

Walking Near Water: my relations with (through) land

by

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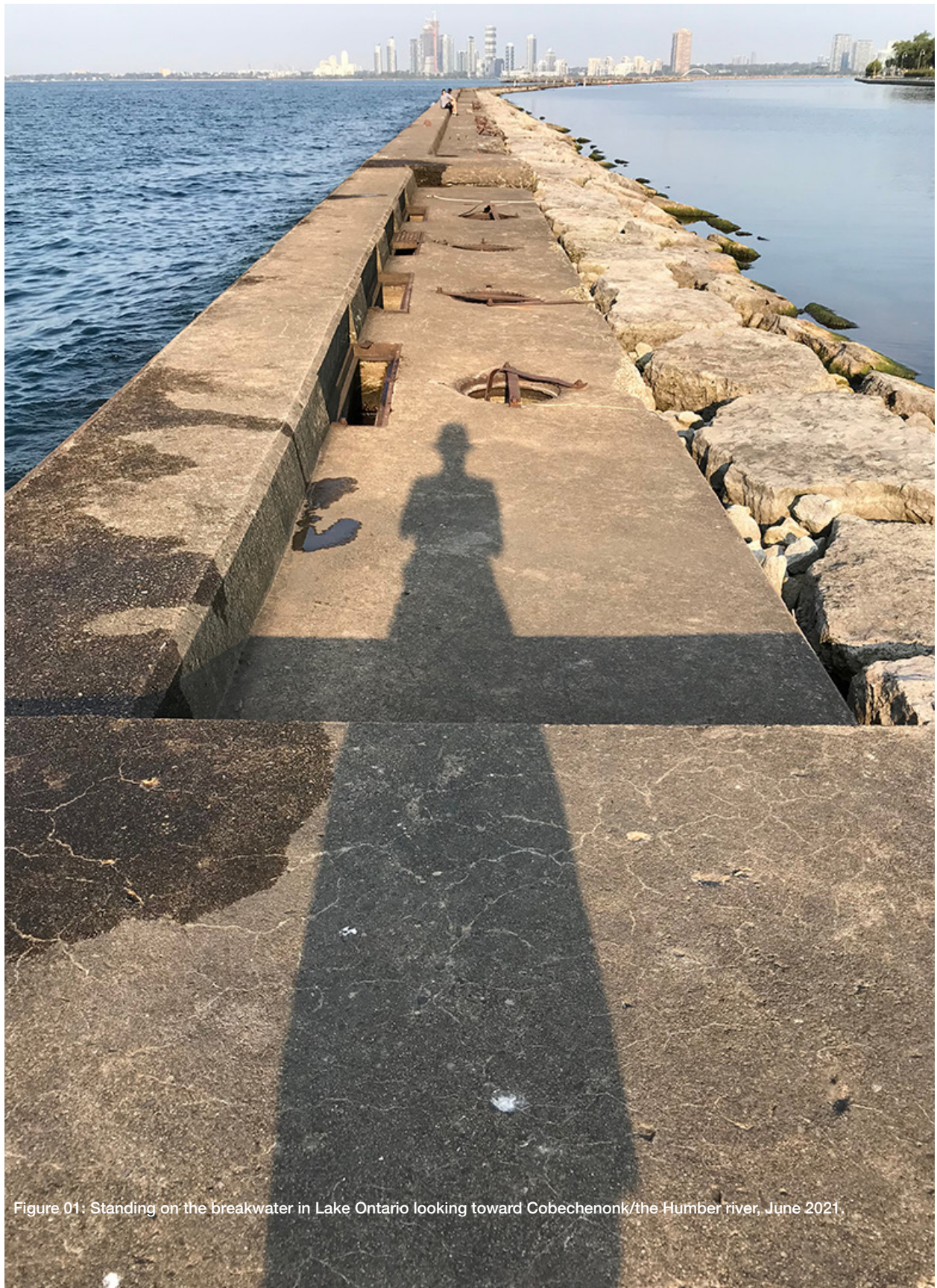


Figure 01: Standing on the breakwater in Lake Ontario looking toward Cobecchenonk/the Humber river, June 2021.

ABSTRACT

I am a metalsmith; an artist whose practice is grounded in materials and making, and on the generational connections of my Scots/English-Canadian family to the Tkaranto waterfront and the Wonscotonach¹ and Cobechenonk² watersheds.

I am re-thinking my relations with these lands, using a research-creation methodology that walks between two rows: one of craft knowledge founded on European traditions of design and making, and one influenced by Indigenous ways of knowing that are rooted in this place.

Each row reveres reciprocal knowledge-sharing that is embedded in materiality and community – cultures of making and visiting. With that in mind, I have re-framed autobiographical narratives of remembrance in works that combine metalsmithing techniques with materials gathered from local sites meaningful to me and my family. Through these works, I imagine new associations between the rows and reconfigured relationships with the land and water where I live with many others, human and non-human.

1 Donald B. Smith, *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-century Canada* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 13. Wonscotonach is the Anishnaabemowin place name for the Lower Don River, often translated as “Back Burnt Grounds” in reference to a wildfire on the site.

2 Smith, *Mississauga Portraits*, 15. Cobechenonk is the Anishnaabemowin place name for the Humber River, rendered in English as “Leave the Canoes and Go Back” in reference to the river’s rapids and portage points.



