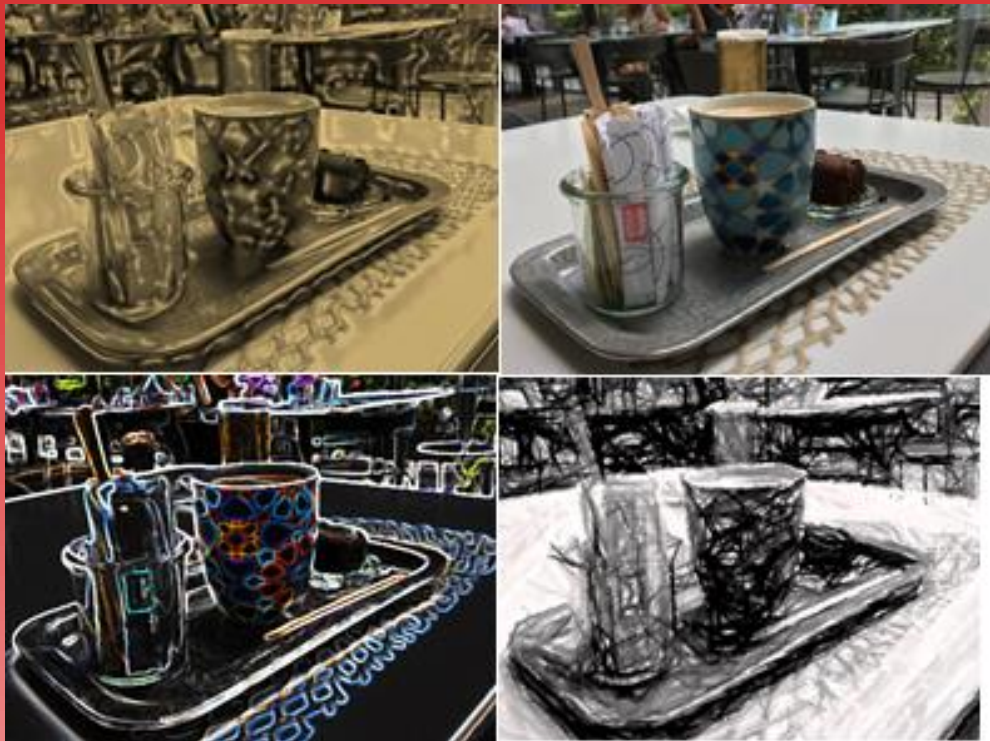


Coffee Talk

Christina Yarmol
2020



All portraits in Coffee Talk are completed by van Duffelen, E. and Yarmol, C. (2019), [Felt tip marker and pencil crayon on cartridge paper, 8½" x 11"].



Christina Yarmol

Yarmol, C. (2018). *Replanting the Forest*. [Mixed media acrylic paint, tissue paper cartridge paper, newspaper, glue on wood panel, 24" x 28"].

As I contemplated my dissertation, I thought about how disability policy plays such a critical role in the lives artists with Cognitive and Intellectual Disabilities. So much work still needs to be done to modify policies and their delivery in Ontario to achieve cultural rights for all. Metaphorically, we should burn some existing policies to the ground and establish more practical approaches that better fit those who want to live and work as artists. An on-the-ground review of social policy and application of new delivery modes could arise to support individuals with Cognitive and Intellectual Disabilities inclusion in society.

The metaphor of *controlled burns* describes setting forests alit, ridding forests of dead leaves, tree limbs, and other debris, reducing insect populations and destroying invasive plants to prevent greater destructive wildfires that might occur at later dates. The resulting ash can act as a nutrient-rich layer to rejuvenate the soil making it fertile for seed germination. Fertile soil coupled with additional sunlight and open space help new trees and plants to grow (National Geographic Society, 2019).

Birch trees as a symbol of renewal arose for me a variety of reasons. Aspen, Jack Pine, Lodgepole Pine, and White Birch re-establish quickly by sprouting from stumps and roots of burned trees (Natural Resources Canada, 2017). Peeling layers of bark reveal the layers below until eventually you reach a point where you stop. The tree's health relies on the integrity of this inner bark. This image is resonant with me. Social policy, like a Birch tree, can be stripped of countless layers - always with caution.



Neil Clifford

“I like people here [Neil points to the people around the room.]. I like the people. I make art too. I draw what I see around me” (Neil Clifford, Interview, September 23, 2020).



Photograph by C. Yarmol

Neil Clifford

Neil has attended SWACA Etobicoke Art Group since 2007. He paints aerial views of Toronto. He likes to paint schools, golf courses with sand traps, restaurants, stores, roads, bridges, ramps and other buildings. He also enjoys painting the city, planes and large machinery. Neil states, "I draw exactly what I see and what I remember. I love to talk about my work. I know all the bus routes. I know where everything is because I am a traveler."





Patricia Habuda

“Why I'm happy is because I come in and I'm happy to talk to people and because and I make art” (Patricia Habuda, Interview, November 20, 2019)!



