

# *unscene*

Willow Arts Community Annual Group Exhibition



May 29–June 14, 2025



## ABOUT WILLOW ARTS COMMUNITY

Willow Arts is a celebrated peer-led arts organization located in the heart of downtown St. Catharines. We foster safe spaces for creative exploration and connections for people living with mental illness/substance use (MI/SU) in Niagara.

We offer seasonal multidisciplinary arts education programming and creative opportunities at no cost to members. All materials are provided, and no previous experience is necessary for participation. We hire local professional and working artists to design and facilitate programming. This bolsters the livelihoods of artists within our community and builds peer networks.

Our commitment to remaining at no cost is driven by the understanding that the majority of individuals living with MI/SU live at or below the poverty line. 1 in 5 residents in Niagara will face a mental health crisis in any given year. We affirm that access to the arts is vital in supporting individual health and helps to build stronger communities.

Willow members have indicated that active participation in our programming reduces social isolation, increases a sense of belonging, builds self-esteem, expands professional and social networks, and increases artistic output.

To learn more visit: [www.thewillowcommunity.com](http://www.thewillowcommunity.com)



## ABOUT *UNSCENE*

This exhibition brings together over 40 artists and creatives living with mental illness and substance use in Niagara, and features a diverse array of artworks including mixed media, sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, fibre arts, music, poetry, and installation. The opening reception featured wearable art from a sculptural costume course held during our spring season.

Willow members were encouraged to create work that reveals the “unseen” parts of themselves — identity, experience, and perspective. They were also welcome to create work that excites them, and we in turn made it widely “seen”. Pieces reflecting on the local art scene, or any scene the artist is a part of, were also invited. The artists were supported in our shared studio by professional artists, and had access to free art supplies, space to develop work, and time to collaborate with peers.

This exhibition stands as a collective testament to courage and truth—heartbreaking, challenging, and profoundly real. We are deeply grateful to the artists for trusting us to hold and foster this space, where stories can be shared, witnessed, and transformed. For those in the process of healing, the act of making—and exhibiting—art becomes a way to give shape and meaning to experience.

We are grateful for the continued relationship and partnership we share with the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts/Brock University. We appreciate this opportunity to exhibit Willow members’ work, as well as having access to the knowledge and experience of the staff and leadership who continue to prioritize the importance of Willow Arts.