Figure 02: Gathering in the ravine at Yellow Creek

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Figure 03: My father and my mother, a recent immigrant, with their catch, Summer 1949.

Figure 04: My brothers, younger cousins and me on Lake Kashwakamak, Fall 1970.

Figure 05: Ironworkers in December 1916 erecting the Prince Edward Viaduct over Don Valley. Their number included my great-uncle Eugene McIntyre. (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 10)

FIRST LESSONS (INTRODUCTION)

One of the first things I learned about my family was that we are makers. My mother's parents were born in an industrial town on the southwest coast of Scotland; her father worked in a shipyard and her mother in a knitting mill. My father's people were ironworkers and roofers in Toronto and, before that, farmed in Southwold County, Ontario on the Talbot Settlement.³ Making things was more than a job; it was a way of living. My mother taught me to sew my own clothes, and her mother taught me to knit. When I was 12 and my brothers were 10 and 4, our family built a place on purchased Crown land in Treaty 27/ the Nottawasaga Purchase.⁴ Our father and his father taught us to frame walls, shingle a roof and run electrical wiring. My grandfather would take my brothers and me out on the lake in the early morning, anchoring in shallow bays or deep channels depending on the kind of fish we sought. Afterward, we cleaned our catch at the end of the dock. The guts and skin went into the lake to feed the turtles and other fish, and we took the fillets inside for breakfast. These were my first lessons in being competent, in handling tools and providing for others. In my grandfather's boat, I began to understand that there is a world beneath the surface of things, and began to learn how to read it.

When I was half that age, my Scottish grandfather would take me down to the water's edge west of the Humber River. We would watch the ocean freighters that had come down the St. Lawrence Seaway to unload at Toronto Harbour. I don't remember our conversations – I was six when he died. But I do remember the sound of his voice, heavily accented and gravelly after a lifetime of smoking and working in factories and shipyards. And I remember his hands – calloused and hard, yet holding mine very gently. Consequently, I always return to the Toronto waterfront when I want to remember him and to calm my turbulent thoughts. Contemplating the line where sky and horizon meet, listening to the waves lapping against the shoreline, I restore myself and reconnect to the world beneath the surface.

My link to the waterfront took a new direction the year I turned 45, when I decided to learn to run long distances. A personal challenge led me to a new community with women whose lives were, in some cases, very different from my own. We were married, single, divorced; mothers, grandmothers, and childless. We were 'comfortable,' getting by, and minimum wage. Over thousands of hours and

3 "Talbot Settlement and Survey Maps, 1793-1849," Elgin County Archives, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/Archives/TalbotTract/talbot.html>. The Talbot Settlement occupied a swath of southwestern Ontario along the north shore of Lake Erie, running east from the Detroit River. From 1801 to 1838, land agent Thomas Talbot managed the settlement like a fiefdom, granting and reclaiming sites at will. Eventually Talbot was removed from office and the lands were returned to the colonial government.

4 "First Nations and Treaties Map," Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, accessed December 8, 2021, https://files.ontario.ca/treaties_map_english.pdf.

hundreds of kilometers, we traced and retraced the contours of trails and pathways across the waterfront and up the Don and Humber ravines as far north as Highway 401. The mothers among us compared our hours-long training runs to childbirth in terms of duration, discomfort, and (sometimes) boredom. To pass the time, we began to tell one another stories: life stories, family stories. Mid-life gave rise to a new yearning to understand and be understood. We opened ourselves to one another as we had not done since adolescence. We changed and lost jobs, lost partners, faced sicknesses of our own and of those we love. One of us has died. Yet the relationships that have grown over nearly 20 years have endured.

Our stories became enmeshed in the landscape through which we moved. Individual landmarks were like beads on a well-fingered rosary: this tree, this story; that rock, that shared moment. Yet, over the past three years I have awoken to the fact that my stories, intertwined with “my” landscape, are among the latest narratives associated with this land. Indigenous relations and histories predate my own, relations of which I have been almost wholly unaware for most of my life. Authors such as Vanessa Watts, Victoria Freeman, Ange Loft, and Eve Tuck have explained the degree to which my understanding of these lands, so familiar to me, was embedded in a colonial project of erasure, a false narrative that portrayed them as fallow and empty until my ancestors arrived to unlock their ‘potential’. I began to see what I had not seen, and to move through the landscape with different eyes.

I have had to expand my understanding of what constitutes community and relations, guided by bell hooks’ description of caring and radical acceptance:

Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love—“care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge”—in our everyday lives. We can successfully do this only by cultivating awareness. Being aware enables us to critically examine our actions to see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn.⁵

Caring is an ethical decision, hooks says. The individual takes on a personal duty of relationship-building; acknowledging responsibility forms the moral basis for one’s actions in the world. hooks’ expansive and enriching perspective enjoins me to be aware of and open to other histories, other narratives than my own. To do this is to allow vulnerability to enter my practice; to accept personal responsibility for relationships between the natural and made worlds that I had made the foundation of my work, but which until now I had not truly understood or admitted to myself or anyone else. My family has been here for approximately 175 years. I am now fully aware of the fact that our tenure on these

5 bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: William Morrow, 2018), 94.

lands was bought, and my connections built, by severing ancient Indigenous relationships to these places. Willing myself to embrace my responsibility, to practice hooks' love ethic, provides a pathway to reconciling my practice with what I now know about this tenure. I began this exploration by framing a series of questions:

- What is respectful, responsible artistic practice for a settler on these territories? How do I respect the sovereignty of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies while re-forming my practice?
- How can my land-based work, reflecting personal memory and family narrative, offer opportunities for respect, learning and relationship-building – the love ethic in action?
- Can I draw on the ethical and intellectual structures of both craft and Indigenous cultures to inform the work of 'opening' my practice?
- How does the practice and demonstration of hooks' love ethic help me to understand the complicated histories of the land that grounds me and inspires my work? Can this re-thinking also help other non-Indigenous makers?