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Patricia Habuda

Patricia has always loved flowers. She has learned how to boldly and colourfully paint her subject matter on a large scale. She also likes to create greeting cards so that her art can be accessible to everyone. Patricia states, "Flowers are my passion. I take my time to make my paintings and drawings perfectly. I am an artist and I sell my work. I love art. I want to learn more! I'm very proud of the work I have made." Patricia is very devoted to her work. She enjoys adding happiness to the lives of others through her art.



Parents



Laura Parsonson: “She’s telling me everyday that she wants to live alone and be independent and there’s no where for her to go to live. And all the residential lists...she has been on a residential list since 18...she was 18! She has been on a list for half of her life to get into any kind of independent supported living...so we can’t have that.... So instead we buy an hour and a half of art, [Laura puts her hands 15 cm from one another and gestures downward.] ...two hours of photography, and...some here, [She pauses for 2 seconds.]...and there, because we are trying to come up with some kind of approximation of an independent life. Why people send them to CVS is because we want them to have a meaningful life. You want them to have a productive life, you want them to have a happy life. They want it, they want that, they want to be happy and a lot of them [participants] get that from art” (Laura Parsonson, Interview, November 17, 2019)!



Shannon Groom: “I just think all arts programs are valuable. You can’t put a dollar value on the value that an arts program brings to somebody. It can take somebody who... [2 second pause] they may not be able to speak, but they can express through art; [She emphasizes the word express.] they can feel good about themselves through somebody’s compliments about their work” (Shannon Groom, Interview, November 25, 2019).



Anna Simonyi: “Yeah, in a social sense it has been wonderful for her but, it is more than just a social place. It is a matter of personal growth, so she is learning from other people” (Anna Simonyi, Interview, October 12, 2019).

Christina Yarmol

BS or Blood Sugar (other colloquial meanings also implied) is a crip art series that communicates the challenges of living with Diabetes Mellitus (Type 1/Juvenile Diabetes) over a lifespan. Through the balance of administering of insulin ingestion of food and exercise one is to maintain a blood glucose level between 6-10 mmol/L (According to medical measurements normal fasting blood glucose is 3.6 mmol/l and 6 mmol/l.) to help reduce complications from the disease. Life's circumstances sometimes cause a fluctuation in glucose levels. Presentation of high and low blood glucose differs dramatically between individuals.



Yarmol, C. (2018). *BS Series: 2.7, Felt It!* [Sculpture with dyed felted fleece, 10" x 8"].



Yarmol, C. (2018). *BS Series: 2.4 Felt it!* [Sculpture with dyed felted fleece, 15" x 11"].

2.7—*Felt It!* and 2.4 —*Felt It!* are psychedelic sculptures created with felted fleece; they are a visual representation of the rare occurrences when I experience low glucose levels. When I close my eyes, beautiful, bright psychedelic flashes of light emerge from the darkness. Stunning deep hues of navy, purple, pink, red and bright orange encircle my field of vision. As alluring as the visual show is, I feel that something is very wrong. Starbursts gradually fade after rest and ingestion of food that elevates blood glucose. Through visual appearance and haptic touch, viewers can have a sensory understanding of my lived experience.

Note: Felting is an ancient form of textile art. The process to create it includes layering combed or carded fibers of sheep or emu fleece followed by adding hot water, soap and then intense agitation to bind the raw fibres together creating a more stable fabric composition.



Jack Homer

“So whether you are disabled or not it doesn’t matter in the final art product” (Jack Homer, Interview, September 19, 2019).



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Jack Homer

Jack enjoys creating imagery about naturalistic landscapes, animals and architectural forms. Jack spends time seeking out images that inspire him. To satisfy his natural curiosity, he will often read about the subject matter he is painting before beginning a work. He approaches his work methodically, and carefully plans his use of colour and shapes to create emphasis in his composition. The use of bright colours causes the viewer to take a second look at the moment depicted on the canvas.



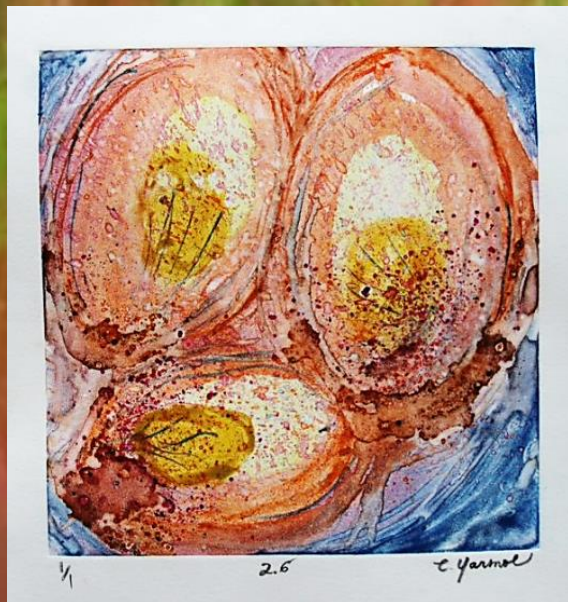
Christina Yarmol



Yarmol, C. (2018), *BS Series: 2.4*.
[Aquarelles on paper, 8 ½ x 11"].