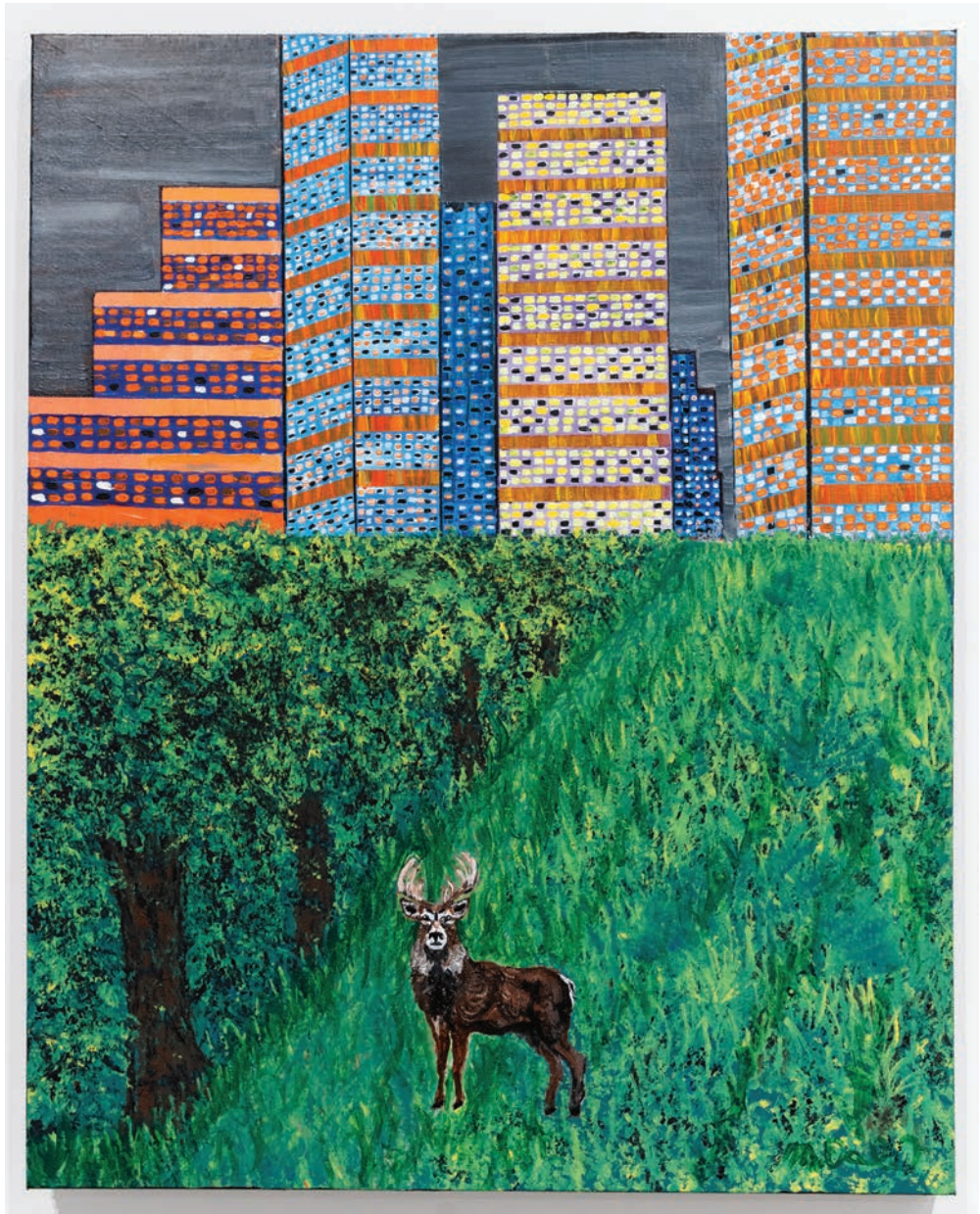




Kate Spiegel | *We Can Grow Stronger Together!* | Muslin, fabric paint, trim and thread | 2025



John Bacher | *Honor Onwanansyshon* | Acrylic on canvas | 2025



Marvin Dale | *Encroachment* | Acrylic on canvas | 2025



James Webb | *Untitled* | Acrylic and pastel on canvas | 2025





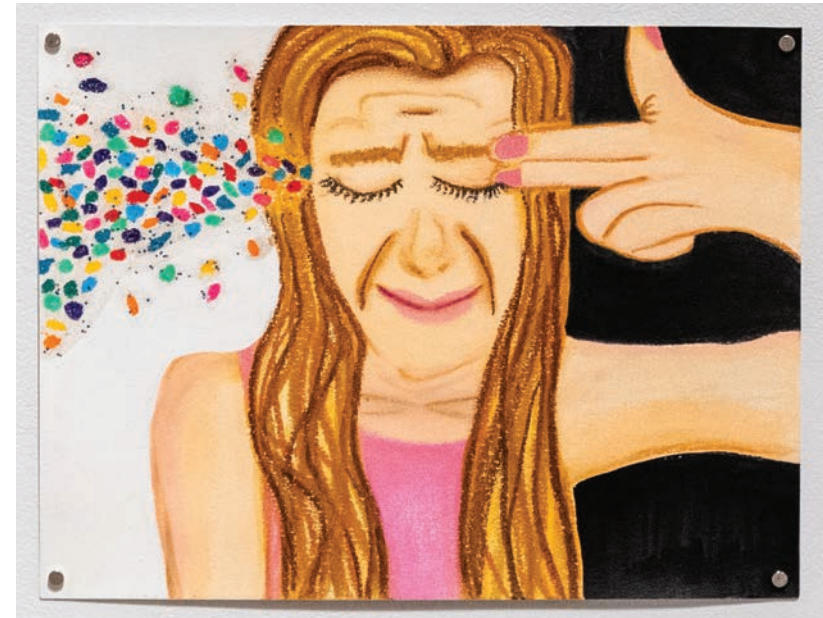
Mckell Lacroix-Derosier | *The Monster of my Making* | Mixed media sculpture | 2025



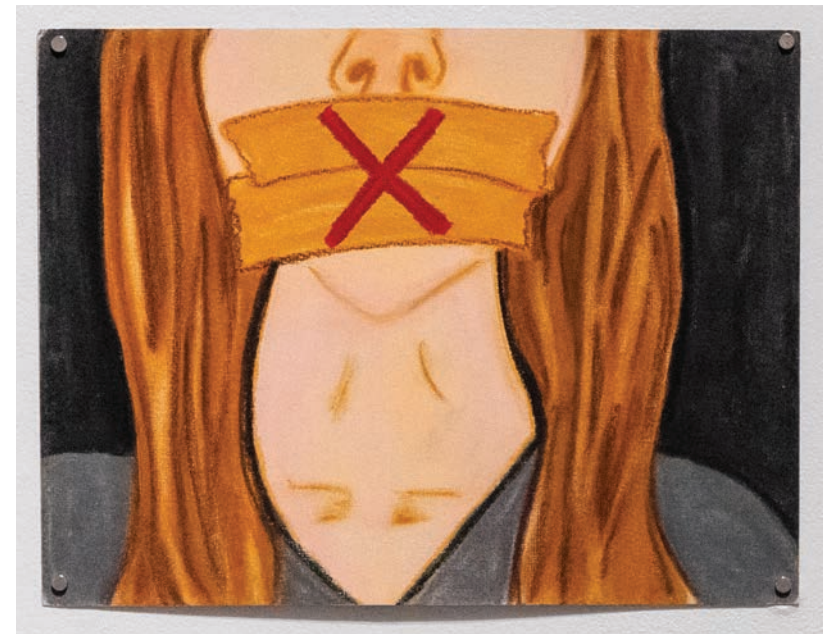
Lenore M'igvyer | *Self Care Doll* | Sculpey, fabric, acrylic paint, popsicle sticks, beads, repurposed objects, nail art, sparkles | 2025



