



The wombs we come from

Curated by Lana Whiskeyjack

February 26-March 11, 2018

The Stollery Gallery at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts

MJ Belcourt Moses
Kasie Campbell
Sofia Cristanti
Linda Fay (Ootemin)
Dez Stewart

Dedicated to all the wombs who gave life, unconditional love and
dedication to protecting the waters and land for our future generations
~ I sakwe you

Curator Statement:

The Wombs We Come From is my curatorial debut. This exhibition is birthed from traditional nêhiyaw (Cree) iskwewewin (womanhood) values of the sacredness and power of women. The etymology of nêhiyawewin (Cree language) introduction relates back to our umbilical connection.

The root word of nitisiyihkâson (my name is...) and ohci nîya (I am from...) is ohtisiy - bellybutton. As a nêhiyaw (Cree person), our identity is directly connected to the wombs we come from.

I invited five diverse iskwewak (women) artists who reside in Edmonton, Alberta, Treaty Six territory, to share their visual reflections on the wombs they come from. The result was five omphalic visual stories shared through a variety of beautiful colours, textures, mediums, and perspectives; from Desiree Stewart's small glossy ceramic fetus and reflective mixed-media uterus to Kasie Campbell's soft abundant collaborative fabric creations. It was beautiful to see Kasie, her mother and daughter help with installing her work. MJ Belcourt Moses' natural material creations reflect her family's Cree ancestral cosmological, nêhiyawewin (Cree language), acahk-pekinahk (spirit markers also known as syllabics), and woman as the home fires; and Ootemin Linda Fay Lawrence's large acrylic paintings of the dancing northern lights celebrates three generations of her mother, herself, and her daughter. Sofia, who immigrated to Canada from Indonesia, shares Wombland mixed-media paintings of where all human life begins in that sacred space of the womb.

- Lana Whiskeyjack




Kasia Campbell

While considering the theme of the show *The Wombs We Come From*, I began to contemplate a series of works that I have recently done in collaboration with my mum, Ginette Lund. The themes and nature of my work thus far, have been about women and the relationship that women have to their bodies, self-esteem and certain ways they may feel uncomfortable in social situations.

Since my mother is a terrific craftsperson, a part of this project has required her to craft sculptures on the theme of body image using yarn and crochet. This performative and sculptural work relates to the way that I was raised and the ways that women generally feel about themselves with respect to their mothers. The chosen material, thread, yarn (through knitting, crochet, sewing), pantyhose, a variety of textiles and cotton batting, explore the link between tradition, domesticity, gender and play directly on the irony of familiar stereotypes.

This collaborative project was rather provocative and I enjoyed getting to see that side of my mum as we worked through sketches and shared images back and forth. As long as I can remember, my mum has had lupus, but this year presented us with more challenges than ever. Collaborating with her has shed some light and humour in the form of text of messages of her posing provocatively, hands against the wall while wearing the crocheted body suit and other messages that read “How long do you want that tit?” To messages that read “I’ll call you as soon as I am done at the hospital”. Through sculpture and performance, we are drawing from the paradigms of personal experience as mothers, daughters and as women in the form of traditional women’s craft.

Kasia Campbell, *Grow (Up)*, Found Objects, Fabrics, Cotton Batting, Pantyhose, 2018



Linda Fay Lawrence

“The Wombs We Come From” theme had me thinking about my own ancestral ties which led me to reflect upon this personal healing journey thus far. It definitely was plagued by confusion as both my parents and grandparents eluded the truth about who “we” actually were as indigenous people, switching from being Indian to Metis to Indian. Furthermore, I had identity issues too, also included switching names, from “Fay Linda” to “Linda Fay.” Hence, I honor my paternal grandfather’s name “Ootehimin” which translates to Strawberry in Cree, and I use “Ootemin” for identifying with my art.

Needless to say, my upbringing was mixed with indigenous languages of both Cree (Nehihaw-en) and Chipeweyan (Denesoline) being spoken and when asked what language they were speaking, they told me it was French. The message was clear at an early age, regardless of the reason, “do not speak, do not see, do not hear” as it is somehow forbidden. Such deception was fed to them by the Residential schools’ staff and church’s cruel and abusive treatment of students while in their care. The residential school legacy has impacted intergenerational children since its closures. The future generation may need to abandon traditional lifestyles to pursue careers away from their ancestral homeland in order to survive. I also suffered abuse as a child and my journey was meant to better the life of my own children, ensuring safer and smoother times than mine were and definitely, more disconnected than the trails of my grandmothers and their own mothers and so on who walked on Mother Earth. It is imperative we keep celebrating our languages and tradition.

My journey also fed into my own addictions and finally had to cease, one addiction at a time. My ancestral roots are deeply embedded with the Metis (French and Scottish bloodlines) and Dene (Athapaskan) ancestry. My womb, my mother’s and grandmother’s wombs also define our journeys and our daughters’ lives to whom we were connected to in the earth plane and certainly before in the spiritual realm. Unbeknownst to us, as Mothers, we did not know we were about to give birth to females. I reflected upon the northern scene as it was our home with its magnetic aurora borealis, so the paintings begin with my maternal Grandmother being in the womb of her mother, her name is Elizabeth. Since my roots and cultural heritage have colonial ties to our ancestors, I believe my ancestors have definitely been impacted our lives as the colonizers have influenced us, with desires to making it easier for the next generation.