I have explored these questions in a body of work that uses my personal and family history to spur reflection (my own, and the viewer's):

- *For Alice*: A supine female figure of woven steel wire, suspended above a turbulent cyanotype 'river'. A partially gilded driftwood form floats within the figure.
- *Breathing Exercise*: A partially gilded cedar root hangs over a charred branch gathered on the waterfront. The figures are held in relation by a cyanotype backdrop.
- *Two Rows*: Fifteen spoons and one fork created from natural and manufactured materials gathered near Lake Ontario, the Wonscotonach/Don and the Cobechenonk/Humber, conjoined by fabricated copper, bronze, and silver elements. The spoons rest on a rough table of planks and sawhorses in front of a cyanotype scrim.

To reveal these personal stories is to choose vulnerability, and open a way toward a more honest relationship to the land and to the people who have lived and continue to live here. I have framed a discussion of these questions on the following pages as a series of walks along the water's edge.

WALK 1: SEEING THROUGH HISTORY: TORONTO/TKARONTO

The urban ravines through which I ran for 15 years share certain qualities with the Toronto waterfront that has been my refuge since childhood. They share a liminal quality identified by Jennifer Bonnell, historian of Canada's public and environmental spaces, in her research into the post-settlement history of the Don River. For more than a century the ravines have held our collective unconsciousness; have been places where social and civil conventions are subverted, attracting (or being left to) marginal populations of the poor, homeless, mentally ill, and racialized.⁶ They are 'dirty' sites: beginning in the mid-19th century, rail yards, factories, tanneries, and slaughterhouses congregated along the Lower Don ravine and across the Central Harbour of the Toronto waterfront, creating a segregated zone devoted to industry and waste disposal – vital to the evolving city but beneath the notice of polite society.⁷ As industry left the city in the 1970s, the natural world reasserted itself in the ravines and along the lake's edge, with foxes, coyotes, beaver, deer and numerous native and invasive plant and tree species re/emerging. The ravines and waterfront remain liminal. Now, they are contested sites into which dwellers in "the city above"⁸ descend for respite and restoration; there, they are confronted with the presence of other residents, human and non-human, who are not interested in their fantasy of a well-maintained 're-naturalized' recreation space.

Ambitious developments like the Evergreen Foundation's Brick Works interpretive centre and Waterfront Toronto's 'renaturalization' of the Lower Don⁹ are characterized as projects of reconstitution and restitution. They may also be viewed, however, as merely the latest attempt to shape land and water to suit colonial infrastructural and aesthetic imperatives. As I reflect on this place's transitions from Tkaronto to Toronto, from pre-settlement hunting and fishing ground to industrial brownfield to constructed public space, I consider my sense of ownership. Are family stories a series of deeds, transacted on Treaty 2 lands surrendered by the Ottawa, Pottowatamy, and Huron, and in the city where my father swam in a Don River polluted by rafts of refuse from local tanneries? Where in those transactional bonds is hooks' love ethic of responsibility and care – where is the respect and relation to land historically practiced here by the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat, and Mississauga?

Social historian Victoria Freeman sums up the settler's experience when encountering Toronto's 'hidden' Indigenous past: "For a non-Indigenous Toronto citizen such as myself, stories relating to the

6 Jennifer Bonnell, "A Social History of a Changing Environment: The Don River Valley, 1910-1931," in *Reshaping Toronto's Waterfront*, ed. Jennifer Laidley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 126.

7 Bonnell, "Social History", 133.

8 Bonnell, "Social History", 142.

9 "Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection," Waterfront Toronto, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/our-projects/don-mouth-naturalization-and-port-lands-flood-protection>.

historic Indigenous...rendered my hometown unfamiliar and strange...leaving me as a settler with a curious double vision where I was both in place and out of place, living in the present yet haunted by an Indigenous past.”¹⁰ Being unmoored in time, in a place that is supposed to be familiar: here is the liminality of the ravine, flooding out and over ‘my’ city.