Sarah Carter | *Layers of Emotions* | Mixed media | 2025



Melissa Pear | *Ruminations* | Mont Marte Twistable Colors, white and black Posca paint pens, glitter nail polish | 2024



Melissa Pear | *Silenced* | Mont Marte Twistable Colors | 2024



Jessie Hirniak | *Unseen* | Acrylic paint, pencil and oil pastels on canvas | 2025



Tamaira Bodogh & Daniel Bodogh | *Autumn Bloom* | Mixed media on canvas | 2025



Catherine Brady | *Freedom* | Acrylic, ink, bronze leaf and glass on canvas | 2025



Andrea Wiens | *Unfinished Sculpture* | Clay | 2024



Robert "Bear" Royal | *Integration of the Shadow Self* | Reclaimed wood | 2025

“In seeking to make sense of life’s struggle and find meaning in its inherent suffering; I was forced to go beyond the purely intellectual and seek answers on the fringes where the utility of words breaks down.

My art provided a vehicle for me to explore those parts of myself that are beyond the reach of intellect alone. This is what I attempt to convey through my art - that there is meaning, purpose and beauty to be found in the struggle and decay we see all around us. In fact it is the pain and the overcoming of adversities that allows for meaning and purpose in our existence.

My approach as an artist is not to “create” beauty, but rather to expose and highlight the beauty that already exists in the chosen medium as a representation of what I see around me. Nature is “imperfect”, asymmetrical, this is why I am drawn to reclaimed wood as a medium- because it seems to me the purest representation of what exists all around in nature. If I look out over any given landscape there is more decay than new growth visible in the scene. This is why starting with a “flawed” medium, I also place “mistakes” in my work to emphasize that imperfection and decay are a defining characteristic of our reality, and not an aberration that detracts from the beauty of life. In fact they are defining elements of nature’s beauty.

This tension between perfect/imperfect is different in every one of my pieces. There are no formulas. The interactions produced visually between the different media worked with demands a continual shifting on this front with sometimes greater, sometimes lesser manipulation required.

For me, choosing a theme to work is about trying to give insight into why we respond to a particular visual experience and expose what exactly makes for a “beautiful” or “moving” experience. The chosen subject will be one that facilitates this exploring and highlighting of the deeper elements which produce an emotional response. This primarily dictates what themes I explore in a given art series.

Aged and decaying wood is certainly not a traditional medium for artists. However, I find the colours and patinas of time and weathering make reclaimed wood a powerful conduit to express myself. I believe this medium visually conveys deep truths of our existence. The flawed and decaying medium of reclaimed wood is the purest representation of what I see around me and therein lies the reason it produces such an emotional response. It connects me with my own mortality and the beauty and meaning to be found in that.

I struggle to express the deeper levels of my emotion and experience. What I cannot express with words, I attempt to express in my art.

“My art is a way to express what I struggle to say and also what I see in nature.

This piece was inspired by a photo I had taken on the beach. The wind had forced ripples in the sand. It was beautiful.

When I revisited the photo, it revealed a bird soaring high. With the theme of the unseen, I wanted to capture the beauty of nature and of movement. My inner warrior appeared. She too is unseen.

As layers of various mediums like charcoal, graphite, pastel modeling paste, and acrylic paint were applied to the canvas images began to appear. Just like the ripples on the sand.

The hawk soaring above.

The hummingbird - my dad, the turtle- my brother. Both of them have left this world but walk with me every day and appear signs in nature.

Playing with the backside of an upcycled canvas, it felt like breaking the rules. The painting started to feel raw, edgy, against the grain and unfinished. I always feel like my artwork is never done. It could always be pushed further. A work in progress. In life I feel like we all are a work in progress.

I invite you to take a peek at the other side of the canvas.



Tricia Franklin | *Inner Warrior* | Mixed media on upcycled canvas | 2025



**Yenis Camargo** | *Catharsis* | Loom weaving, crochet tapestry, acrylic paint, natural vines on repurposed door | 2025

“*Catharsis* is a piece about transformation and beauty. This old door, once thrown away, now has a new life through art.

I painted cherry blossoms with acrylic and also crocheted some of the flowers. In the windows, I placed handmade weavings, full of colors and different knots. This piece is about things made with love, patience, and creativity. It’s a tribute to the handmade, the feminine, and the power of giving new meaning to something forgotten.

*Catharsis* is not just a decorated door — it’s an invitation to see beauty in simple things and to open up new possibilities.

