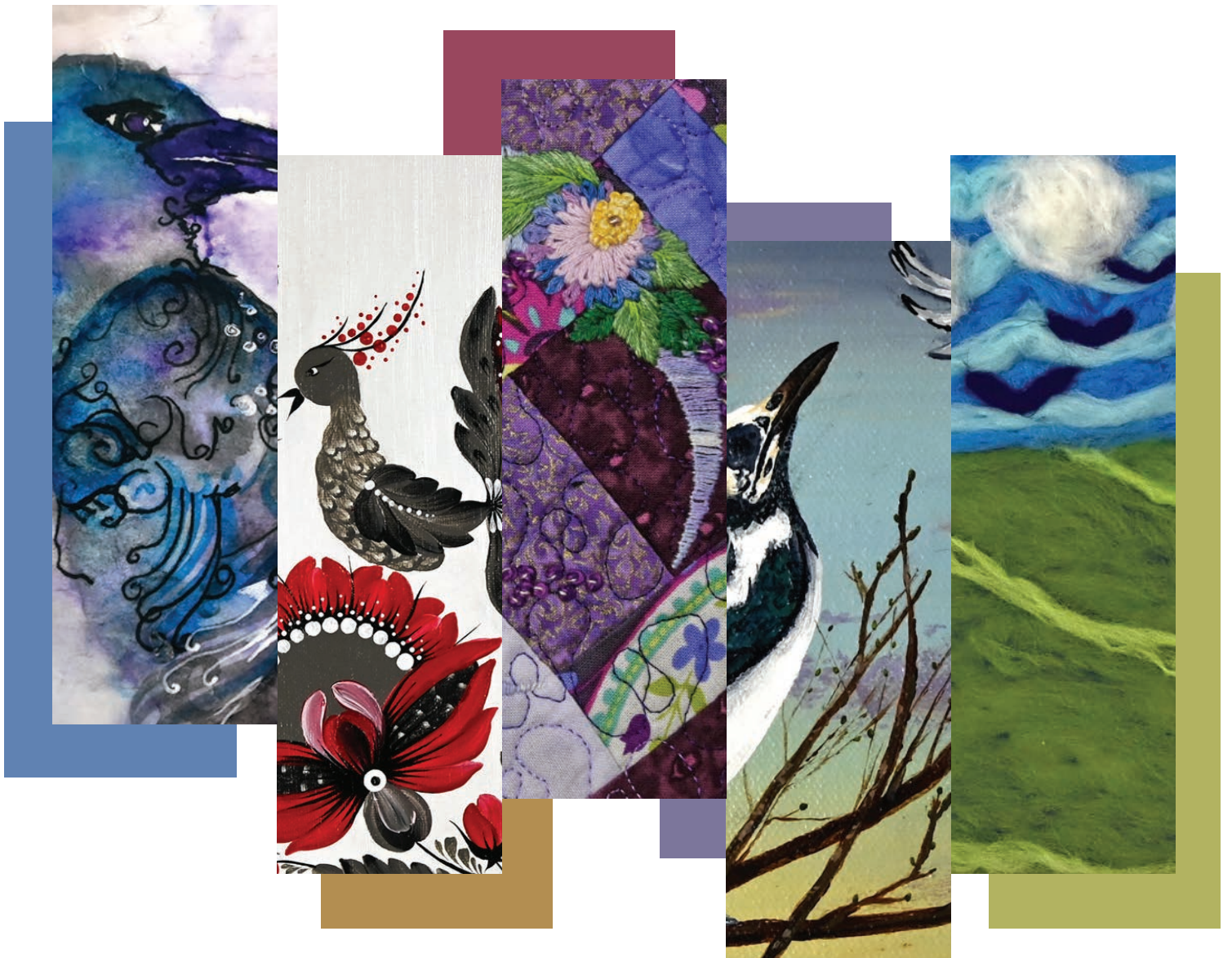


HOPEFUL *fragments*



BRENDA SCHENK | VIKTORIIA POLISHCHUK | SHAUNA-LEE BILLWILLER
MICHELLE FORRESTER | DESIRÉE DESROCHERS-PEQUENO

HOPEFUL *fragments*

Acknowledgements

TREX Northwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for the Travelling Exhibition Program. We would like to thank the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie for supporting this region as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Curator & Art Projects: Jamie-Lee Cormier & KC Santos

Preparation: Robert Swanston

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Published 2026

We acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 8 territory—the ancestral Land of the sovereign Dane-zaa, Nehiyawak, Dene, and Otipemisiwak Nations. We acknowledge the many Indigenous Peoples who have lived and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude.