Yarmol, C. (2018), *BS Series: 2.7*. [Aquarelles on paper, 8 ½ x 11"].



Yarmol, C. (2019). *BS Series: 2.6*. [Monoprint with aquarelle crayons on paper, 6" x 6"].



Juan Meneses

“It keeps me calm when I do work” (Juan Meneses, Interview, September 23, 2019)!

Juan Meneses



Brightly coloured landscapes, cityscapes and seascapes are the focus of Juan's artwork. He concentrates on scenes from his country of origin, Colombia. More recently he has shifted his attention to painting motifs in the still-life genre. He finds painting very relaxing. Juan states, "I will often sketch my ideas in my sketchbook before painting them on canvas. Sometimes I will use my phone to record and think about my work."



Christina Yarmol



Yarmol, C. (2019). *BS Series: The Forest on High Morning*. [Photography, digital print on paper, 8" x 11"].



Yarmol, C. (2019). *BS Series: Hi, High*. [Monoprint with aquarelle crayons on paper, 6" x 6"].

In contrast to portrayals of low glucose are the rare high glucose levels evident in the mono print *Hi High* and *The Forest on High Morning*, a digital photograph illustrates experiences of blood sugar levels from 12–20 plus mmol/l. A general feeling of unwellness slowly arises with a headache, lack of appetite, fatigue, increased thirst and urination, and irritability. The headache creates a sensation that one is in the midst of a heavy fog; it takes hours after injecting insulin to relieve the sluggish sensation. The *BS Series* title also indicates assumptions made about the status of one's health the moment one utters the term, "Type I diabetic".

Christina Yarmol

This work was inspired by the readings of feminist critical disability theorists Margrit Shildrick (2015), Judith Butler (1993), and Susan Wendell (1996) who all address questions of embodiment. These philosophers posit that many of society's social constructions and policies are organized with unacknowledged ablest assumptions about neglecting the basic human needs of what many people require to participate fully in the societies in which they live (Wendell, 1996, p. 39).

I created a makeshift loom and hand-wove together individual, stretchy postal elastics from a 20-pound cache I found in my mother's basement. The medium of postal elastics living as common, singleton objects seems so apparently weightless, however when hand-woven together, the resulting textile transforms into a strong, weighty yet pliable fabric that can be a metaphor for change.

The woven poncho is a representation of Shildrick, Butler, and Wendell's conceptions of flexible embodiment that can be applied to an examination of policy making. Blanket policy making should be adaptable to the needs of the individual. A variety of policy solutions, even non-traditional options, are possible. Due to its mailable, stretchy material and the addition of a magnetic clasp in lieu of a zipper or buttons, the poncho can be adjusted and manipulated by anyone who desires to wear it; it BECOMES any form that it needs to be.

We require new "models of identity that incorporate difference" (Lindgren, 2004, p. 159). A re-examination of assumptions can begin the conversation about how to actively engage all people in society by considering how to accommodate for their needs.



Yarmol, C. (2016). *Flexible Embodiment*. [Sculpture with postal elastics, acrylic and wire mannequin form, magnetic handbag clasp, 54" long is 14" across and is 5" inches in width]. Below is an image of the weaving of *Flexible Embodiment*.





Astra Milberg

“It's actually better to get out... out in the community than to stay inside all of the time” (Astra Milberg, Interview, September 19, 2019).

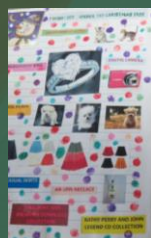
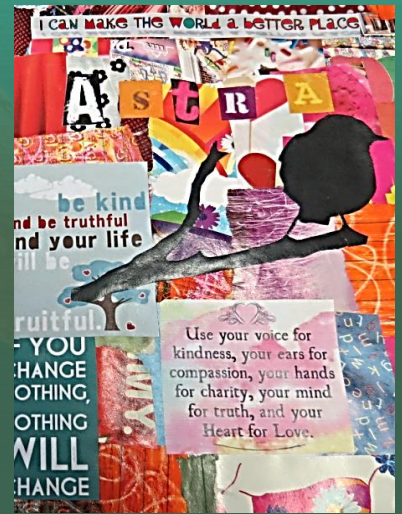


Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Astra Milberg

Astra loves to experiment with colour, texture and assorted materials for personal mixed media applications.

Astra explains, "I like pretty and colourful imagery. I like making princesses into brides. Anything that resembles love attracts me. I want to get married but if I can't be a bride, I can still paint about my wedding day. I enjoy painting and journaling and can spend hours in my own world."





Steve Nicholson

“Well, after you have a drink in that you sit, relax with your drink for a couple of minutes and then you try to think [Puts his pointer finger of his left hand to his temple.] either about what you want to do or what you have done and come and search for your painting and then finish where you left off” (Steven Nicholson, Interview, September 19, 2019).