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*Catarsis es una obra que habla de transformación y belleza. Esta puerta vieja, que alguien había desechado, ahora tiene una nueva vida gracias al arte.*

*La pinté con flores de cerezo en acrílico, y también tejí algunas con crochet. En las ventanas, incluí tapices hechos a mano en telar, con hilos de colores y distintos tipos de nudos. Todo en esta obra representa lo hecho con amor, paciencia y creatividad. Es un homenaje a lo femenino, a lo artesanal y a la magia de darle valor a lo que parecía perdido.*

*Catarsis no es solo una puerta decorada; es una invitación a ver la belleza en lo simple y a abrir nuevas posibilidades.*



Leah Klassen | *Calm Beneath the Storm* | Acrylic and pen on canvas  
| 2025

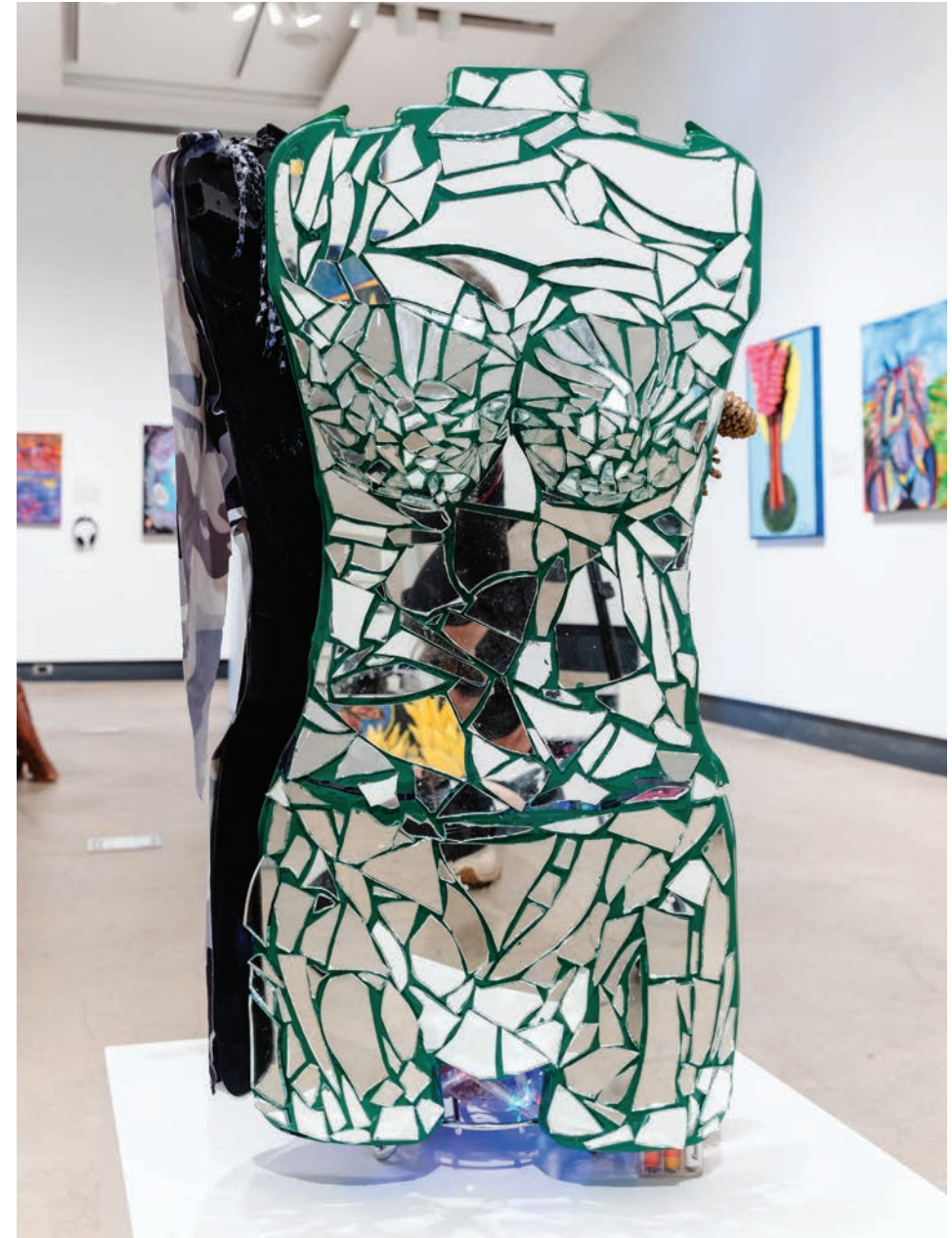


Leah Klassen | *Singing Trees* | Acrylic and pen on canvas | 2025

“This painting is based on a dream I had where I experienced the sensation of trees singing to me. In this dream I didn’t hear the music with my ears but instead felt it radiate through my whole self. I felt deeply connected and seen in this moment. The nesting doll represents myself, the vibrant colours of the trees represent the music and the birds are inspired by drawings by my Great Great Grandmother Sarah Funk Loewen Falk found in her journals from Russia. I love to honour my heritage and ancestors through my art.



