual arts.

Don't miss the concurrent exhibition featuring paintings by the Group of Seven selected from the MSAC/UG collections, including major works by Tom Thomson and Lawren Harris (opening May 8, 2008).

MSAC Receives \$75,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for HVAC Upgrade

Guelph's public art gallery has received a significant grant of \$75,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation towards the cost of replacing its heating, ventilating and cooling (HVAC) system. The MSAC will complete the new HVAC equipment installation in spring 2008.

In fall 2007, MSAC received \$235,000 from Cultural Spaces, Heritage Canada towards this project. With the total cost for replacing the HVAC system being \$580,000, the MSAC continues its fundraising activities.

The new system will benefit the collections of over 6,000 art works, covering three centuries of Canadian Art, by ensuring that correct museum-standard humidity and temperature levels are maintained in the building, to ensure the safety and longevity of this valuable community resource.



Canadian
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Silver Jewelry and Embroidery by the Naxi, Bai and Miao People of China

January 24 to July 20



^ Bai women sell objects of their cultural heritage at the farmer's market in Shaping.

In May 2007, MSAC director and curator Judith Nasby traveled to Chongqing, China to lecture on Canadian Inuit art as part of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute's first international symposium on Aboriginal art in China and Canada. The symposium was held in conjunction with the launch of the touring exhibition, titled *Aboriginal Works from Juxian, Jinshan and Qijiang/Contemporary Canadian Inuit Drawings*, a collaborative project by the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre and the Chongqing Art Museum. At the conclusion of the symposium, Nasby traveled in Yunnan and Gansu Provinces, collecting extraordinary examples of jewelry and embroidery by the

Naxi, Bai and Miao people and by Tibetan Buddhists. The sale of traditional hand-made silver jewelry and embroidered clothing, in favour of new machine-made articles, has resulted in the availability of objects of tremendous cultural and historic importance.

The Naxi have lived in concentrated communities in the Naxi Autonomous County of Lijiang, Yunnan Province, South West China for 1,000 years. Naxi society is largely matriarchic, and the women wear traditional dress in recognition of their roles and identity within the community. The exhibition features Naxi scripts inscribed with traditional Dongba pictographs, as well as embroidery

with dragon and phoenix imagery intended to bring luck to its wearer.

The Bai have lived in the rugged, but fertile, mountains of the Cangshan-Erhai Lake (Yunnan Province) for more than 4,000 years. Bai women are excellent embroiderers, combining innumerable stitching techniques with batik and tie-dye using cording, gold and silver bands, and three-dimensional appliqué. The Bai are known for heavily embroidered baby hats and carriers, called *guobei*, and remarkable silver necklaces depicting animals and anthropomorphic subjects.

The Miao live primarily in southern China, in the provinces of Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hainan, Guangdong, and Hubei, and can trace their ancestry to the twenty-fifth century B.C. Women's headdresses have special importance in Miao culture, and depict animistic decoration in accordance with traditional Miao religion.

The Labrang Monastery in Xiahe, Gansu Province, is the second largest Tibetan monastery in the world. It is an important pilgrimage site and centre for learning. Today, the monastery houses 1,700 monks. Buddhist liturgical vestments and regalia worn by pilgrims, that feature corral and brass beads, shells, amber, turquoise, cloisonné, and even silver coins, can be readily purchased in shops on the main street of Xiahe.

Brown Bag Lunch: exhibition curator Judith Nasby
Tuesday, February 26 at noon

Art Centre News

Our Team

MSAC acknowledges the contributions of our fall 2007 Collection Management Assistants Nicole Hewat and Karen Judge (Canadian Museums Association – Young Canada Works in Heritage Institutions). We wish Nicole and Karen well in their individual pursuits toward building careers in the field of visual arts. We thank our student employees (Ontario Work Study Program), interns, and volunteers who have gained valuable experience working with MSAC staff in all aspects of gallery operations through 2007/8: Jennifer Althouse, Brittany Anderson, Amy Calder, Josh Cleminson, Emily Drinkwater, Andrea Dziurma, Madison Erhardt, Brandon Frey, Seth Gerry, Katie Green, Michelle Lane, Emily Martel, Danielle McAllister, Lonnie McDonnell, Stella Melchiori, Elizabeth Meyer, Claire Mussar, Katie Reiffenstein, Sarah Scholes, Grace Scorrar, Katie Shoemaker, Kevin Wallace, and Lisa Whittaker.

Gardenscapes 2008

Planning is underway for this 16th annual self-guided tour of Guelph gardens, organized by the Art Centre Volunteers. Join us on Sunday, June 22 from noon to 5:30 PM to view 10 extraordinary properties cultivated by local gardeners. Complimentary refreshments will be served at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, where the gift shop and sculpture park are also open.