Steve Nicholson

Steve paints the places he has visited around the city and objects in his daily life. Steve's style vacillates between realistic scenes and abstractly painted compositions. He likes to experiment with bright colours, geometric shapes and various painting techniques to get new, astounding results.

Steve says, "It's always a surprise when I combine different styles to create a new visual experience."



Photograph by H. Tomlinson





Quyen Ngo

“I like to come here. It is quiet. I come. I draw. I like this one [He looks at me but points downward firmly with one finger at one of his still life flower paintings.]. I decide. I paint it” (Quyen Ngo, Interview, October 23, 2019).

Quyên Ngo

Quyên draws on his friends, family, nature, culture and everyday objects as inspiration for the diverse imagery in his artwork. Overtime his style has matured dramatically from basic organic shapes to the addition of more complex and repeating patterns. He often outlines his shapes with a solid coloured contour line and uses vibrant colors to create emphasis in his work. Quyên creates distinctive pieces that are quite recognizable to the casual viewer. The mood of happiness always prevails in his work. Quyên states, "I painted a little when I was young. Painting is easy for me. I like seeing my paintings hanging up on the walls".



Photograph by H. Tomlinson



Christina Yarmol



Yarmol, C. (2020). *Coffee Talk*. [Digital photograph of 7 finished albums, 9" x 11" each, book binding cloth, matt board, Japanese paper, double-sided tape, PVA glue].

According to American author, book artist, visual theorist, and cultural critic Johanna Drucker, "The space of a book is intimate and public at the same time; it mediates between private reflection and broad communication..." (2007, p. 15) as we turn the pages. I have sculpted a series of handmade, album-structure books as a form of exhibition of the study participants' and my artworks. The advantage of the structure of these albums is that they can be enjoyed individually, or pages can be withdrawn from the central concertina spine and exhibited in a public space along side each artists' artworks. The articulated narrow pockets inside the books grip pages filled with an exhibition of artists' artwork and artists' statements. With the help of the help of the studio's facilitator Harold Tomlinson, I asked each artist about the subject matter and the contents of their artworks. The key points of each exchange about the artwork were edited and presented along side photographs of their selected artwork. Inclusive arts practitioners Alice Fox and Hannah Macpherson say, "Self-authored artists' statements offer another opportunity for the artist's voice to emerge for individuals to represent themselves rather than to be, once again observed and talked about. However, supporting a learning-disabled artist (terminology in the United Kingdom, known as CID in North America) to write an artist's statement is an art in itself, and one that needs to avoid an overly simplistic wordy, sentimental or sympathetic response. The best work in this area tends to emerge from well-established relationships" (2015, p. 41). I agree with Fox and Macpherson's assertion that relationship is the key to the development of succinct texts reflective of the artists.

Residing between each of these pages are colour copies of artwork that CVS artist Evelyn van Duffelen and I created for this project. I sketched portraits of each participant at the studio and Evelyn selected and applied the colours in her preferred medium of pencil crayon. Key phrases from the interviews with each artist are positioned below each portrait.

Artist and author Audrey Niffenegger conveys the authority a book can have: "The book is an object. The book is an idea. Books inspire and are inspired by revolutions, love affairs, religions. What does it mean to make a book? To make a book is to gain power over objects. Books are potent items" (Wasserman, K., Niffenegger, A., & Drucker, J., 2007, p. 12). Niffenegger continues: "To make books is to create physical form for ideas. All artists do this, of course. But the book has been the body of human thought for many centuries, and when we make unusual books, artists' books, we are messing with that body. This can incite strong feelings in readers. We identify with books, and when artists transgress against books it's a serious thing" (p. 13). I believe that the creation of these handmade books is well-suited for this multi-method critical disability studies dissertation as it credits the knowledge of the artists in this study. Book creation is not only a visual way to exhibit work but a means to powerfully communicate the idea that people with CIDs can be knowledge makers.



Emily Parsonson

“It amazes me how I see myself as an artist and now I am [She puts her right hand to her heart.]. I am getting more and more creative everyday” (Emily Parsonson, Interview, November 17, 2019).

Emily Parsonson

Emily May Collins Parsonson has been painting for many years and has taken lessons at Creative Village Studio which is run by Community Living Toronto. She says that she enjoys painting with her Dad, Lauren, who is very talented and her Mum, Laura who is not artistic but has many other redeeming qualities. Sunshine and flowers are her specialty. She is extremely proud of her company *Emily Parsonson Productions* where she makes and sells her artwork. She is grateful to all of the people who support her and encourage her creativity.



Parsonson, Lauren. *Portrait of Emily*, [Acrylic on canvas, 11 " x 14"].