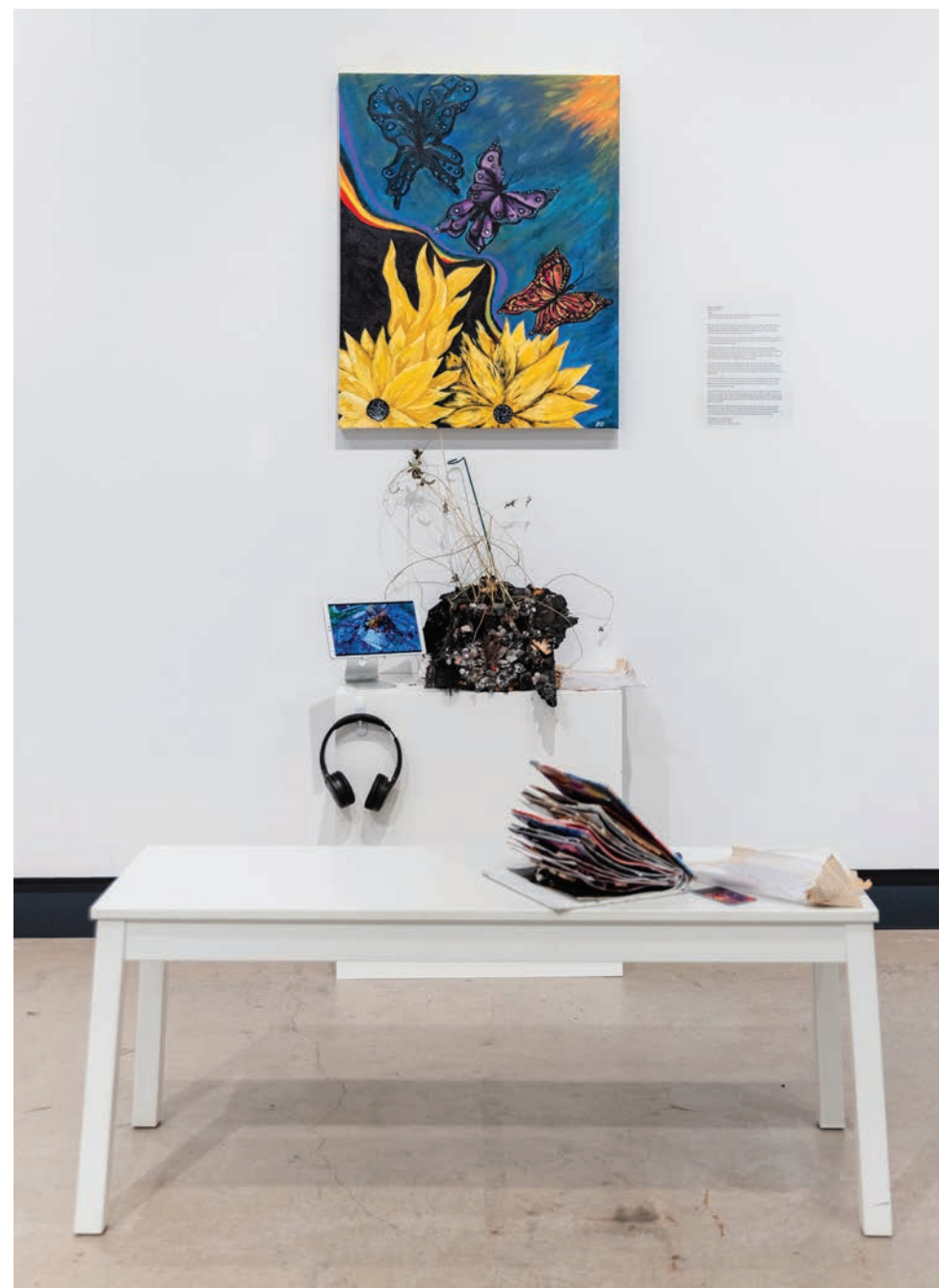
**Paddy Barrett** | *Shower of Tears* | Mixed media | 2025



**Zendragonette** | *The Goddess* | Recycled materials | 2025



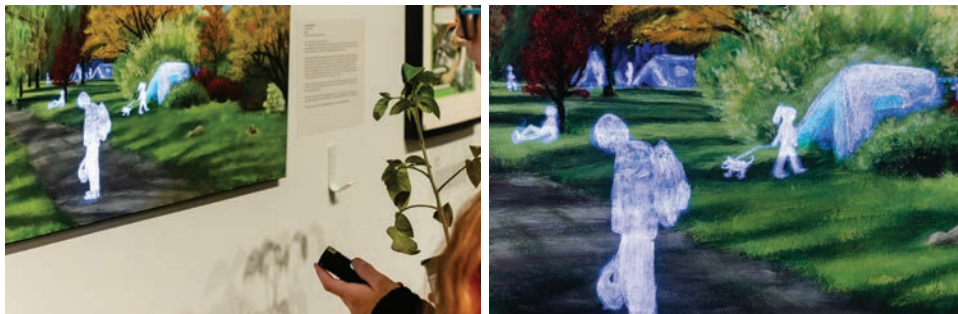
Michelle Boulay | *Depression* | Mixed media on box | 2025