Ootemin, *Fay Linda*, Acrylic on Canvas, 2018

Sofia Cristanti



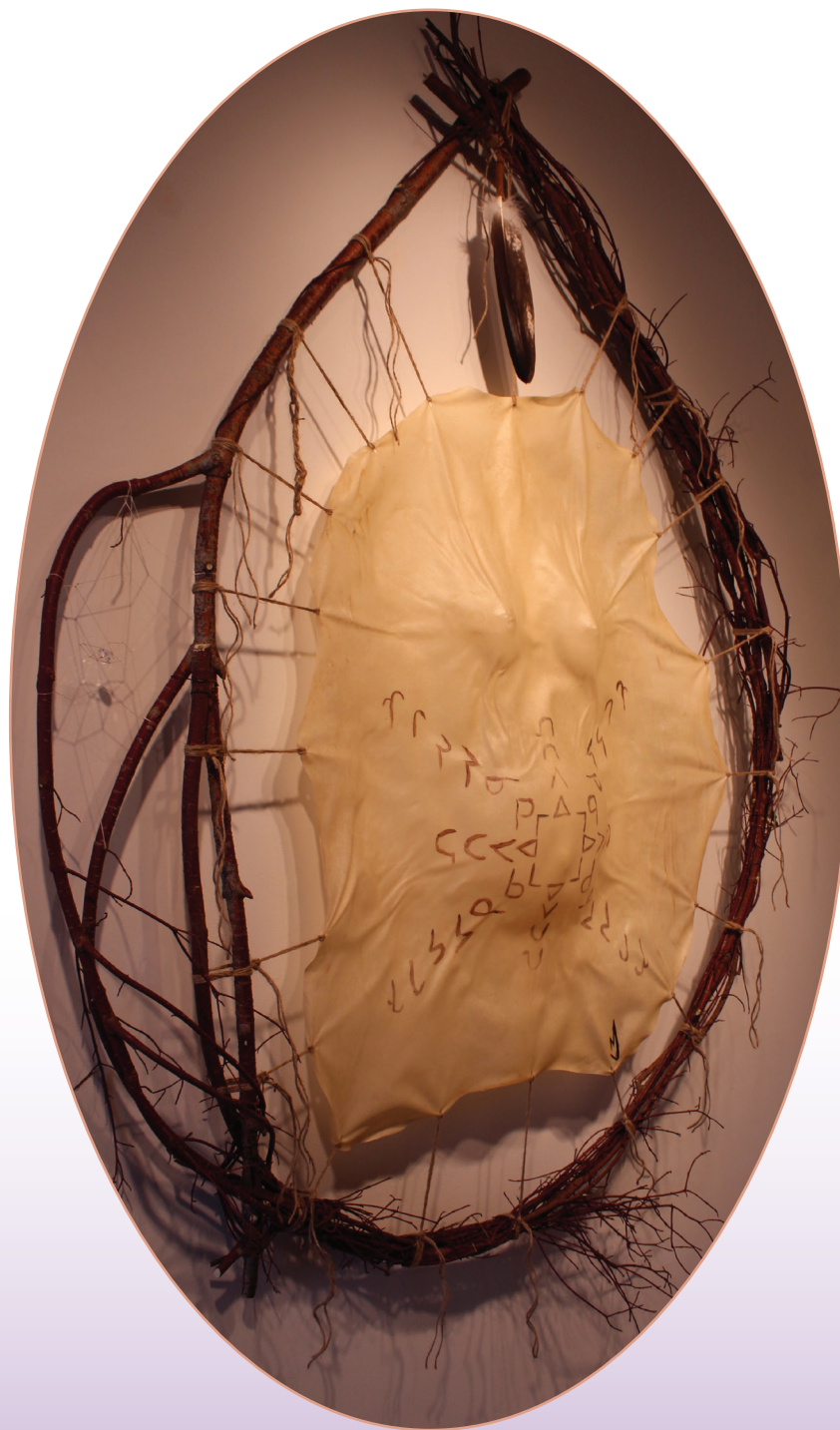
Sofia Cristanti, *Wombland II*, Acrylic and Fibre on Canvas, 2018

When Lana told me about the theme of the exhibit, “The Wombs We Come From,” I was excited because I have been investigating my own identity during my transition in life as a first generation immigrant in Canada. The womb came across in my mind as feminine gender identity, and a special feature of the woman’s body.

My painting series titled *In The Womb Land* visualizes four womb landscapes representing how a human has been created. This theme was explored by incorporating textile art images like Batik pattern as a representation of my Indonesian origin, where Batik is an Indonesian traditional wearable textile. On the canvases I have installed contemporary macramé and wool weaving to symbolize how life in Canada has influenced me, living in the North with textile wool culture. The series is telling my past, present, and hopeful future life, while visualizing women’s symbols like pink, blood, baby, and textiles.

