

Ancestral Bonds

This exhibition explores how contemporary First Nations' artists address their history through the visual arts. In particular, the exhibition looks at different approaches to portraiture. What is a portrait? Why do people create them? What exactly constitutes a portrait?

Ancestral Bonds showcases the various ways that the participating artists have kept memories, connected to people of the past, alive, yet the artworks often defy the ancient tradition of portraiture. Here the images of senior artists Jane Ash-Poitras, Kimowan McLain and Linus Woods, who have paved the way for a new generation of First Nations' artists, are shown with works from emerging First Nations artists.

Jane Ash Poitras chooses to use an 'xray' technique by overlaying a shaman on a colourful background to create the feel of the 'other world' to her spiritual work. **Linus Woods** boldly portrays a shaman as an elk spirit while *White Star* has numerous tales to tell. **Kimowan McLain** uses digital copies of his grandmother's Bible to turn religious and written bonds into visible objects. He places small notes into the margins of the work as if to correspond or connect with her.

Of the eight emerging artists, both **Brenda Jones** and **April Mercredi** have portrayed influential elders whose reputations have affected their lives. **Heather Shillinglaw** reaches for memories of her great great grandmother finding inspiration in blankets, healing flowers and maps. **LauraLee K. Harris** enforces her spiritual bonds with ancestors by working on wood. She believes it to be, not only God's creation, but also the tree spirit and therefore another spent life. **Paul Smith** uses a 'trickster' as his alter-ego in this graphic story-board image searching for an understanding of his place within the community. **Duane Linklater**, in relating to "oral history and to stories about cultural heroes in a nontraditional native manner" uses images of newsworthy 'icons' and himself whereas **Maxine Paul-Morin's** works, which also relate to oral traditions, depict a technique of colourful shapes and outlines reminiscent of Norval Morriseau's Woodland style. **Sarah Wostenberg** uses a symbolic approach to visually illustrate 'portraits' of her thoughts on the stereotyping of native women.

The works showcased in this exhibition represent both verbal and remembered experiences. The artists have created a thread that connects one generation to another, building a shared history with their ancestors through the process of creating. In turn the images form new links and "ancestral bonds."

This exhibition is co-curated by Aaron Paquette and Fiona Connell.
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