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie also recognizes that Land Acknowledgments are not enough. Through our actions we commit to truth, reconciliation, decolonization, and allyship in support of Indigenous lifeways and wellbeing.



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Alberta Foundation for the Arts

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

Northwest Region:

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

Northeast and North Central Region:

The Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

Southwest Region:

The Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

Southeast Region:

The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat

Each year, more than 600,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program also offers educational support material to help educators integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREX program are curated from a variety of sources, including private and public collections. A major part of the program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 9,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 1700 artists. The AFA art collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.



The AFA and TREX partners respectfully acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8: lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.





Region 1: Northwest Alberta

HOPEFUL *fragments*

In this exhibition, the artists drew on life experiences to reveal what brings hope, joy, love and peace into their world. It is their hope that viewers feel and embrace what these works hold. In today's world we sometimes need a bit of hope to help us get by. For some, hope is an active mindset and emotional anchor that lets us envision a better tomorrow, fostering resilience during adversity.

Hopeful Fragments features five Peace Region artists who have not met until this show came to fruition. Together, they created a show of tiny works meant to provide comfort, strength, along with the belief that positive change is possible. When experiencing Brenda Schenk's intuitive energy paintings, take a minute to see the hidden images that appear in the free-flowing paint. Fabric works by Michelle Forester and Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno offer the viewer hope, joy, love and peace with fragments of space and feeling.

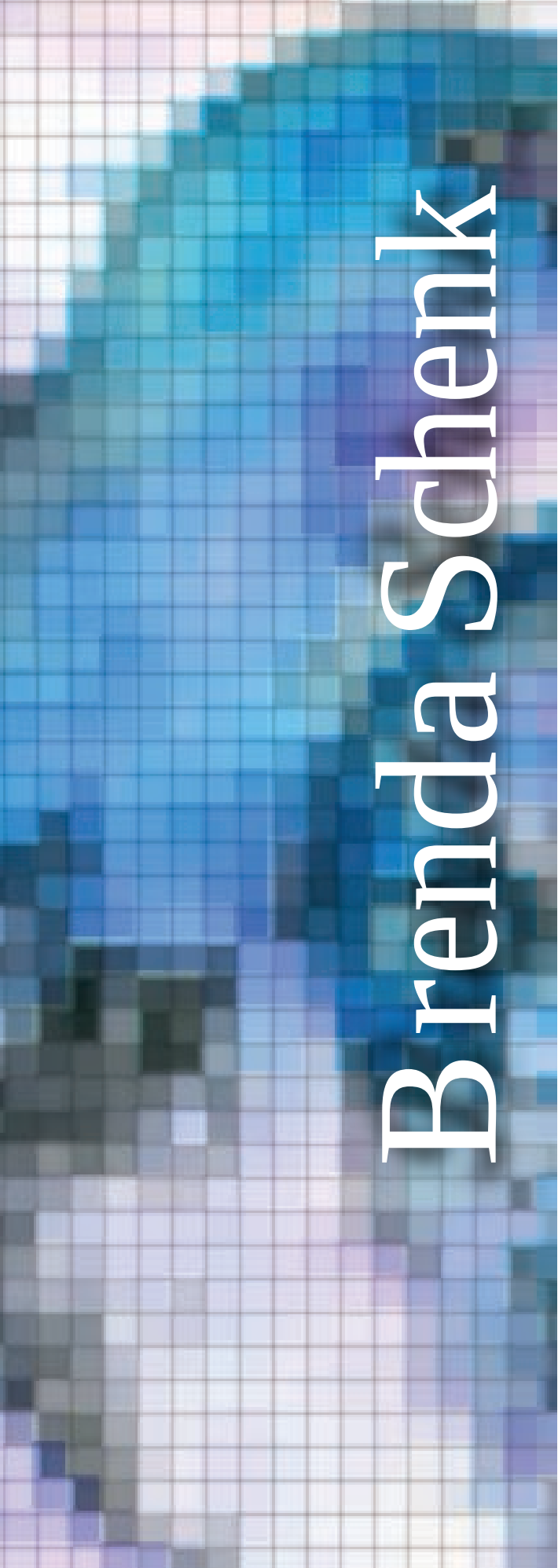
Hope arrives entwined with the reality of emotions that challenge us. Viktoriia Polishchuks created her work at a time when her homeland, Ukraine, has been enduring profound challenges - war, displacement and threats to its cultural identity. She embraced the Petrykivka style, bringing bright floral and natural motifs to the fore - even in dark times. In Shauna-Lee Billwiller's *Soulmate*, a magpie takes centre stage and shows the beauty of how life and death are intertwined. Hope is not just optimism: it is the active pursuit of goals despite difficult circumstances. It lifts us up and motivates us to move forward when we want to give up.