Unanga scholar Eve Tuck puts her hand directly into that flow when she discusses colonial occupation through the theoretical framework of hauntology, illustrated by the imagery of horror cinema:

The difference between notions of justice popularized in US horror films and notions of justice in these examples of horror films from Japan is that in the former, the hauntings are positioned as undeserved, and the innocent hero must destroy the monster to put the world in balance again. ...In the latter, because the depth of injustice that begat the monster or ghost is acknowledged, the hero does not think herself to be innocent, or try to achieve reconciliation or healing, only mercy, often in the form of passing on the debt. ...Settler horror, then, comes about as part of this management, of the anxiety, the looming but never arriving guilt, the impossibility of forgiveness, the inescapability of retribution.¹¹

Tuck compares the film protagonist’s presumed innocence with the tactics of European settlers and their descendants, who constructed a mythology of the territories in this hemisphere as *terra nullius* – empty land made fruitful through their labour. This myth of settlement sidesteps the reality that this ‘development’ was a predatory enterprise facilitated by the structures of capitalism and colonization, financed by land theft, and realized in large part through the toil of the enslaved and the economically exploited. Tuck suggests that settler horror is rooted in the cognitive dissonance required to maintain a façade of innocence against the fact of intercultural, interspecies trauma. The image of my adolescent father and his friends frolicking in the Don’s toxic flow seems a perfect metaphor for this self-deceit.

A hauntological reading of my family history doesn’t legitimize our place here. Rather, our sorrows and losses become the currency with which we must pay an intergenerational debt, and I am left suspended between an unquiet past, a haunted present, and an uncertain future. The implications of settler guilt, however, are highly problematic. For one thing, this guilt continues to centre my family’s experience when ours is but one strand in the network of histories woven into this land. For another, it is as performative as the horror ingenue’s ‘innocence,’ dragging Indigenous individuals and communities into a drama of forgiveness and validation intended to console me while doing nothing to resolve injustices

10 Victoria Freeman, “Indigenous Hauntings in Settler Colonial Places,” in *Phantom Past, Indigenous Present: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*, ed. Colleen E. Boyd et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 212.

11 Eve Tuck and C. Ree, “A Glossary of Haunting,” in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacey Holman Jones et al. (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2013), 641-642.

past or present. The hauntological lens frames a histrionic melancholy that whines, “I am trapped by my history; what can I do?” This is the specious innocence that Tuck identifies and which I must reject.

Acknowledging Treaty Responsibilities

I am bound to acknowledge that my sense of my place here is not what I thought it was when I was a child or, frankly, even three years ago when I began my Master’s program. It is liberating to cease the labour of rationalization and use that energy to investigate my relations to this place in deeper and more honest ways. Rejecting the lure of melancholy is not the same as relinquishing my responsibilities. In fact, it’s the opposite: it means acknowledging the contested and complicated history of the treaty lands on which my family has lived, and taking on the work of aligning my life and creative practice with the spirit of the treaties enacted on these territories.

The treaties that guide my work are the Guswentha (Two Row Wampum) of 1613, which established a framework for relations between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Dutch in present-day New York State;¹² the Silver Covenant Chain treaties of the 17th century between the Haudenosaunee and the English Crown;¹³ and the Dish With One Spoon Treaty of 1701 between the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee that was folded into the Great Peace of Montreal that same year.¹⁴ These agreements set out significantly distinct understandings of the relationships between the sovereign Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and European nations. Understanding how the different treaties regard these relationships has informed my research and learning about Indigenous knowledge keeping and sharing, and the philosophical and spiritual principles of relations and kinship. Through these learnings, I am beginning to reshape my practice – being influenced but not influencing the knowledges and practices shared with me through scholarly writing and visiting.

The principle of sovereignty is articulated in the Guswentha, as preserved in Haudenosaunee tradition:

These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, traveling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel.¹⁵

12 C. Maracle, *The Grandfather of All Treaties*. Video. 2015.

13 Cornelius J. Jaenen, “Covenant Chain,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, last modified November 30, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/covenant-chain>.

14 Victor P. Lytwyn, “A Dish with One Spoon: The Shared Hunting Grounds Agreement in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Valley Region,” in *Papers of the 28th Algonquian Conference*, ed. David H. Pentland (1997), 217-18.

15 “What is Wampum?,” *Ganondagan*, Friends of Ganondagan, accessed March 8, 2022, <https://ganondagan.org/Learning/Wampum>.

The goal of the treaty is to protect the sovereignty of each party. Each nation is free to travel on the river and pursue their own interests, as long as they do not interfere with the other party. If I am guided solely by the Two Row Wampum, it is not appropriate for me to access or interact with Indigenous knowledges; attempting to integrate them into my practice would be a breach of the treaty, which remains in force to this day.

However, the Silver Covenant and Dish With One Spoon treaties outline a more reciprocal relationship between nations. The Silver Covenant, recorded in oral tradition and in wampum, stated that “the Red Man and the White Man would have but One Heart, One Head, One Eye and One Hand and the two parties would hold each end of the [silver] chain for ever as long as the sun shines and waters flow.”¹⁶ The Dish With One Spoon Treaty negotiated between 1700 and 1701 outlined a cooperative relationship that ensured mutual benefits for the respective Indigenous and colonial nations, rather than simply mutual non-interference. At a 1700 trade meeting with the English at Albany, New York, Haudenosaunee representatives informed the colonial government that the Anishinaabe had called for a treaty under the Dish With One Spoon:

“We have come to acquaint you that we are settled on Ye North side of Cadarachqui Lake near Tchojachiage [Teiaiagon, on what is now the Humber River near Jane and Annette Streets] where we plant a tree of peace and open a path for all people...and desire to be united in Ye Covenant Chain, our hunting places to be one, and to boil in one kettle, eat out of one spoon, and so be one.”

and that the Haudenosaunee had replied:

“We are glad to see you in our country, and do accept of you to be our friends and allies, and do give you a Belt of Wampum as a token thereof, that there may be a perpetual peace and friendship between us and our young Indians to hunt together in all love and amity.”¹⁷

The agreement was extended at the Great Peace of Montréal in 1701, under the auspices of the French colonial government. In this way, the Haudenosaunee established a multilateral agreement that instituted principles of sharing resources and cordial relations between 36 sovereign Indigenous nations,¹⁸ while at the same time ensuring the cooperation and backing of the two significant colonial powers who were contesting for dominance in the lands that became Canada and the United States.