Betsy Pattinson

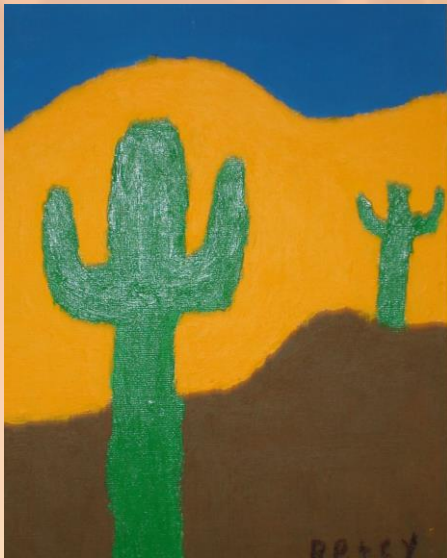
“I like coming here. I like concentrating and I like helping people out. ‘Cuz I like painting and stuff” [She definitively nods her head.] (Betsy, Pattinson, Interview, September 19, 2019).



Betsy Pattinson

Betsy attends painting classes at Creative Village Studio weekly where she likes to paint simple, brightly colored flowers and warm landscapes. It makes her very happy when her paintings end up with people who appreciate them. Betsy also really enjoys helping and socializing with other artists at the studio weekly.

Photograph by C. Yarmol





John Fredy Salazar

“I like photography and painting...Tak[ing] pictures or painting things like, my country, hats, coffee beans, the skies, the sun, water and landscapes. I only go to two programs...only here, only two” (John Fredy Salazar, Interview, September 19, 2019).

John Fredy Salazar

Of Colombian decent, John Fredy uses painting and photography to examine and pay homage to his environment, cultural roots and future goals. John Fredy's curiosity thrusts him into experimentation with new techniques leading to the creation of innovative compositions that often translate to environmental and social issues. These compositions express vibrant, mundane, fearful and wonder-filled moments of everyday life.



Christina Yarmol



Yarmol, C. (2020), *Fly on the Wall & Fly on the Bench*. [Egg tempera on wood panel with faux silver leaf and size, 16" x 18" & 8" x 10"].

I agree with a/r/tography theorist Rita Irwin's claim that, "A/r/tographers understand that who they are is embedded in what they know and do" (2006, p. 2). I was keenly aware of my artist, art educator and researcher identities throughout the research process. As a researcher, I found it challenging not to constantly share knowledge deeply embedded within these identities with the study participants. Letting the artmaking process naturally unfold by refraining from offering advice or sharing commentary that might interfere with instructors' art facilitation and artists' production of their own ideas was of paramount importance at the outset of the observation sessions. A mantra resounded, "Be a fly on the wall Yarmol!" or "Be a fly on the bench!" These phrases are what Irwin et al (2008) would term as a metaphor — to be still and to use my senses to actively attend to what was evolving around me.

The fly's anatomy helps to strengthen this metaphor: the fly's compound eye made up of various lenses makes up most of its head affording the fly with accurate three-dimensional sight. The six legs each equipped with a tarsus, a pair of claws and a fleshy, adhesive glandular pad called a pulvillus assists the fly with walking across walls and ceilings suspending itself in various locales around the studio.

I communicated to the studio's facilitator that I would share my reflections about the studio's processes after the research data was analysed however, if an art researcher acts simply as a stiff observer who purposefully does not respond to the artists' queries about their work, opportunities are denied and the resulting fieldnote data and observations become less rich. I found that I was constantly balancing on a sort of teeter-totter thus I found myself moving toward the participant-observer role creating small landscapes in my sketchbook with the excess paint left on palettes at the end of sessions. My interactions with participants, their artwork and artistic processes resulted in increased communication and caused the effect of validating me as an artist-participant. These resulting *impressions* are represented by pigment smudging left on the panel at the base of the fly's pulvillus.

The choice of an ancient method of egg tempera is purposeful in that pigments are very thinly applied in transparent linear washes. The layering of the egg tempera is slow and methodical building up layers of paint to avoid crumbling and cracking. The utilization of this process was also reflective of a/r/tographic processes which "build up knowledge" through lived experience like the way I carefully approached the data collection at the research site.



Matthew Sheeny

“If I didn’t come make art, I’d probably stay at home [Deep sigh.]. I hate like heck spending the money, but I pay the bucks...with a cheque. My staff at home, she gives me a cheque. I give the cheque to him [Harold]. The money? My Dad’s got it” (Matthew Sheeny, Personal conversation, September 19, 2019)!

Matthew Sheeny

Matthew adores painting rainbows above green trees with acrylic paint on canvas. He also likes creating images of parrots, snowmen, landscapes and still-life scenes.

Matthew says, "I like to use all of the colours so that my work will be beautiful!"

He looks forward to coming to Creative Village Studio to make art, have a coffee, share jokes, and his sparkling personality with his friends especially with his girlfriend.



Photograph by C. Yarmol





Sabrina Simonyi

“I take sculpture, iPad, drawing and mixed media and painting. Those classes are fun, and um...and good to learn...and do new things. You use your imagination”
(Sabrina Simonyi, Interview, October 12, 2019)!



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Sabrina Simonyi

Sabrina is passionate about the disciplines of drawing and painting. She has many sources of inspiration and sharing them with others brings her great happiness and joy. She likes to select subjects that interest her like animals, film characters, and landscapes. Her artistic style ranges from simple and boldly coloured organic compositions to intricately detailed subject matter with complex patterns. Sabrina says, "I like to experiment then practice new techniques in classes to expand my skills and then work on my own ideas. The studio gives me the chance to learn and to grow".