^ Martin Golland, *Hothouse*, 2006 (oil on canvas, detail)
Purchased with funds raised by the Art Centre Volunteers, and with financial support from the Canada Council for the Arts, 2006.

Gallery Shop/Art Sales & Rental

The Gallery Shop, managed by our dedicated Art Centre Volunteers, offers a wide selection of Inuit sculptures, as well as works by regional artists in pottery, raku, blown glass, wood and silver. Original art works in a variety of media are available for sale, or minimal rental costs. Proceeds from the Gallery Shop/Art Sales & Rental sponsor art acquisitions. (For more information about the Gallery Shop, call 519-837-3808.)

SPECTACLE + ARTIFICE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Natascha Niederstrass, *Broken, Part 1*, 2007 (video still).
Collection of the artist.



Elena Willis, *Sweet Dream II*, 2006 (digital C-print, 60" x 48").
Collection of the artist.



Reece Terris, *Bridge (Wooden Arch)*, 2006 (colour photograph, 26" x 33" framed).
Courtesy of Jennifer Kostuik Gallery, Vancouver.

self-portraits, symbol-laden views of domesticity that examine the phenomenology of siblings, notably twins. Despite the ready acceptability of the manipulated photograph, Eyre's silver prints are deceptively subtle. Her interiors are strewn with symbolic imagery inhabited by strange girls, immobile and often staring out of the frame at the viewer. The stillness of Eyre's compositions, and even the styling of her scenes, recalls early nineteenth century portraiture when each exposure took minutes to capture on film.

The still photograph is jolted to life in the work of Natascha Niederstrass. With a two-part installation of simultaneously looping videos, she conjures the double-image as a metaphor for solitude and absence. Like Eyre, Niederstrass performs in her own work; however, her aesthetic is restrained (even elegant) and her actions broken, accompanied by a cacophonous soundtrack. Performance is also at the core of Reece Terris' work. Terris challenges the perception and representation

of space through video, photographic documentation, and architectural models. What takes place in the fabrication of each image implicitly informs the finished works, a process that reveals the fallibility the photographic image.

In contrast to her contemporaries represented in the exhibition, Elena Willis completely immerses the viewer in a non-physical world and she doesn't attempt to convince that the space beyond her lens is real. The unsettling events that she depicts are completely severed from reality, yet we know and understand this space of black dreams, caught in a dim spotlight.

The meticulously constructed images of Carlos & Jason Sanchez so closely replicate a film noir aesthetic that the visual narrative compromises the (non) fictional thread. As viewers, we are afforded rare proximity to acute emotion: pain, elation, utter disquiet. The Sanchez brothers weave life with fiction in their portrait of *John Mark Karr* (2007). Karr confessed to the murder of six-

year-old Jon Benét Ramsey who was found dead in the basement of her family's home in Boulder, Colorado on December 26, 1996. However, DNA tests failed to place Karr at the scene of the crime. With their portrait of Karr, the Sanchez brothers are complicit in the story which has played out in the international press and consumed by the public as infotainment.

Spectacle + Artifice is curated by Dawn Owen.

Brown Bag Lunch: exhibition curator Dawn Owen
on curating and collecting photography
Tuesday, February 5 at noon

Artist Talk with Robyn Cumming
on her series *Little Legs*
Friday, February 8 at 1:30 PM

Exhibition Reception
Wednesday, February 13 at 7 PM

Drawn by Light: Collecting Photography

January 31 to March 30

The exhibition, *Drawn by Light: Collecting Photography*, features works selected from the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre's collection of contemporary photography, including many that are on public view for the first time. It is an opportunity to reveal important bodies of work that have been acquired for the permanent collection through purchases and donations, and offers a counterpoint to the concurrent exhibition *Spectacle + Artifice*. *Drawn by Light* focuses on traditional documentary approaches (such as the photo essay) and pre-digital techniques (such as photo-montage, collage or gum bichromate), in contrast to the highly directorial photo-based works featured in *Spectacle + Artifice*. These exhibitions ignite the debate between objectivity/subjectivity in the photographic image.

Andrea Modica (Manitou Springs, Colorado) celebrates the diversity of Native American peoples and challenges assumptions about their cultures in her photo-essay titled *Real Indians*, 2002 (a commission by the American Indian College Fund to photograph the people closely associated with the 32 tribal colleges for Native Americans in 12 western states). Twenty-five of Modica's silver prints are featured in *Drawn by Light*. The exhibition includes nine large silver print portraits of Inuit artists created by John Reeves (Toronto), a

leading documentarian of Canada's Arctic Inuit communities. Reeves created these photographs on visits to nine distinct Inuit communities between 1968 and 1998: Arctic Bay, Baker Lake, Cape Dorset, Chesterfield Inlet, Eskimo Point, Igloolik, Keewatin, Pelly Bay and Repulse Bay.