Curated by Jamie-Lee Cormier © 2026 Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

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Brenda Schenk

Biography

And I am an intuitive energy artist.

I have always been an intuitive and creative soul, my painting journey began in a very quiet and almost unintentional way, it barely began before it would stop and sat dormant for a few years to follow. Some major life-changing events in quick succession would stop my entire life, almost completely... that's when the deepest journey of my life began.

In 2011 I began to find comfort in this creative outlet and was only partially aware of its healing effects on my soul. In the beginning, I showed my art to only family and close friends, it was really all about the feeling I experienced, not the art itself ...which turns out to be the most important factor in my work today.

I have never received art training unless you count finger painting in grade one, how I loved that! Instead, I was gently drawn into this world of blending colors and allowing the water to move the paint as I watched with a soft gaze, I found it completely mesmerizing and it easily coaxed me into a hypnotic state.

With some encouragement, I began sharing my art on social media and began receiving some commissions! I continued to paint and learn more on my own, nothing else thrills me like a blank canvas, it feels like opening a magical door that will lead to surprises and things I've never seen or dreamt of before ...

I describe myself as an intuitive energy artist, painting pieces that will appeal to many, and also offering intuitive art in an individual client's energy, created solely for them.

My process is best described as, "Releasing Creatively while in a meditative state." I love to share this process within my in-person workshops.



Brenda Schenk
Shaman's Dream
Watercolour with wood frame
4in x 4in



Brenda Schenk
Together Again
Watercolour with wood frame
4in x5in



Brenda Schenk
Hidden Protection
Acrylic with wood frame
8in x 8in



Brenda Schenk
Connected
Acrylic with wood frame
8in x 8in



Viktoriia Polishchuk

Biography

Viktoriia Polishchuk is a Ukrainian-born artist whose creativity was first shaped in her grandmother's garden, where vibrant colors and delicate textures sparked a lifelong fascination with floral forms. She began drawing at the age of two, and flowers soon became the central motif of her early artistic expression — a theme that continues to inspire her work today.

Recognized for her talent from a young age, Viktoriia attended art school in Ukraine and participated in local and regional competitions, where she developed technical skill along with artistic confidence. For many years, she worked primarily in colorful pencils and watercolors.

After moving to Canada a decade ago, her practice evolved as she began experimenting with acrylics. The medium's bold colors and dynamic possibilities opened a new chapter in her artistic language, allowing her to explore more expressive and contemporary styles.

Throughout her life, Viktoriia has been deeply inspired by Petrykivka—the traditional Ukrainian folk painting style known for its elaborate florals and folk motifs. A short online course from artist Kateryna Kryvolap a year ago marked a turning point. Through Petrykivka, she felt a profound reconnection to her cultural roots and rediscovering an artistic heritage.

Now, based in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Viktoriia balances full-time work with her passions for painting and photography. Despite a busy schedule, she always finds time for her creative work—a heartfelt hobby that continues to inspire her and is constant link to the beauty that inspired her from