Conrod Skyers

“It gives me a place to go, it keeps me out of trouble and keeps me off the streets” (Conrod Skyers, Interview, October 3, 2019).

Conrod Skyers



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Conrod's vivid imagination enables him to explore and to cultivate his personal Caribbean island background and to combine it with his urban sensibilities to create a distinctive style. Through his exuberant use of colour and gesticulating shapes, Conrod's work exudes energy and movement. His automatic, undulating lines radiate directly from his head to his hand creating organic shapes directly onto the surface of the canvas. His lively patterned scenes openly invite the viewer to quietly pause awhile to visually explore every corner of the composition.



Christina Yarmol



Yarmol, C. (2020), *Rhizomatic Engagement*. [Mixed media-acrylic paint on canvas, yarn, branches, glue, panel, Top Panel: 16" x 18" Bottom Panel: 40" x 22"].

Rhizomatic Engagement is a visual representation of my overall thinking and growth about this interdisciplinary project. The subject matter depicts growth based on a wide-trunk tree with far reaching linear branches that dynamically surge both upward and outward. The branches bare large-surfaced leaves that collect the sun's energy for nourishment through photosynthesis. Rigid roots anchor the towering tree drawing in nutrients from the water and soil stabilizing the earth to prevent erosion. This tree is a metaphor for highly structured, firmly entrenched, societally system of thought that mediates views of theory, language, behaviour and culture—a hegemony of mainstream neo-liberate thought. The complex networks support hierarchical, binarized thought where something can grow securely while still being firmly located in its place by inflexible roots. The arborescent metaphor is where I situated myself at the start of the project given my positionality. The tree itself as well as the overall palette of *Rhizomatic Engagement* in cadmium- red, orange, yellow, separated by intermittent by lines of malachite (green) or Tyrian purple, and backed by a blend of ultramarine-based violet with the addition of titanium white, recall a childhood memory.

When I was in senior kindergarten, I illustrated a colossal tree with a violet-coloured trunk and branches on very large, greyish coloured, thin piece of cartridge paper. I used jumbo-toddler crayons to add several brightly coloured red, orange and yellow leaves. My teacher came toward the table where I was working and said,

"Tina, trees aren't purple!"

When I asked why, she replied, "Because that is not the colour we find them in nature!"

She then ripped up my drawing and threw it away. I remember my eyes swelling up with hot tears beginning to flow as she curtly walked away. When I told my mother what had happened, she tsk-tsk-ed and said that some people just had no imagination or creativity and only saw things in one way. Mum said that trees could be any colour I thought that they could be. At home I kept drawing tree after tree in different colours until I was satisfied. I knew from spending a lot of time outside in nature that spring flowers or the fall leaves all bared these brilliant hues. I now realize that it was quite presumptuous of the educator to state that this was, "not the colour we find them in nature" but...the way that teacher saw the world. The teacher's, *it-had-to-be-response* to my image of a violet tree represented limiting binarized thought—"this or that".

Rhizomatic Engagement was inspired by *Deleuzoguattarian theory* which subverts a fixed, foundational view of knowledge: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction "and ...and...and..." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be" " (Deleuze, & Guattari, 2004, p. 27). Opposed to linear modes of thinking, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari use the rhizomatic metaphor to contest hierarchical structures and stratification of 'the tree'. Rhizomes enable us to see the connection between topics as there is no predetermined path from one idea to another. Stirred by this idea, a critical disability studies stance questions and pushes the hegemonic views of what "to be" means as a binary structure of either-or, a dominant and oppressive dichotomy. By questioning *being*, rhizomatic thinking offers a new possibility of *becoming*.

From the genesis of this project until now, I have grown enormously. I now think more broadly opening-up to the potential of *becoming*. I think that when considering social policy for people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities who want to be artists, we must think in a rhizomatic manner striving to fashion "violet trees" as we will need all the creativity, we can muster to devise innovative solutions to funding difficult social policy issues. Policy based on a mythical, normative stance should no longer be tolerated to 'service' people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities.

Lisa Tuckwell



“At Creative Village Studio, I put my imagination onto the canvas” (Lisa Tuckwell, Interview, October 28, 2019)!

Lisa Tuckwell



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Lisa actively uses her observation skills to closely examine the subjects of her compositions. She often expresses her subjects from close-up vantage points to celebrate the complexity of ordinary objects. Vivid, high contrast colour palettes help to create an energetic vibe in Lisa's paintings.

Lisa says, "I like to paint landscapes from the places I visit, flowers, everyday foods, and animals like dogs and birds. I would like to use my photographic skills to help research my favorite subjects then combine these photographic images onto the canvas in a new way. I feel very proud of my work and I can't wait to start the next piece".