16 Sharon Styres, *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education: Philosophies of Iethi'nihténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land)* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 136.

17 Ange Loft, “Remember Like We Do,” in *Indigenous Toronto* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2021), 22.

18 Loft, “Remember,” 23.

These agreements were never rescinded, though post-colonial governments in Canada and the United States developed legal frameworks that sought and achieved the negation of Indigenous land rights.¹⁹ Nevertheless, I consider myself bound by what I understand to be their principles and provisions:

- to engage in collegial and respectful relations with the people and the territories where I practice
- to share and receive knowledge but not to use what I know, learn, or do to influence or constrain those who share with me
- to create scholarship and artworks that express and promote relations and kinship with human and non-human societies on these lands.

Through my thesis studies, I have taken on the work of aligning my practice with the spirit of the *Guswentha* and *Dish With One Spoon*. I have embraced the unsettling experience of acknowledging the colonial power structures from which I have benefitted, and interrogating my responsibilities under treaties that remain in effect, even if they are not recognized by the post-colonial governments that act for my benefit. Extracting myself from privilege has, in part, meant creating work that explores my relations with land and with other people through the lens of these responsibilities.

Two Rows

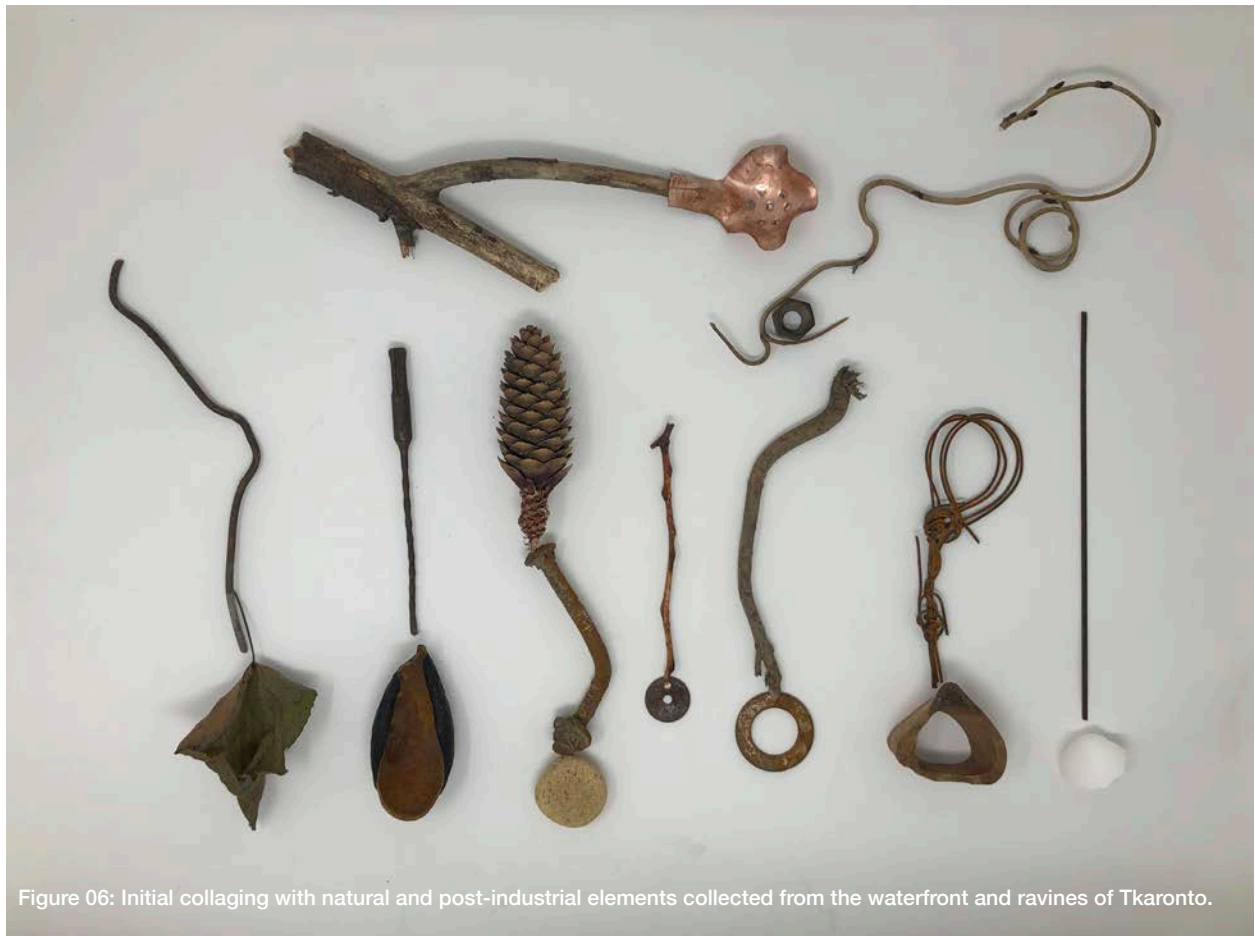
Two Rows reflects my interpretation of the treaties – what I owe to my relationships with the land, and with Indigenous and other people who live on these territories. I have gathered fragmentary elements of the natural and industrial landscape from the lake's edge and the Humber and Don ravine systems, and created a series of eating implements – some useable, some not – that reference *Dish With One Spoon*'s scenario of hunting and eating together. The diverse nature of the individual components reflects the multiplicity of peoples who now live in the treaty territory stretching from the Great Lakes to Québec and from Lake Simcoe into the northern United States.²⁰ In line with the principles of sovereignty set out in the *Guswentha*, the origins of the spoon components are still quite legible. Using my skills as a metalsmith, I have proposed new relationships between the natural and the 'made,' relations that enable these fragments to take on a new elevated purpose of mutual care.