Viktoriia Polishchuk
Love in Bloom
Acrylic on canvas
12in x 12in



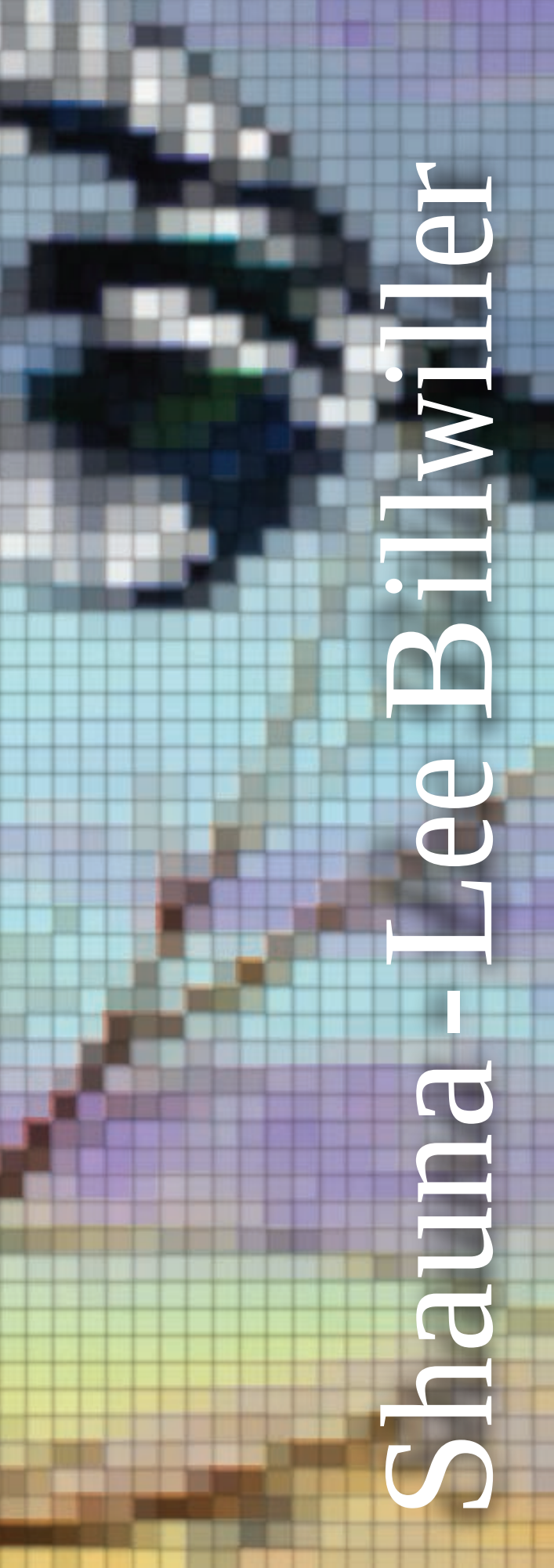
Viktoriia Polishchuk
My Place of Power
Acrylic on canvas
12in x 12in



Viktoriia Polishchuk
Hope
Acrylic on canvas
12in x 12in



Viktoriia Polishchuk
Nature's Embrace
Acrylic on canvas
12in x 12in



Shauna-Lee Billwiller

Biography

Shauna-Lee Billwiller is a self-taught artist, born and raised in British Columbia, who has happily called Alberta home since 2014. She has always loved art, finding inspiration from nature and animals. Shauna-Lee originally created art in acrylic and watercolour, and now includes taxidermy within her work and skills. When working in taxidermy, her desire is to create magic, whimsy, and awe in the beauty of nature and death, using ethically sourced items. Upcycling has always been a key focus, trying to minimize as much waste as possible, while turning things that were once “Ew” into “Awe”. Her work expands by offering pet memorial, to help people honour their beloved critter family members. As a painter, Shauna-Lee’s work has been displayed in local shows, and she has donated many pieces to charity fundraisers to give back for the support she’s received.

Artist Statement

The pieces presented in this show are a snapshot into the style and vision of this artist. The purple rabbit, titled “Two-Faced” consist of mix media including lace, acrylic and gold leaf. This piece was first displayed at the Purple Show with the Centre for Creative Arts in Grande Prairie, Alberta. The skull used for reference is from the artist’s collection and the rabbit depicts a pet named Floyd. The magpie piece, “Soulmate” shows the beauty of how life and death are intertwined, using acrylic as a medium. Lastly, “Forever Playful” is a beautiful memorial to a farm kitten who did not survive being orphaned. The kitten lives on



Shauna-Lee Billwiller
Soulmate
Acrylic
8in x 8in



Shauna-Lee Billwiller

Two-Faced

Mixed Media (acrylic, lace, gold leaf)

10in x 10in



Shauna-Lee Billwiller
Forever Playful
Taxidermy
11in x 12in x 3in



Michelle Forrester

Biography

Michelle is a mixed media artist that was raised in rural Beaverlodge and returned to the area after experiencing 6 years of city life in Vancouver. She has always been crafty and was happiest as a child doing whatever art project Mr. Dressup had done that day. Crafting followed into adulthood and blossomed when she took up a cone of henna in 2006. Being a self taught henna artist in the Peace Country was a very isolating experience and led to joining friends taking an online Art Journalling class in 2013. Discovering the fun of working with different mediums and colours during the course has guided her to her current infusion of mixed media with henna influences. Working intuitively and collaboratively brings her joy and she hopes the results bring you joy as well!