Barb Lynn Baker | *Break the Cycle* | Acrylic on canvas, altered book, potted sunflowers, mixed media, written poetry and video with artist singing Pink's song "All I Know So Far" | 2025



Farrow Mascoe | *The Unseen* | Acrylic and UV paint on canvas | 2025



Kit Andres | *Restoration* | Paper collage | 2025



Rajshree Jena | SYNERGY OF SELF | Acrylic on canvas | 2025

“This canvas is a visual exploration of the intricate landscape of the inner self. At its crown, a form reminiscent of the brain unfolds, its sections blooming with diverse botanical patterns. These represent the multifaceted nature of the mind – a garden of thoughts, experiences, and perceptions, where the restless “monkey mind” finds its playful embodiment.

Centrally rooted, a lotus flower emerges, a timeless symbol of purity and the blossoming of consciousness. From its radiant core descends a column, a visual echo of the spine and the subtle energy channels that weave through our being. Along this pathway, luminous dots or stars punctuate the space, suggesting the vibrant presence of the chakras, the energetic centers that orchestrate our inner world.

Flanking this central axis, fluid blue patterns ripple like water or waves, perhaps mirroring the ebb and flow of emotions and the depths of the subconscious. Ultimately, this painting is an invitation to contemplate the journey of self-discovery.

Colours and their connection with nature are my inspiration and healer. Painting is my meditative outlet that allows me to reflect on the world as I see it and my place in it. Being from India exposed me to a variety of folk arts. I bring these into my paintings, where simple lines tell a story with play of vibrant colours.

As an artist, my work is a fusion of my passion for architecture, art, penmanship, and painting. Drawing upon my background in architecture and art, I blend elements of acrylic and watercolour to create pieces that showcase the beauty and wonder I find in the world. The influence of Reiki in my art adds a deeper energy and meaning, allowing me to connect with my audience on a spiritual level.

My inspiration comes from the vibrant colours of picturesque landscapes, the freedom of travel, the grace of birds, and the delicate elegance of flowers. These elements form the foundation of my art, each stroke of the brush reflecting- trees are metaphors for being beautiful and alive, which I wanted to express in my works.



Dani RJ Hummel | *The Seeds We Leave Behind* | Mixed media on canvas | 2025



Nancy L. | *My Journey of Healing with Complex Trauma* | Mixed media | 2025



Andrea Eby | *everLASTing HUG* | Acrylic on banner paper | 2025



Tasha Dowd | *aen miiraak aen pchi biibii* | Acrylic on canvas | 2025



sophie scott mansbridge | *Precursor for Creativity* | Self portrait photography print | 2025



Kai Kristoff | *Intergenerational Trauma* | Scrap metal and puzzle pieces | 2025



Kathy Black | *Shadow* | Acrylic on canvas | 2025



Paul Reslinski | *Oneiros Wing (Dreams Unseen)* | Acrylic on wood | 2025



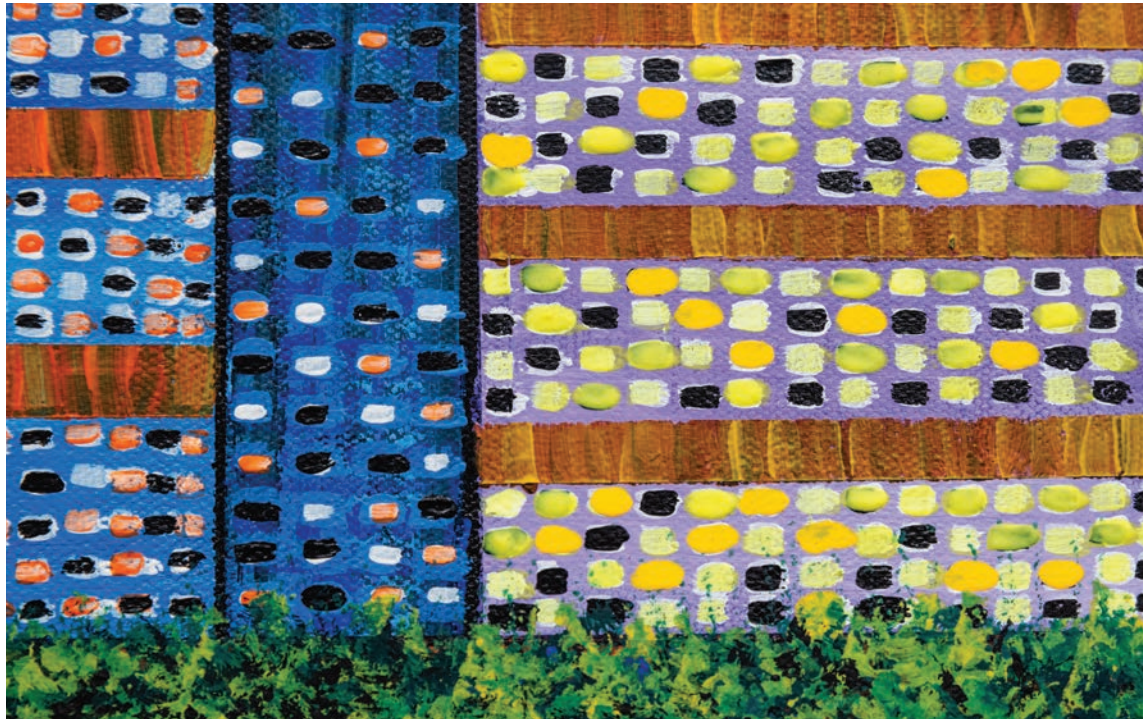
Tammy Mae Fenner | *Letting Go* | Tempered glass shards and resin | 2025