Evelyn Van Duffelen

“Well I work in pencil crayons. I hate sharpening pencils [She looks down.]. It drives me like up the wall! You know, I hardly touch the paper and then it looks like I am really pressing [She motions back and forth along the table miming the action she takes with her pencil crayons.]. That is why the pencils break” (Evelyn van Duffelen, Interview, September 23, 2019).



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Evelyn Van Duffelen

Evelyn works primarily with pencil crayon on paper pressing extremely hard until the wax glistens on the paper's surface. Cutting out, arranging, then gluing her pencil crayon work on painted acrylic canvas backgrounds to create new collaged imagery is a departure that has broadened Evelyn's artistic repertoire.

Evelyn says, "Making art makes me feel good. It's nice when people like your art, buy it, take it home and put it on their walls. Then my art makes them feel good when they look at it."



EVELYN



Donna Worotyneć

“The program adds to my life [She raises up her chin and nods downward with a thrust.]. If no program, well, I'm with myself. I can't sit there in my room every time! You know what I'm saying this don't you? I can't sit there in my room or a bed either! That's why I feel that way” (Donna Worotyneć, Interview, November 6, 2019).



Photograph by H. Tomlinson

Donna Woroty nec

Donna loves to draw and paint imagery about objects and the people in her environment. Her figures are formed by combining simple shapes and bright colours creating a lively scene for the viewer. Donna says, "I read everything I can find on art and making art. I want to be the best artist that I can be. My characters make people smile and laugh, and I like that. I'm proud of my work and growth. Art is my life."





Photograph provided by H. Tomlinson

Harold Tomlinson

The subject of my art has always been an extension of Atlantic and gay life. On yearly summer visits to Nova Scotia in my childhood, I assisted my grandfather building worley-gigs, beautiful bugs with thread and feathers with flies for fishing. As a self-taught artist my forte was painting wooden, folk art pieces with odly sized build-outs to fit into Victorian homes with high ceilings, and large-scale installation pieces. I exhibited my pleasant, serene artwork in numerous galleries and sold paintings globally during the 1980-1990's. I eventually opened my own gallery called *Elysium* and my artwork was sold to patrons of folk-art collections.



While working with individuals with intellectual disabilities in residences and day programs, I imagined the potential benefits of creative art programs. Underpinned by both my experience in counselling and art-based skills, I encouraged clients to begin expressive painting projects, hand-made crafts, and to participate in board game nights. The by-product of teaching these new skills was that participants gained self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment fostering social skills, and cooperation. This range of programs slowly morphed into artist-facilitated creative, hands-on project planning where independence in art making, development of personal styles, promotion and exhibition of art, and building community through partnerships became of great importance (Harold Tomlinson, Interview, December 14, 2019).





Harold Tomlinson

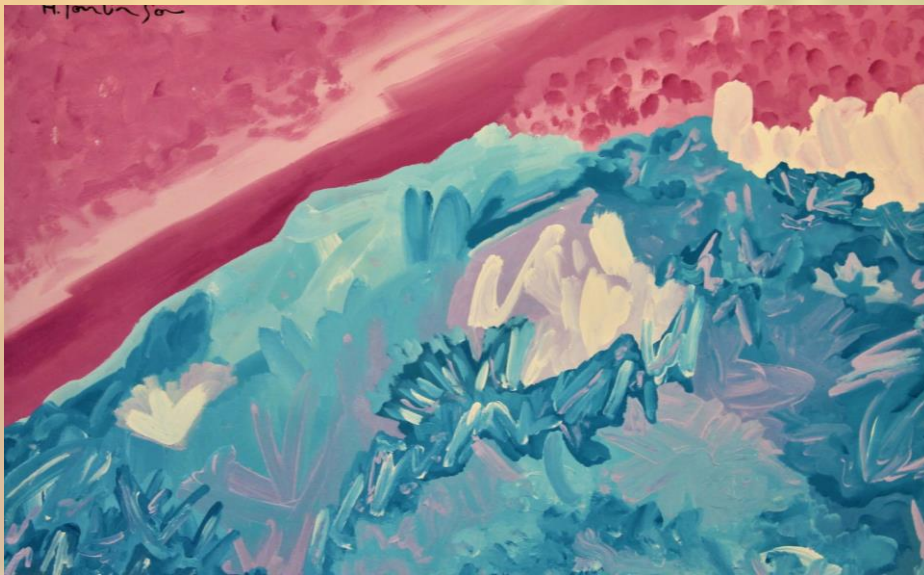
“The thing that I first start doing is comfort before skills. One of the first things I work on is making people feel comfortable because they are not going to participate fully if they are not comfortable being here. They have to be comfortable to make mistakes and to learn new things. A lot of these artists were never actually given permission to learn. They were told they couldn't. I find the battle is a lot of individuals, they have never had a choice so, if you've never had choice you don't know what you like and what you don't like so there's a lot of experimentation. There is a lot of trying to figure out where you fit in” (Harold Tomlinson, Interview, November 25, 2019).



