

# *Tenderness*

**Annual Juried Exhibition**

Ann Decker, Bruce Kauffman, Dorota Dziong, Elizabeth King, Frances Key,  
Janet Crocker, Marta Mouka, Michael Amar, and Valerie Camila.

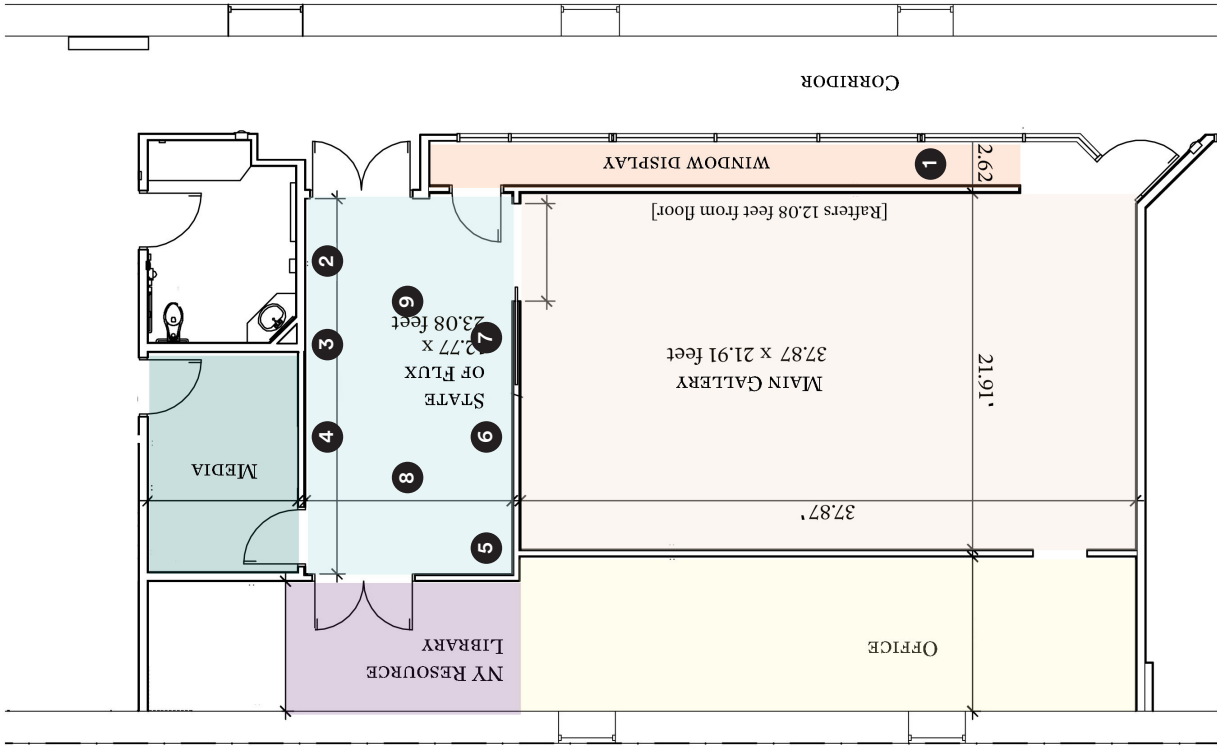
Window and State of Flux Galleries

June 10 to July 22 2023



**MODERN FUEL  
ARTIST-RUN CENTRE**

Suite 305 - 370 King St. W.  
Kingston, ON K7L 2X4



- 1** Bruce Kauffman
- 2** Marta Mouka
- 3** Elizabeth King
- 4** Valerie Camilla
- 5** Janet Crocker
- 6** Ann Decker
- 7** Dorota Dziong
- 8** Michael Amar
- 9** Frances Key

# ANN DECKER

“Face in the Mirror” | “Nude on Yellow Sofa” | “Woman with Teapot”

## Artist Statement and Biography

I grew up in Newfoundland and worked in Canada and internationally. After a career in IT, I attended a degree program in 3D Contemporary Craft at York University, England (2009). My focus was brightly coloured ceramic sculpture. When I moved to Kingston five years ago, I started painting from my home studio. I love the immediacy of paint to express the language of colour. I use colour to create mood and depth in my paintings. The colour studies of Josef Albers and the chroma combinations found in nature give me a continuing source of awe and inspiration. I draw and paint natural forms including nude figures and portraits. Transcribing an organic 3-dimensional object into a visual image using water- media (acrylic, water-based oil paints or watercolour) is magical to me. In my abstract paintings, I use colours and shapes to give rhythm and emotion. With painting I'm sculpting the subject with visual elements of brightness, contrast, and texture. I have exhibited at Modern Fuel RE:MEMBER, Tett Tuesday, Cezanne's Closet/Union Gallery, and Kingston Square Foot Show. Last December, along with three other Kingston artists, I was very pleased to show my body of works based on the human figure at the 'Insight' Exhibition.