“This year began with three days of my home being shot at. As someone who has been working through PTSD; the event was shattering to say the least. There was quite a lot of broken glass to clean up in the dead of winter. Without having a specific vision at the time, I felt compelled to save the shards to make something meaningful of it. This piece represents a moment suspended in time; but it is more than that. It is a moment of reflection of what actions are out of our hands  
It is the freeze response when our own hands feel foreign  
It is the quiet surrender of what we cannot change  
It is the strength of release—the belief that in letting go of the broken pieces, we make room for something new to take shape.











## Thanks + Acknowledgments:

**Coordination:** Sonya de Lazzer

**Curation and Installation:** Matt Caldwell, Sonya de Lazzer,  
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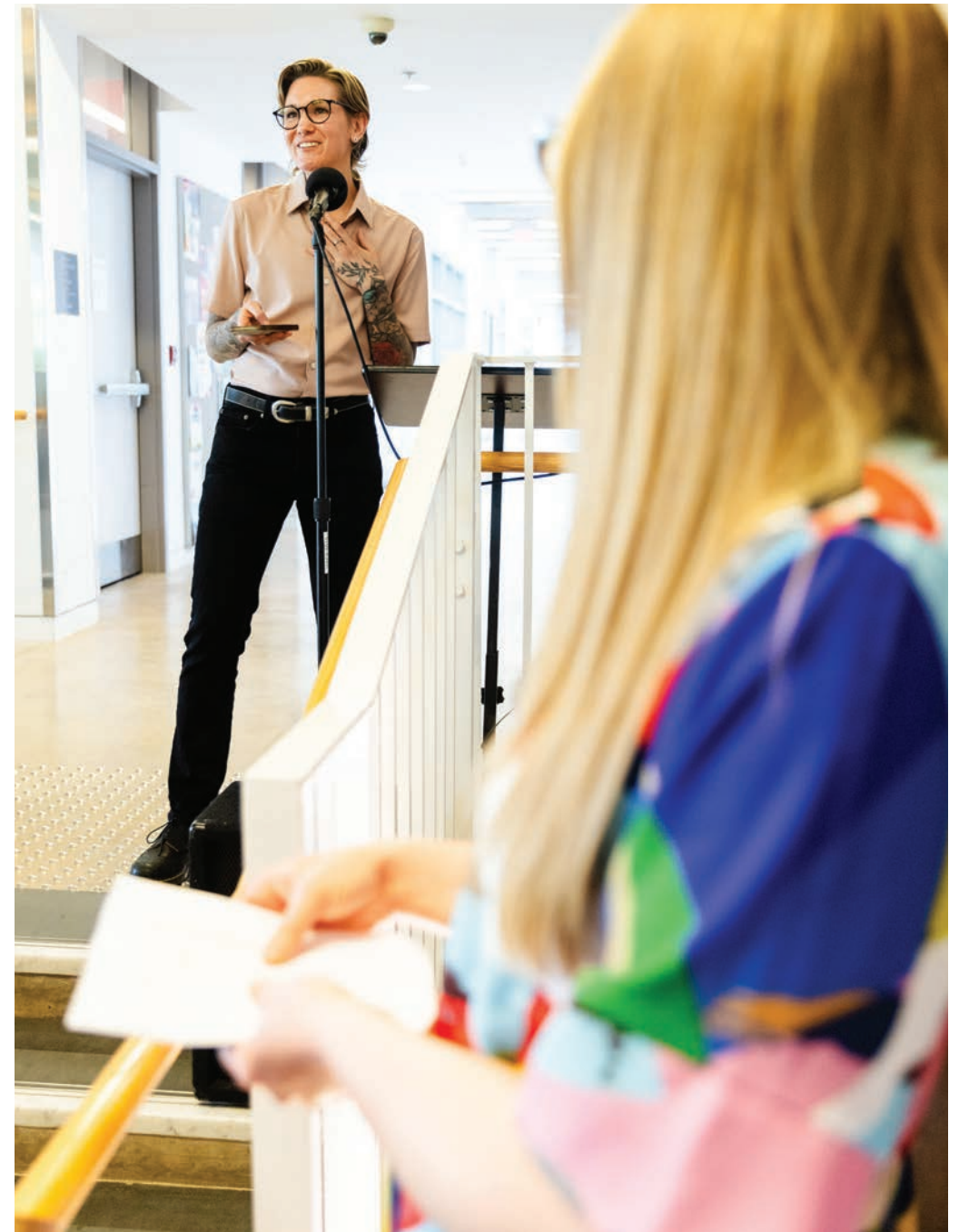