Artist Statement

The pieces for this exhibit are a departure from my usual work. I have been focused on reducing consumption of goods both in my personal life and in the studio. During the spring of 2025 I found an example of building quilt blocks with scrap fabric, using scraps from previous projects to create joyful colorful bases was a welcome balm while waiting for the results of the Federal elections. Hope for the future was stitched into squares created from chaos. Embroidery was also a newer skill that caught my interest and using my stash of embroidery floss from a long left cross stitch phase was a great “use what we have” moment. Stitching images based on the natural world reminds me to ground my energy, share without the expectation of reward, and that spring and regrowth is always possible.



Michelle Forrester
Mums in the Moon
 Fiber
 6in x 6in



Michelle Forrester
Conifer Dreams
 Fiber
 6in x 6in





Michelle Forrester
Pursuit of Woodland Charm
Fiber
3in x 3in

Desirée Desrochers - Pequeno

Biography

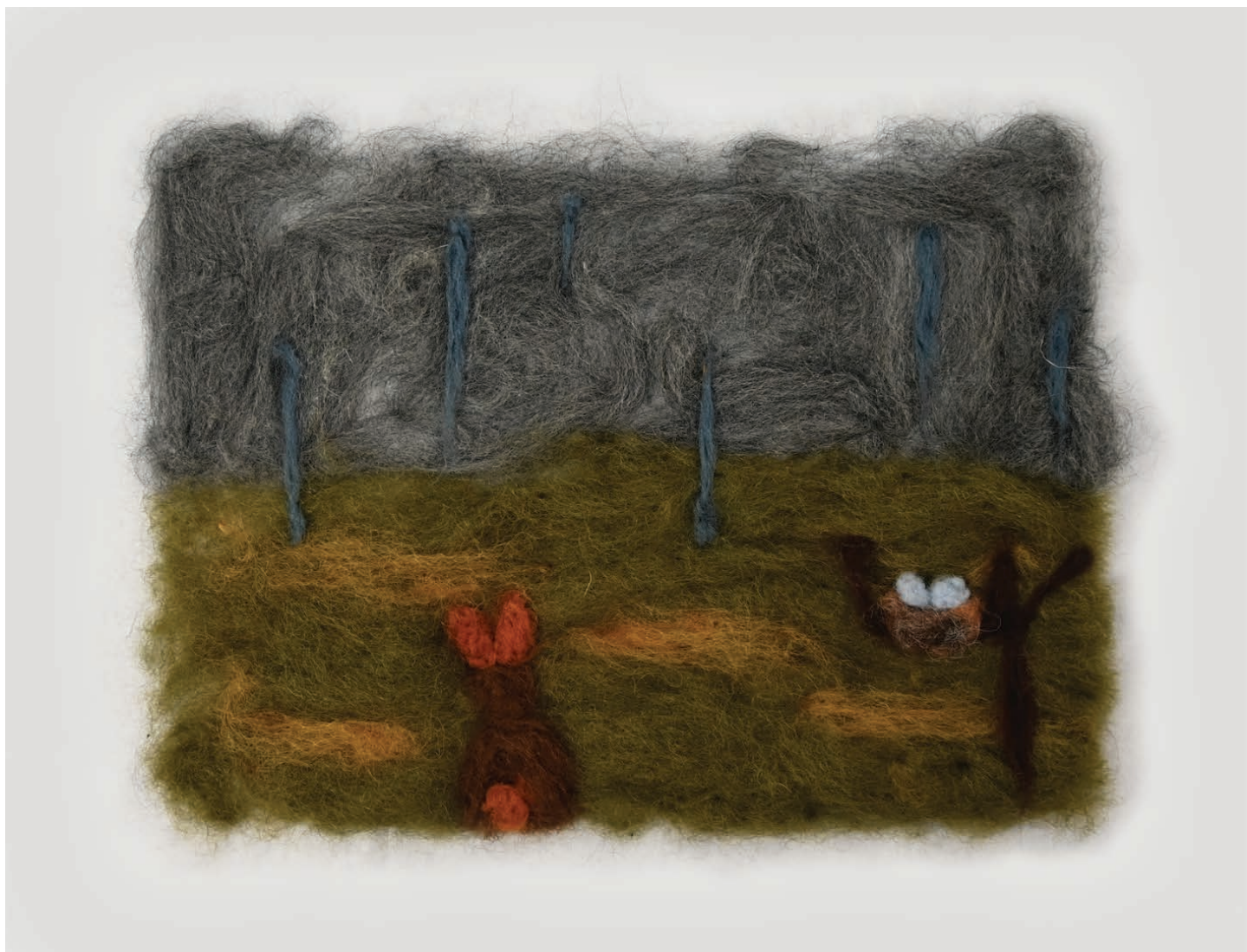
Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno is a Canadian fibre artist whose work explores texture, form, and the quiet spaces of everyday life. Desirée creates fibre work that explores texture, atmosphere, and wonder. Her practice emphasizes intuitive making, fragmentary forms, and drawing inspiration from the places in between. She develops work across a variety of themes and processes, from small scale objects to series exploring emotional cycles rooted in quiet mahic, inviting viewers to engage with delicate textures, curiosity.