## Description of the Works

During the pandemic the importance of social contact became apparent. I re-discovered the joy of life drawing by attending sessions on Zoom. Each session featured a live model from another country, and other artists on the call were from around the world too. They came into my studio for a brief time, connecting us all during a time of sadness and isolation. For a few hours a week we could focus on something outside of ourselves and our worries. We didn't know we needed each other until that contact was threatened in a very serious way. The models had found a way to continue working, this time with a much wider audience, and artists had found a source of inspiration and community. This was a refuge for me during a period of deep sorrow in the world.

In these paintings the female nude is relaxing on a sofa or enjoying a cup of tea, enjoying a rare moment to herself amidst the stresses and demands of everyday life. To me, there is a tenderness to the scene as we see the figure at her most unguarded (unclothed, lost in her own thoughts) yet aware of our gaze. These intimate scenes invite mindfulness from the viewer, a slowing down and contemplation of the image. What is that person thinking? What kind of day has she had?

# BRUCE KAUFFMAN

Poems from *still arriving*: “we”, “delicate”, “fluid”, “later”, and “an offering”

## Artist Statement and Biography

I am a poet and realize that I am often fascinated by the seemingly smallest of things. Of how they capture me, as if almost hypnotized, and then each of them – their story, its poem washes over me. I am equally inspired by how life, with all things in it, flows. And how then all things, the full of it all, flows together. How interconnected we are to each other. How interconnected we are to the ‘all’ of it, and it in turn to all of us.

I am lucky to have landed in a city that is filled with so many amazing poets and artists. How our paths cross. How conversations allow us to uncover things in ourselves. Gifts and talents we may not have been aware. And how we, too, discover and remind those around us of their gifts, talents that they hold within themselves.

I’ve been fortunate to have had a few chapbooks and five collections of poetry published. The latest collection, *still arriving*, has just been released. In addition to my own writing, I’ve edited several anthologies. And in order to help others share their work, I’ve hosted a monthly open mic reading series the past 14 years; have produced and hosted a weekly poetry-related radio show on CFRC the past 13; and with this year, I have for the past 9 years organized and hosted a summer, multi-day outdoor poetry festival as part of Artfest Kingston.

## Description of the Works

The theme of Tenderness runs as an undercurrent through a number of poems in the book. The poems in this book came to me by way of tender reflection of what I saw and see as I look around me, and as I look back on my life. I have always found the idea of softness or tenderness more compelling than that of hardness or rigidity.

As I am then drawn toward and into that softness, that is what I choose to write about as of late. I believe in this collection, most of which was written in the last 3 years, the nature of the world around us almost insisted that we begin to look both within and around us through the softest of lens. At least, that is how I chose, and now choose, to look both outwardly and within.

# DOROTA DZIONG

“Tenderness 1”, acrylic and ink and canvas on unstretched canvas, 2023 | “Tenderness 2”, acrylic and ink and canvas on unstretched canvas, 2023

## Artist Statement and Biography

I'm based in Toronto where I studied art and art history, worked in the non-profit arts sector and maintain my studio practice focused on oil painting, mixed media and drawing. My recent work is informed by my family history and personal experience with displacement through immigration and Toronto's housing crisis. Focusing on serious subject matter I operate through absurdity, playfulness and humour, as manifested in fantastical creations and paradoxical juxtapositions. I apply the absurdist lens to themes of destabilization, change, uncertainty, and shelter, combining research with my personal experiences and ongoing interests. My style combines aesthetics of painting and visual directness of poster art. Currently, I use a method of painting that involves cutting out elements painted on canvas or cardboard and recontextualizing them in a collage-like way on other surfaces.

I completed a BA (Hons) in Visual Studies and Art History at University of Toronto. Recent exhibitions include a solo show *Re(Moved)* at Red Head Gallery in Toronto, and group shows *And All of a Sudden*, Curated by Simone Rojas-Pick and Chad Wolfond at the Propeller Art Gallery, *Through 100 Windows* at the Clark Centre for the Arts, and *Still Life* at John B. Aird Gallery. I have participated in the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair for a number of years.