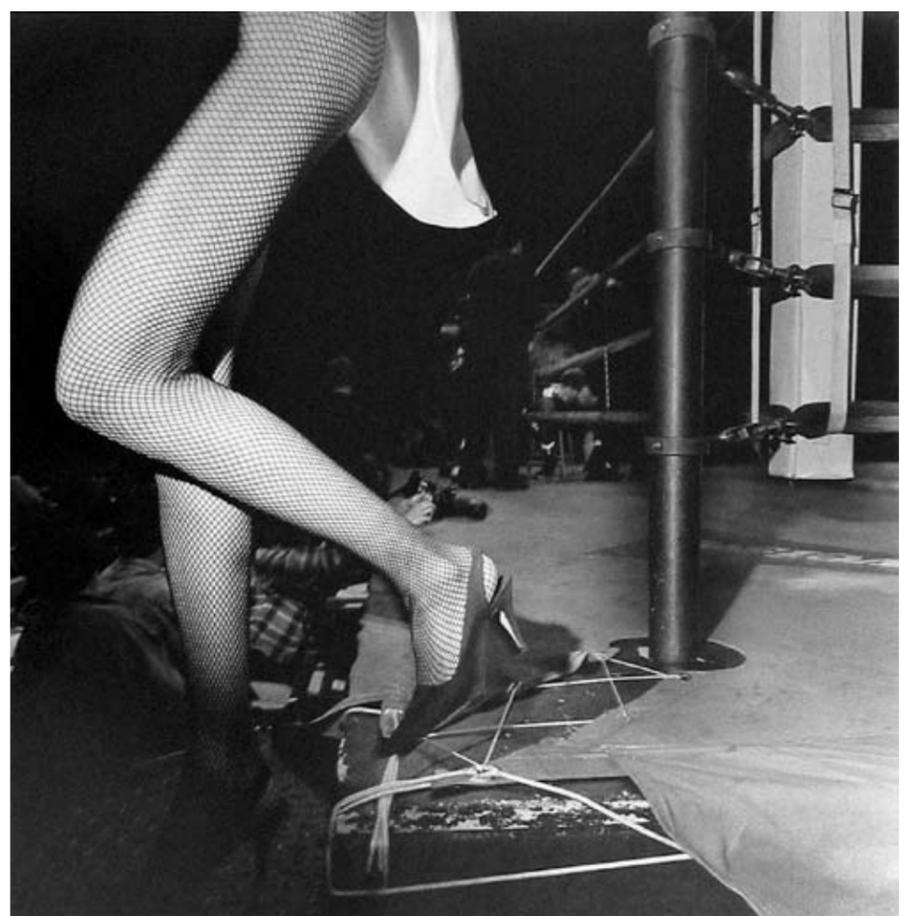
Ten silver prints selected from *The Boxing Portfolio* (1989-1996) by Larry Fink (New York), reveal the gritty reality of a sport consumed as entertainment. A practitioner of the 'snapshot aesthetic,' Fink uses the flash to terrific expressive potential, a technique that epitomizes, even values, the imperfect photograph. *Ring Girls, Madison Square Garden, NY*, May 1996 (pictured) acknowledges the archaic tradition of scantily-clad showgirls who announce each round during a fight. Fink's close proximity to his subject results in the awkward elongation of her legs, a gross distortion that underscores the brutish reality of the sport.

Three gum bichromate prints by Stephen Livick (London, Ontario) from his *Middle America* series employ visual literalism: pointed snapshots of middle class society. The complexity of Livick's medium stands in contrast to his subjects, who are photographed at home and in their local environments. Pre-digital photographic manipulation is explored in the collages of Sylvie Belanger and Christine Davis, and in the

photo-montages of Brian Scott. Belanger and Davis question our understanding of identity and representation, whereas Scott's work references the surreal and deals with culturally-coded aspects of perception. John Massey combines conventional photography with digital manipulation, as exemplified by two

photo-serigraphs, and Lori Newdick takes an unfettered approach to figurative colour photography in a vertical triptych. (Belanger, Davis, Scott, Massey and Newdick live and work in Toronto.)

Drawn by Light: Collecting Photography is curated by Dawn Owen.