Artist Statement

This body of work explores emotional states through the rhythm of the seasons, using firmer as both material and metaphor. Each piece reflects an inner transition, a moment where feeling shifts, soften, and takes new form. Spring emerges as hope and summer embodies joy and radiance. Autumn turns inward holding love, intention, and letting go. Winter arrives as peace and stillness. Through dry needle felting, fibre construction, and surface manipulation, I create tactile forms that invite slow observation and close engagement. Mirroring the emotional work of transformation itself. Together, these pieces form a meditation on cyclical experience. Fragments of feeling that hold space for hope, joy, love, and peace.



Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno
Radiate
Felted wool, jersey wooly rabbit fur
2026



Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno
Awaken
Felted wool, jersey wooly rabbit fur
2026



Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno
Reflect
Felted wool, jersey wooly rabbit fur
2026



Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno
Heal
Felted wool, jersey wooly rabbit fur
2026

Education Material

English 7/8/9: Outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2

English 10/20/30: Outcomes 1.1.1, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.3, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 5.1.2

Art 10/20/30: Outcomes 4.A, 7.A, 7.B, 8.A, 8.B, 9.A, 9.B, 11.A, 11.B, 12.A, 12.B, 13.A, 13.B

Questions for discussion:

What is intuition?

How does the outside world inform what we know about the world?

What is perspective and what is empathy? Is it possible to see through another's eyes or do we see alongside what another sees?

How are animals represented in the show?

Are animals characters, symbols or participants in the works in the show?

How do painting and tapestry (fibre-based images) relate to one another?



How to Look at Art

Based on the Four Stages of Criticism

Age Levels: K-Grade 3: Do stage 1 and possibly stage 2

Grades 4-6: Do stage 1, 2 and possibly 3

Grades 7-12: Do all four stages

Stage 1: Description

What do we see when we look at a work of art?

- List or describe all that you see.
Hint: Start with what you know.
- Describe the subject. What is this a picture of?
Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, still life, etc.
- Describe the materials used to make this art
(medium/materials): Is it an acrylic or watercolor painting? Drawing?
Photograph?
- Describe the type of lines. What kind of shapes are used? Natural or geometric? Is there any texture to the surface of the artwork (rough/smooth/dry/wet). Does the work have areas (values) of dark and light?

For Grades 10-12

Describe the style of work. Is it realistic or abstract? Does it have a theme or subject? Can you describe a style that it resembles? For example, Impressionism, Expressionism, Surrealist.

Stage 2: Analysis

Observing Relationships How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

- List and describe the principles of design (movement, contrast, unity, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space).
- Are there contrasts of light and dark colors?
- Are colors or shapes repeated to create unity or rhythm? Is there a sense of motion?
- Do the objects seem to be close up and in a shallow space or move far back to create deep space and distance?
- Is there one object that stands out and is more emphasized than other objects?

For Grades 10-12

- Does the artist use complimentary colors against each other to create balance?
- What type of balance is it (symmetrical or asymmetrical)?

Stage 3: Interpretation

What meaning or reasons did the artist have in making this artwork?

This stage is a statement to help make sense of all the observations made in previous stages. It is the most difficult, yet most creative stage. It is the process that makes connections between the artwork and the viewer's personal experiences.

- What do you think this work is about?
- What mood or feeling do you get from this work?
- Why did the artist create this work?
- What do you think the artist thinks or feels about their world?
- Give an explanation of the work or describe the problem the artist is trying to solve.
Remember there are no right or wrong answers in the interpretation. Each viewer will bring their own ideas and life experience into their explanations.

Stage 4: Final Conclusion About the Work

What do I think or feel about this work?

Decide what you like or dislike about the work. This is purely subjective, however the decision should be backed with valid explanations and possible ideas as to how the artist could have changed it to make it better.

- Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- What are the strengths about this work?
- What are the weaknesses and how would you change them?
- Has your impression of the work changed after observing and analyzing the piece?



Brenda Schenk
Connected
Acrylic with wood frame
8in x 8in

Hope, Joy, Love & Peace Collage

What gives you Hope and Joy? What/who shows you Love and Peace?