## Description of the Works

I have been using images of hands and other disembodied body parts in my work in a collage-like way for a while, and here I interpreted them as tools of tender touch and gesture.

The images are loosely inspired by a fragment of a relief sculpture of the Last Judgement on the tympanum of the medieval Autun Cathedral in France. A sinner is being grasped by their head by the hands of the devil and pulled into hell. It is a small part of a very large composition that frightened and scared visitors with the visions of what would happen to sinners. It is an unusual image to the modern eye and I had found the devil's hand gesture surprisingly tender and chose to revisit it here to meditate on the harshness of morality and judgement, the rationing of empathy, and the question of who gets to judge who deserves tenderness and who doesn't.

The elements of the image had been painted on unstretched primed canvas, cut out, and glued onto unstretched canvas primed with clear gesso to create the final compositions. I used unstretched canvas because it results in a more immediate, less finished surface that is less distanced from the viewer than a formal stretched painting and becomes more intimate that way. The canvas remains unframed to appear more like a textile object, emphasizing its softness and flexibility.

# ELIZABETH KING

**“Mother & Child”, Wood/enamel & acrylic paint**

## **Artist Statement and Biography**

Elizabeth King is a Kingston-based contemporary artist. Her work is inspired by music, nature, architecture, travel and emotional & life themes. She works mainly with acrylics and also experiments with oil paint and sculpture. Her works are colorful, intuitive and often bold and saturated. She likes to experiment with forms and lines which transform into something abstractly figurative and representational - a suggestion rather than a description. With each piece she creates, her goal is to transcend the energetic and vibrational connection she feels with the universe, into something loosely interpretive.

## **Description of the Works**

The mother-child connection represents care, intimacy and vulnerability. The mother as fierce protector, yet empathetic caregiver is inherent in most species. The child is an extension of the mother's body & as much as the child depends on the mother for life, the mother depends on the child's wellness and development for her peace and emotional wellbeing. There is both strength and fragility in this symbiotic union.

# FRANCES KEY

## “INTERFACE - My Father’s Vest”

### **Artist Statement and Biography**

Living in Eastern Ontario in a rural landscape, my oil paintings reflect how light plays across the terrain illuminating the lay of the land. Deep shadows, strong colours and subtle nuances are revealed. Previously from a large city environment, the rural patchwork of fields, never fails to inspire me.

### **Description of the Works**

The surface forming a common boundary between two bodies is called an interface. My work explores interface as it occurs between clothing and people. Using media such as Polaroid transfer, photo silk-screen, lithography and liquid light, I introduced photographic elements into the making of the vest.

Artifacts from my father’s past can be found collaged between layers of silk and organza. Combining these elements the artist plays upon the notion that the presence of the wearer is imprinted into and absorbed by garments.

The object/clothing that I sew are stand-ins for the absent figure. They speak of personal stories, family history and contemporary ideas.

The work responds to the theme of Tenderness both in the material chosen, feminine craftsmanship and the tenderness and pain of a lost presence and his mother.

# JANET CROCKER

“110920”, acrylic on canvas | “062821”, acrylic on canvas | “011423”, oil on canvas

## Artist Statement and Biography

I'm inspired by joy in the physicality of painting: the involvement of the body, and the materiality of the painted object/surface. In my work I aim to create a sense of space, time and movement to evoke fundamental processes that are difficult to observe directly but can be sensed or inferred: growth, decay, gravity, entropy, expansion, fusion, and fission.

Janet Crocker has studied drawing, painting, sculpture and ceramics over the past 30 years at Toronto School of Art, Fleming College/Haliburton School of the Arts, and, most recently, Emily Carr University of Art and Design. She studied figure drawing, color theory and oil painting for three years with OCADU professor Greg Damery. Her current art practice, which became more intensive in recent years, is focused on abstract painting, primarily in oils. Janet has been a member of Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre since 2021, and has exhibited in the annual members' show (non-juried).

## Description of the Works

This series of three paintings explores the pulsing, opposing forces that drive life on the vast scale of the universe and at cellular and subatomic levels alike: drawing together-driving apart, merging-separating, flowing-fragmenting, clashing-harmonizing, building-dissolving. In these works, this pulsation is at its gentlest, evoking tender processes of coming together and separating, suggesting the possibility of a dynamic intimacy that allows for – even thrives on – difference.