^ Larry Fink, *Ring Girls, Madison Square Garden, NY*, May 1996 (from *The Boxing Portfolio*, 1989 to 1996) (silver print photograph on multi-grade fibre-based paper, edition 13/25)
Gift of Avrum Glasner, 2005, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection

Exhibitions



January 30 Aggie Beynon's *Wabi: Imperfect Beauty*

Aggie Beynon *Wabi: Imperfect Beauty*
Organized by The Robert Langen Art Gallery, Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo)
January 24 to July 20

Silver Jewelry and Embroidery by the Naxi, Bai and Miao People of China
Tibetan Buddhist Jewelry and Clothing
January 24 to July 20

Spectacle + Artifice
January 31 to March 30

Drawn by Light: Collecting Photography
January 31 to March 30

Chris Ahlers: Urban Systems
Continuing to March 10



February 8 Artist Talk with Robyn Cumming

Events

Wednesday, January 30 at 7 PM
ARTIST TALK: Aggie Beynon (Waterloo) followed immediately by a wine and cheese reception for her exhibition *Wabi: Imperfect Beauty*.

Tuesday, February 5 at noon
BROWN BAG LUNCH: Assistant Curator Dawn Owen on "Curating and Collecting Photography: *Spectacle + Artifice* and *Drawn By Light*."

Friday, February 8 at 1:30 PM
ARTIST TALK: Robyn Cumming (Toronto) on her photo-based practice including the series *Little Legs*, featured in the exhibition *Spectacle + Artifice*.

Friday, February 8 at 8 PM
CONCERT: Visual arts icon and pianist Michael Snow (Toronto) and percussionist Jesse Stewart (Guelph) collaborate in a unique improvisational performance
Tickets: \$20 general and \$15 student/senior



February 13 *Spectacle + Artifice*

Contact Aidan Ware, Public Programming Assistant, for conference, reception, and tour bookings (info@msac.ca or 519.837.0010).

LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM Aggie Beynon, *Pin*, 2005 (constructed powered metal (pure copper, silver, gold-heat patina), sterling silver, 14k yellow gold, set with 2.10 ct. tourmaline); Robyn Cumming, *Many Shades of Pink*, 2006 (chromogenic print, detail); Janieta Eyre, *The Twin Manicurists*, 1996 (silver print photograph, detail).

Sunday, February 10 at 3 PM
CONCERT: Clarinetist Lori Freedman (Montreal) with Guelph musicians Ajay Heble, David Prentice, Ellen Waterman, and Jesse Stewart.
TICKETS: \$15 general and \$10 student/senior

Wednesday, February 13 at 7 PM
EXHIBITION RECEPTION: *Spectacle + Artifice* with many of the artists in attendance, followed at 8 PM by a free public concert directed by Lori Freedman.

Wednesday, February 13 at 8 PM
CONCERT: Clarinetist Lori Freedman directs youth musicians from the Contemporary Music Ensemble (University of Guelph), Guelph Youth Jazz Ensemble, and local Guelph high schools. Free Admission!

Monday, February 18 from 9 AM to 5 PM
FAMILY DAY! A full day of family friendly activities:
10-11:30 AM: Snow Sculpture Super Stars
11 AM-12 PM: Painting the Group of Seven
1-2:30 PM: Act Out! Performance Art
3-4 PM: COPY CATS Printmaking
4-5 PM: A Grand Tour of Guelph's public art gallery
ALL DAY: Dress the Bear!

Tuesday, February 26 at noon
Brown Bag Lunch: Director and curator Judith Nasby on "Silver Jewelry and Embroidery by the Naxi, Bai and Miao People of China, and Tibetan Buddhist Jewelry and Clothing."

Tuesday, March 4 at noon
BROWN BAG LUNCH: Darryl Butler, Manager of Heritage Resources at King's Landing Historical Settlement (New Brunswick), on "Thomas Nisbet and the furniture makers of Saint John, New Brunswick, the commercial capital of the 19th century Maritimes."

Monday, March 10 at 2:30 PM
COLLAGE PARTY with artist Paul Butler (Winnipeg) and critic Robert Enright (Winnipeg/Guelph).

Tuesday, April 1 at noon
BROWN BAG LUNCH: Oswaldo (Achu) DeLeón Kantule on "Molas and Kuna Art from Panama."



February 18 Family Day!



February 26 Brown Bag Lunch with Judith Nasby



April 1 Brown Bag Lunch with Oswaldo DeLeón Kantule

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM Carl Skelton, *Canadiana/Begging Bear*, 1995-1999 (bronze, detail), purchased with funds donated by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation with the financial support of The Canada Council for the Arts, 1999; Tibetan Buddhist Neckpiece; Mola textile in reverse appliqué from Kuna Yala, Panama.

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The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre is supported by its sponsors: the University of Guelph; the City of Guelph; the Upper Grand District School Board; and the County of Wellington; by memberships and donations; and by grants from the Ontario Government through the Ontario Arts Council and the Ministry of Culture, and from the Federal Government through the Canada Council for the Arts and the Museums Assistance Program of Canadian Heritage. Special thanks to @Guelph and the University of Guelph Communications and Public Affairs.