In this exhibition, the artists drew on life experiences to reveal what brings **hope**, **joy**, **love** and **peace** into their world. It is their hope that viewers feel and embrace what these works hold. In this activity we want you to think about what these four words mean to you. Then we would like you to sit down and do a collage with magazines, newspapers, scrap paper, markers or paint to display your feelings of these words.

Describe what these words mean to you;



Instructions

Step 1

Sit down and think about the descriptions of HOPE, JOY, LOVE & PEACE that you just wrote down. Think about what images would represent these words.

Step 2

Take the magazines, newspapers or white paper and start cutting out/drawing what you think you will see on your road trip.

Step 3

Start gluing down the cut out shapes.

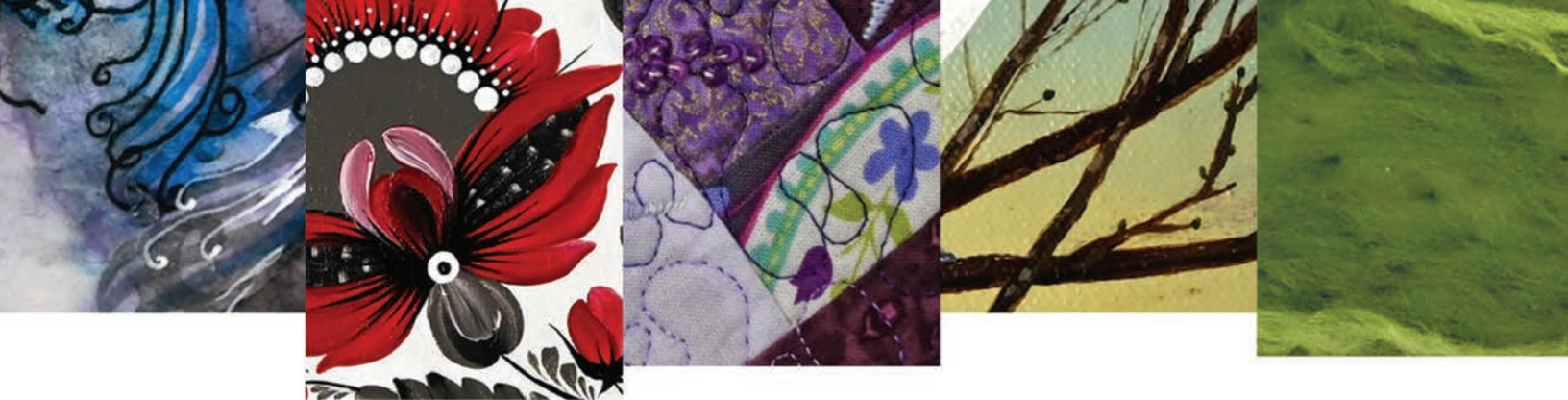
Step 4

Once you have your board covered you can add colours and words with the markers to give it an added layer. You could write down words that describe these emotions, or what they mean to you.

Step 5

Once you are happy with your collage, share it with your class or family. Talk about what is in your pieces and why you choose the images and words to describe these emotions.





Hope _____

Joy _____

Love _____

Peace _____



Intuitive Line Activity

Intuitive line art activities for kids help children express feelings and build focus without stress, using simple projects like intuitive scribbling, blind contour drawing, and penny-guided line mapping. In this activity you can also play different genres of music for them to use as inspiration for their mark making.



Materials

- Watercolour paper
- pencil
- black marker
- watercolors
- paintbrush
- water

Intuitive Line Activity

Instructions

Step 1

Have the student sit in front of their paper with a pencil. Either let them do a blind contour (not looking at their paper) fluid line all over or play some music for inspiration and let their pencil do the talking as it moves to the music.