MJ Belcourt Moses

MJ Belcourt Moses comes from a rich Metis ancestry and possesses a wealth of cultural skills, acquired from Metis and Aboriginal elders throughout northern and central Alberta. As a descendent of the French, Cree and Mohawk people of the Michel Band, Melissa-Jo has strong reverence for the skills and technology employed by her ancestors.



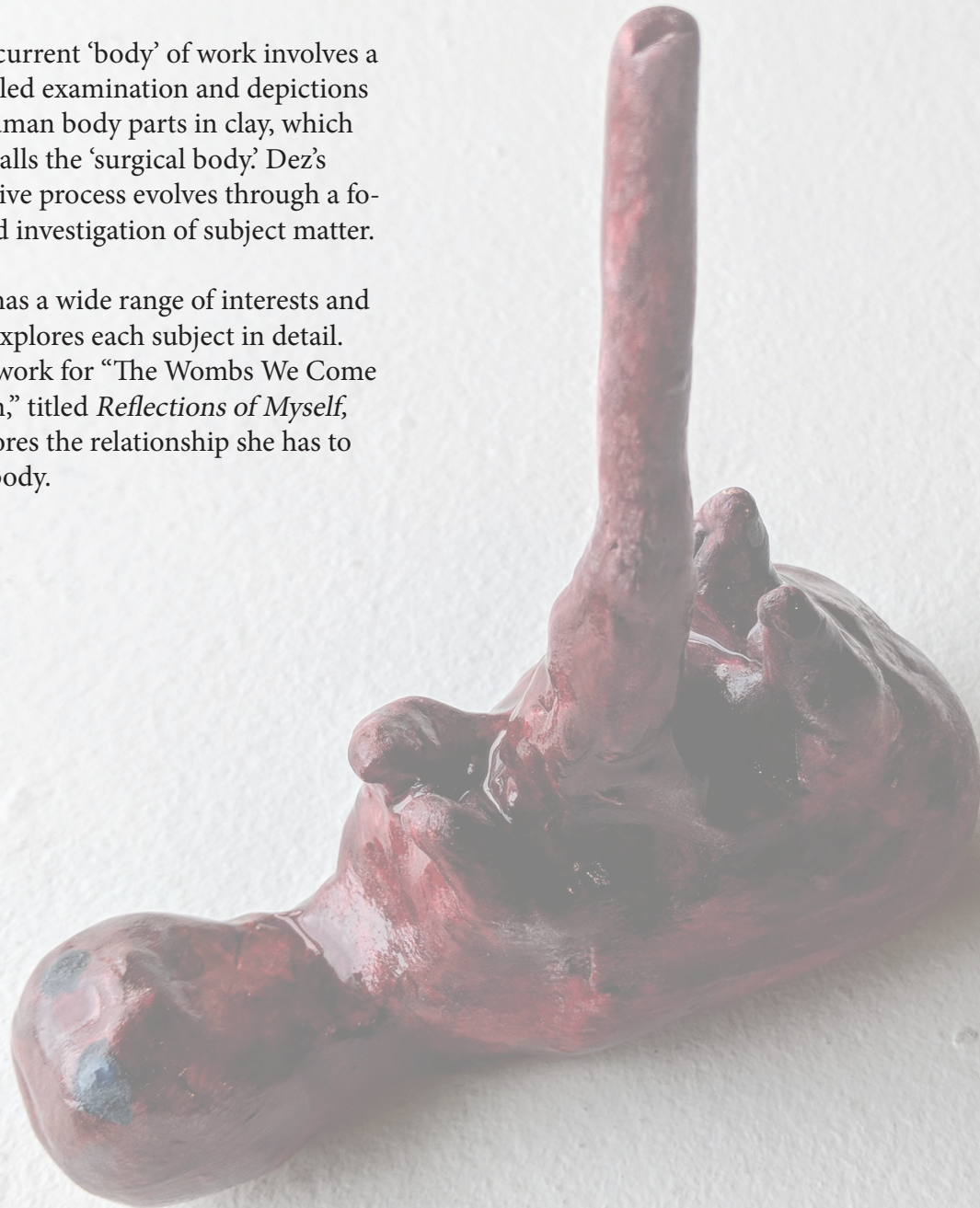
MJ Belcourt Moses, *acahkosak ê-ohciyahk (We Come From the Stars)*, Deerskin, Red Willow, Eagle Feather, Sinew, Jute, Crystal, 2018

Desiree Stewart

Dez is an accomplished artist and works with many mediums – clay, glass, lino print, drawing and painting. She has done many works with pastel on paper and canvas.

Her current ‘body’ of work involves a detailed examination and depictions of human body parts in clay, which she calls the ‘surgical body’. Dez’s creative process evolves through a focused investigation of subject matter.

She has a wide range of interests and she explores each subject in detail. Her work for “The Wombs We Come From,” titled *Reflections of Myself*, explores the relationship she has to her body.



Dez Stewart, *Fetus...*, Ceramic, 2018

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âyihiy mistahi kakīyaw ni-wahkomākanak (Thank you greatly all my relations)