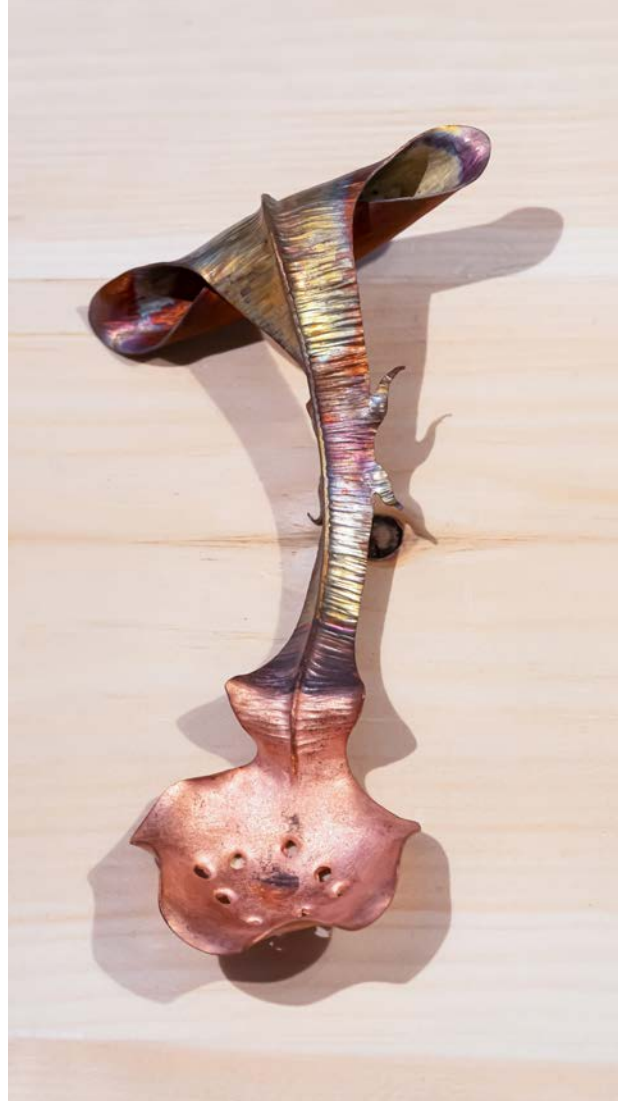
¹⁹ Lytwyn, "Dish," 224-225.

²⁰ "Indigenous Acknowledgment," Future Skills Centre, Government of Canada, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://fsc-ccf.ca/indigenous-acknowledgement/>.

I developed guidelines for gathering and combining the fragments of bone, wood, feather, metal and plastic:

- manufactured objects whose states reveal their origin in nature, such as steel decomposing into iron oxide
- natural and manufactured objects with equivalent functions or purposes, such as seed casings and nut husks that have held nourishment (similar to a spoon), or iron wire that binds elements together (like a vine binds itself to a tree)
- natural and manufactured objects that are related conceptually; for example, a fishing float and a fishbone





Figures 07- 08: The initial spoons for *Two Rows* (all photographs of thesis exhibition works by Matthew Jacula).

Figure 09: Video still showing a repair on the copper spoon.

In addition to these scavenged materials, I also gathered mismatched pieces of silver-plated cutlery from yard sales and thrift shops. These items were once a focal point for celebratory family dinners. They had been members of a 'family' of knives, forks, spoons, and serving pieces. As individual implements, they are a little melancholy, a little lost. Their new relationships restore their essential function – to celebrate, nourish and provide care.

The initial spoons were conceived as a pair and created in the Spring of 2021. One is forged and fabricated from found iron artifacts. It references my family's history as bridge builders on the Don River, and my father's memories of the polluted river of the mid-1930s. The other is forged from copper sheet. Its undulating organic lines evoke nature, and the techniques used to create it represent the 'creative family' of metalsmiths from which I'm descended. The bowls of each spoon are incomplete; neither can hold nourishment, evoking the ways that colonial and capitalist structures have starved the natural world that sustains us, and have sought to undermine the agency and identity that sustains Indigenous nations and communities.²¹

After this initial pair, I constructed 13 other spoons and one fork, of varying levels of functionality or non-functionality. As a collection, they explore how we provide or withhold sustenance; how we preserve or destroy relations. There are no knives at this table, honouring the treaty prohibition against implements that might disrupt the peace of the communal meal.²² Even the spoons that are completely non-functional could be made to hold nourishment. We can repair our relations – but we must want to do so.