Step 2

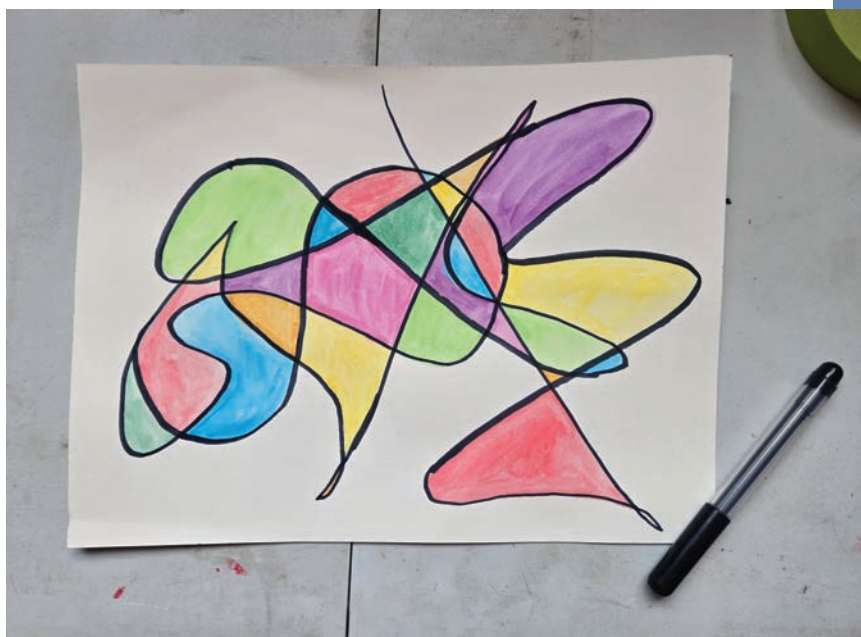
Take out the paint and start filling in each shape with different colours, trying not to have the same colour touch two shapes.

Step 3

Once they are done painting the shapes take your black marker or pencil again and trace out the line you drew first to make it more visible.

Step 4

Hang your works on the wall for everyone to enjoy.



Here are some more intuitive art activity ideas...

Intuitive painting is an expressive, process-oriented practice where you let go of expectations, rules, and perfectionism to paint purely based on your emotions and impulses. It acts as a visual journal to help you quiet your inner critic and explore your subconscious.

These specific activities and warm-up exercises can help you dive into the intuitive painting process:

The 5-Minute Scribble & Color: Close your eyes and draw a free-flowing 5-second scribble on a sheet of paper or canvas. Open your eyes, and fill in the resulting shapes with paint, focusing on rhythmic strokes to soothe your nervous system.

Two-Minute Timed Layers: Tape down your paper or canvas and give yourself only two minutes to apply a base layer of paint. Focus purely on movement rather than the final picture. Once dry, grab different mark-making tools (like a sponge or credit card) and add a layer of a different color.

Blind Contour Painting: Choose an object or just stare into space, close your eyes, and let your brush wander across the page. The goal is to surrender control and tap into how you feel physically and emotionally.





Felted Friends

This activity is inspired by Desirée Desrochers-Pequeno felted pieces of the four seasons including a little rabbit in each scene. Felting is a textile craft that tangles and locks wool fibers together to create solid objects or flat pieces. The two main methods are needle felting (dry sculpting with a barbed needle) and wet felting (using water, soap, and physical agitation). We will show you how to do dry needle felting and recommend that if you want to do felting with younger ages that you try the wet felting as the needles will be hard for younger ages to use.



Materials

- felt
- felting needles
- foam block
- scissors



Step 1

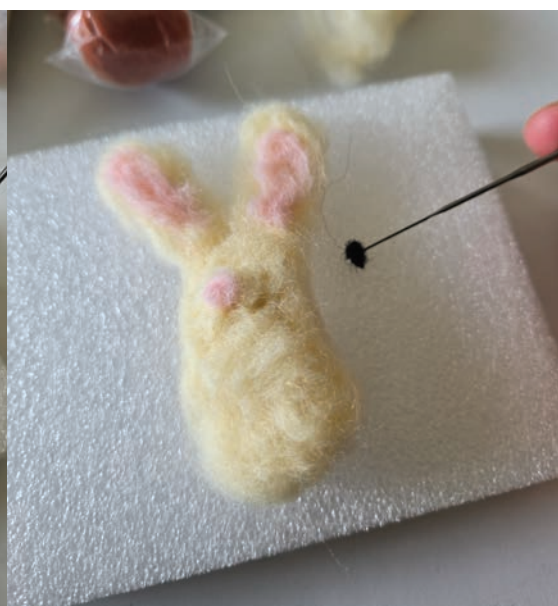
Select what animal you would like to make, we choose a rabbit. Select the colours of felt you will need for your sculpture.

Step 2

Tear off some of the felt for your animal's body, you will be surprised at how little you actually need for your project.

Step 3

Start slowly stabbing your felt in the decided shape you want for your animal's body. Keep rotating the felt as you poke it with your needle. Always insert and pull the needle straight up and down.



Step 4

Pull off some more felt and add the face, tail or ears.

Step 5

Add detail like eyes, nose or mouth.

Your felted sculpture is finished when it feels hard to touch.