Photograph provided by H. Tomlinson

Harold Tomlinson

“As an artist and a facilitator, watching artist novices blossom and grow into seasoned artists, exhibitors, and professionals has been a labour of love and respect. I believe that I have given substantial creative direction, a sense happiness and a home to many participants at Creative Village Studio” (Harold Tomlinson, Interview, November 25, 2019).



Volunteers

Pina Barci

“The program's greatest strength is the art! I think it helps make the participants feel empowered that they can do something so creative” (Pina Barci, Interview, November 20, 2019).



Lois Langdon

“Yeah actually people with intellectual disabilities, they are like everybody else [She says nodding her head.]. They do have their feelings, their ups and their downs. They're no different than anybody else” [She nods her head from left to right.] (Lois Langdon, Interview, November 7, 2019).

Beverly Gordon

“They need more places like this and they need more caring people to look out for them so that they don't get into trouble or so that people don't take advantage of them... Their families are passing away, so they have nobody out there anymore fighting on their behalf” (Beverly Gordon, Interview, November 20, 2019).



Instructors

Cait Mitchell

“I think the photography workshops were a great way for the artists to get out of the studio and explore the world...to see and be seen creating” (Cait Mitchell, Interview, December 28, 2019).



Yona Reznik

“There is such incredible work happening at the CVS! Participants are often creating work to be shown in exhibitions, sold to patrons, and for their own personal enjoyment. I believe the goals of the visiting artists to CVS include an opportunity for socialization and community building. Further, I see growth in the openness and overall mindset of the artists. They are active in their creativity and their enthusiasm for art-making. The studio is a very special place for everyone who visits” (Yona Reznick, Interview, December 6, 2019).



Shannon Groom



“When you walk into Creative Village, you can see the pride in the artists’ work and that is something that I feel is so important for people with disabilities. It is important for all people but especially for people with disabilities to have a sense of pride, to have a sense of accomplishment, to feel included, supported and free to take risks. Because with art, and anything to do with art there is a vulnerability [Shannon points both hands at her heart.] that you put yourself into [Both of her hands tap the table in front of her.]. And our participants are already vulnerable, so for them to take that added risk, in a safe environment like Creative Village, there’s no, no...There's no better way to do it!

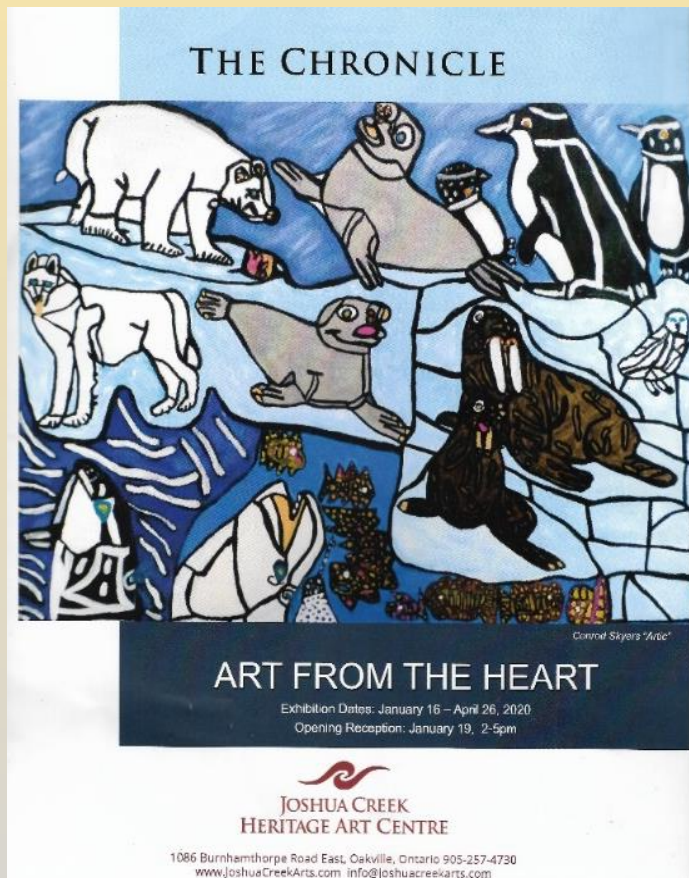
We define ourselves as things... like a social worker, a teacher, a doctor, a mother ...like whatever. Like when they go to Creative Village Studio they can finally define themselves as artists, as something! They...they have a role, they have a title, and that comes all down to social [role] valorisation. All the things that are important to people without a disability are important to people with disabilities. Why do we think it otherwise? It’s the same (emphasis added)” (Shannon Groom, Interview, November 25, 2019)!



Photograph from Connections Fibre Artists Blog

Gallery Owner Sybil Rampen

“The purpose of the gallery was to make a place for emerging artists because artists cannot get into commercial galleries unless they have been in a gallery. So, that was my major realization that they need to have an emerging artists’ gallery and we have marvelous openings” (Sybil Rampen, Interview, December 9, 2019)!



The Chronicle Pamphlet from Art from the Heart Show. (2020).
[Skyers, C. *Arctic*. (2019),
[Original artwork acrylic paint on canvas, 3' x 4'].