# MARTA MOUKA

“Blooms 1 and 2”, Fibre art

## Artist Statement and Biography

In my practice, I combine experimental eco-printing with traditional collage applique. The process of unlocking pigments and tannins in the botanical prints is as important to me as the graphic vocabulary that shapes my work. The contact printed silk is collaged, needle-felted into its final form, and detailed with hand-stitching and fused silk. I draw inspiration from books, gallery visits, and my daily contact with Ontario's rural landscape.

Marta Mouka is a textile artist who creates collages using a unique approach to needle-felting. She works with woven silk, often contact-printed with plant material, to make finished textiles with a smooth texture and soft-focus colour transitions. She experiments with centuries-old techniques of dyeing with natural dyes and combines them with the more contemporary method of botanical contact printing.

Marta studied graphic design and visual arts at the College of Applied Arts in Brno, Czech Republic. She ran a graphic design studio in Toronto for 14 years, specializing in magazine art direction. Her extensive graphic design experience brings a strong sense of composition to her work.

Marta has been creating art for over 30 years. Since 2008 she has been a full-time textile artist, living and working in Tweed, Ontario. She has held solo shows and participated in juried group exhibitions, and she has received a number of awards. Her art is held in private collections across Canada.

## Description of the Works

The backgrounds of these two pieces represent earth covered with botanical material that reveals three-dimensionally arranged flower petals. Sculpted petals with their bright colours bring positive and uplifting emotions.

The artwork is needle-felted to its final form, and constructed with machine-stitched silk petals. The fabric is dyed with natural dyes and contact printed with leaves.

# MICHAEL AMAR

**“Fullness of Time”, fired clay**

## **Artist Statement and Biography**

My practice as an artist is and has been a major part of my life. Defining my imagery is a lifelong journey of an endless process of inquiry of perception within the context of culture.

As a teacher of visual arts the process of inquiry is also at play in the classroom. I have found the rewards of teaching as valuable as my work as an artist. The essence is to arrive at the core of a concept in the most immediate and truthful way, such is teaching my practice as an artist.

## **Description of the Works**

The work references the rocking back and forth of a child while held by the mother. The experience of a fleeting tenderness exists and passes so very quickly. Those moments are full of tenderness. One might say that time stands still in a space of silence, harmony and warmth.

The sculpture is balanced on one point and can be gently rocked.

# VALERIE CAMILA

“fish seventeen”, Oil on stretched canvas

## Artist’s Statement and Biography

Valerie Camila (b. 2002) is a contemporary oil painter from Southern Alberta, currently based in Kingston, Ontario, working towards her BFA (Honours) at Queen’s University. She is an emerging artist with a unique signature that creates dreamlike work by speaking from personal experiences and combining them with surrealist motifs. As a young Colombian-Canadian woman, her paintings pay homage to her idea of self and personal relationships through explorations of her Colombian heritage and her identity as a lesbian. Camila highlights Hispanic subjects to illustrate themes of intimacy, strength, and representations of self throughout her work, alongside an emphasis on queer affection as a way to enact casual and meaningful representation. Throughout her career, she has been interested in developing stylistic brushwork that gives life to her figures and atmospheric qualities to her scenes. With vivid orange colour palettes, she plays on complimentary colour relationships that mimic the subject matter of her paintings.

Valerie Camila has been featured in local exhibitions in Kingston, including the Union Gallery’s annual Cézannes Closet exhibit and in Alberta at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery’s Art’s Alive exhibit in Lethbridge. Her work was also featured in online publications like Ultraviolet Magazine and MUSE Magazine, where she is employed as the Head Illustrator.

## Description of the Works

*fish seventeen* (2023) is a large-scale self-portrait demonstrating personal strength and perseverance using fish as a representation of self. The work visually represents personal tenacity through the use of the literary idiom “fish out of water”. Camila illustrates a giant carp as a symbol of courageous vulnerability, persistence, and strength of character. The figure occupies both the caregiving and recipient position as the fish is helpless out of the water, she lovingly caresses the carp with a comforting yet firm grip. The relationship between the subjects creates a vision of tenderness and solace. The subjects are their own within a surrealist backdrop of a dark abandoned room of plastic-covered furniture. A disparity between the scene’s tension and the nurturing caress of the human figure incites introspective discomfort through the personal navigation of restlessness and care. The colour palette’s deep blues, mauves and greens emphasize an ‘aquatic’ atmosphere and add to a dreamlike, surreal quality, alongside their complementary colours that reflect the balanced and harmonious relationship between the subjects.