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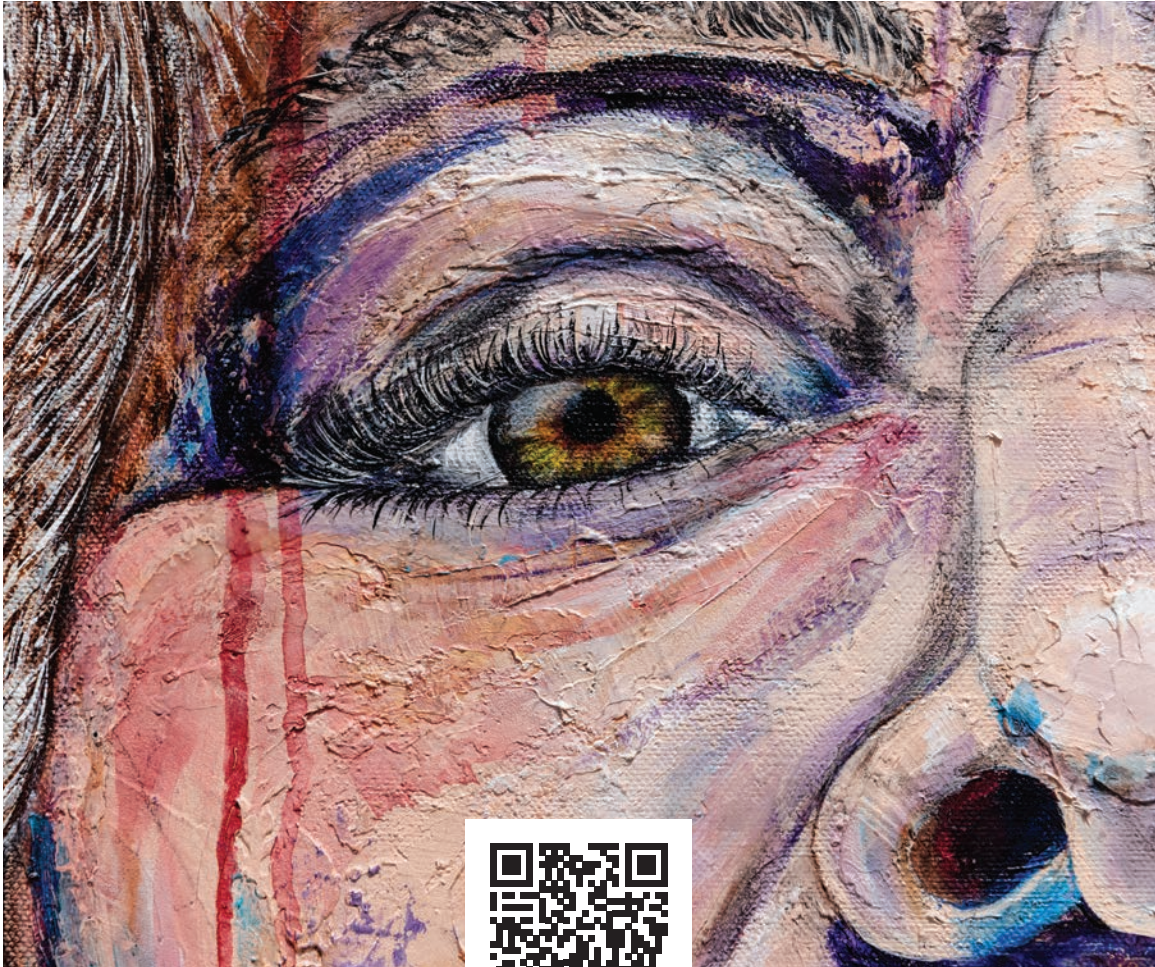
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### EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Kit Andres, Elliot Auwen, John Bacher, Barb Lynn Baker, Paddy Barrett, Kathy Black, Tamaira and Daniel Bodogh, Michelle Boulay, Catherine Brady, Yenis Camargo, Sarah Carter, Marvin Dale, Tasha Dowd, Andrea Eby, Tammy Mae Fenner, Tricia Franklin, J. Gill, Jessie Hirniak, Dani RJ Hummel, Rajshree Jena, Leah Klassen, Kai Kristoff, Nancy L., Mckell Lacroix-Derosier, Lenore M'igyver, sophie scott mansbridge, Farrow Mascoe, Melissa Pear, Paul Reslinski, Robert "Bear" Royal, Kate Spiegel, James Webb, Andrea Wiens, Zendragonette



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ARTS  
COMMUNITY**  
*Create · Connect · Celebrate*