21 Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-thought & agency among humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no 1 (2013): 23.

22 Lytwyn, "A Dish," 221.



Figure 10: *Two Rows* – Two paths, one with flowing marks made by cloth and twigs, the other a more regimented, bead-like pattern created from plastic snow fencing that is often used to demarkate private land and prevent entry.

Figure 11: *For Alice* (detail) – A print created with cloth, water from the lake, earth and decomposed leaves from a tributary of the Don. The image evokes the river that witnessed her husband's punishment, and which bears up Alice and her child on its current.

Figure 12: *Breathing Exercise* – A smoke-like framing device for the installation's root and branch elements; viewers have compared it with an altarpiece, defining a meditative, contemplative space.

Cyanotypes

Three large-scale cyanotypes serve to unify the individual installations *Two Rows*, *For Alice*, and *Breathing Exercise*. Over the latter half of the 19th century, the medium of cyanotype was the province of educated amateur scientists, occupying a conceptual space that reduced the natural world to a pyramid of taxonomies systematized to facilitate industrial exploitation and colonization.²³ Simultaneously, cyanotype became the default technology for on-demand mass reproduction, giving us ‘blueprint’ as a generic term for technical, engineering, and architectural drawings even into the digital age. These associations implicate cyanotype in the structures of capitalism and empire-building, and the accompanying erasure of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing.

As a technique, cyanotype has certain hauntogenic qualities – not just its connections to the intellectual and economic frameworks of modernity, but also the fact that the images are negatives – the ‘ghosts’ of objects laid on treated paper or cloth. Cyanotype is, therefore, an ideal medium for creating ambiguous images of contested landscapes, and projecting the unsettled, double-vision predicament of the settler. My approach is improvisational, assembling and arranging found materials *en plein air*. I spatter water, soil, and gravel onto the print during exposure to weather the chemical emulsion in ways corresponding to how rain and snow erode both ravine walls and steel structures.²⁴ It is a collaborative approach infused with the spirit of the urban environment, interweaving natural and industrial materials.

Aural Landscape

The ‘soundtrack’ of the thesis exhibition suggests an unseen but immanent environment within which the exhibition works are situated. The implied narrative loosely traces 24 hours from dawn to dawn, assembled from natural and industrial sounds gathered from the waterfront, ravines, and urban sites. The individual elements have been taken out of geographic and temporal context, with some elements filtered and looped. The dreamlike and textural effect reflects hauntology’s focus on temporal disjunction and the persistence of memory. Together, the cyanotype and aural elements of the exhibition suggest that hauntology’s mourning for a ‘failed future’ is in fact the failure of the triumphal colonial project, and the unsettling that opens a new future for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on these territories.

²³ Margaret Denny, “Royals, Royalties and Remuneration: American and British women photographers in the Victorian era,” *Women’s History Review* 18, no. 5 (2009): 803.

²⁴ Resources describing the process of cyanotype printing are readily found online; I have created an instructional video available at <https://vimeo.com/440823854>.

WALK 2: THE NETWORKS OF CREATION

The first walk acknowledged pain and hurt, both caused and experienced. The creative process is, however, optimistic at heart. Like the networks of creation, it carries the promise of repair, rebirth, and reconstitution. I have opened my mind and heart to the non-human world and to systems of thought that have at their core an ethic of relationship creation and protection. Vanessa Watts describes the Indigenous way of understanding the world as “based on the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.”²⁵ She contrasts this profound cosmology with the fallacy that shaped my education, anatomizing the world’s networks and rendering them (and those who live in relationship with them) as passive subjects of that constraining analysis.²⁶ Watts identifies a way out of the desert my culture created and into Place-Thought, “the network in which humans and non-humans relate, translate and articulate their agency,” where the human and non-human recognize their reciprocal responsibilities.²⁷

Inspiring as I find Indigenous ontologies, I understand why Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is critical of attempts to ‘decolonize’ academic institutions by introducing these teachings in non-Indigenous settings. The Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, author and artist believes the inevitable result is self-defeating: “Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Indigenous learners [are] set up in a never-ending battle for recognition within that system, when the academy’s primary intention is to use Indigenous peoples and our knowledge systems to legitimize settler colonial authority.”²⁸ Her skepticism is well-based, and I accept that healing, for some, means no longer attempting relationships with people and institutions that are determined to misunderstand or misuse one’s intellectual and spiritual traditions.

In *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Shawn Wilson cites essential distinctions between the individualism of the academy and collaborative Indigenous research models, between “knowledge that is individually acquired and ‘owned’ versus Indigenous paradigms that come from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. It is not just interpersonal relationships...it is a relationship with all of creation....You are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research.”²⁹ As I re-form my relationships with this place, I take guidance from research paradigms formed amidst

25 Watts, “Indigenous Place-thought,” 21.

26 Watts, “Indigenous Place-thought,” 22.

27 Watts, “Indigenous Place-thought,” 27.

28 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 22.

29 Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax; Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 56-57.

the networks of the natural world. As I have said, the creative act itself is a form of healing. My thesis work demonstrates the process of recovering connections between the human and the natural worlds, between my personal relations and my relations to this territory.

The feminist theorist Donna Haraway incorporates Indigenous ideas into her hypothesis about integrated human and non-human networks. She advances hybridity as a tactic for living in and with a ruined post-industrial world,

rehabilitation (making livable again) and sustainability amid the porous tissues and open edges of damaged but still ongoing living worlds, like the planet earth and its denizens in current times being called the Anthropocene. If it is true that neither biology nor philosophy any longer supports the notion of independent organisms in environments, that is, interacting units plus contexts/rules, then sympoiesis is the name of the game.³⁰

Haraway argues that the landscape is already hybrid, an embodied teaching about living valiantly and care-fully within dying systems. Referencing Tsing's *Art of Living on a Damaged Planet*, she observes that we embrace "the contaminated and nondeterministic, unfinished, ongoing practices of living in the ruins...as a practice of caring and thinking."³¹ Walking along the water's edge, I see how the natural world is broken on the wheel of industry; yet it cracks the concrete, rusts the steel and returns it to the earth. I distinguish between sympoiesis – 'making with' as a means of communication and healing – and the creative experiments with hybridity that Haraway proposes. The latter would not cost me the sovereignty they can cost an Indigenous artist or scholar, as Simpson states. Haraway has entered into extensive dialogue with Indigenous thinkers and makers,³² which I have not yet done. While I am opening my creative work to Indigenous ways of knowing and research methodologies, I am careful about the direction in which influence flows, not trying to adapt the knowledge shared with me or to over-extend any comparisons I might make between Indigenous and dominant cultural precepts.

The role of storytelling in maintaining and preserving relationships – personal, familial, cultural – has been a preoccupation of mine since writing my undergraduate thesis and creating the related body of work entitled *The Persistence of Narrative*.³³ I have continued to explore the healing aspects of narrative in my graduate thesis work, reflecting on its role in preserving and deepening human- and land-based connections. I have contemplated Indigenous concepts and practices around kinship, particularly the

³⁰ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 33.

³¹ Haraway, "Staying," 37.

³² As observed by my primary advisor, Jay Irizawa, in conversation on 25 March 2022.

³³ Mary K. McIntyre, "The Persistence of Narrative," *Mary K. McIntyre*. Squarespace, Inc., 2017, <https://www.marykmcintyre.com/about-the-series>



Figures 13-15: Breathing Exercise – The gilded root and charred limb are a manifestation of body and spirit and celebrate the beauty that is possible even in decline and decay.

idea that this connection survives time and mortality. Over this past year, as I reflected on personal and familial stories of loss, I conceived large-scale works informed by visiting and storytelling methodologies that meditate on loss but are not consumed by it; which heal and preserve connection.

Visiting Methodology

Breathing Exercise

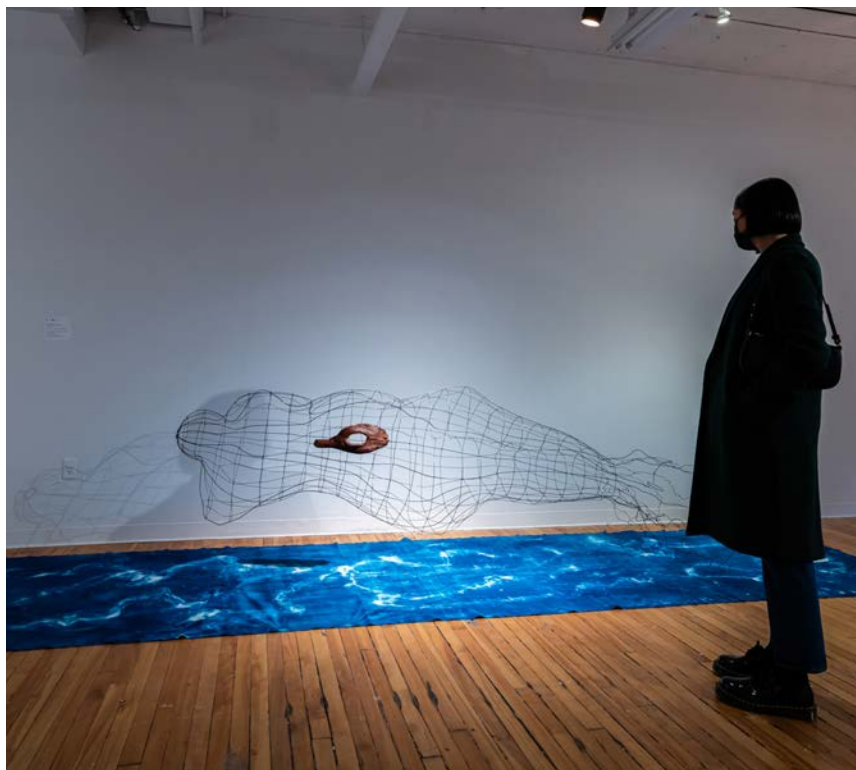
Breathing Exercise identifies the human body with narrative; both serve as vessels for memory and means of preserving relations. This work was conceived as a memorial to a close friend, made during the last three weeks of her life. For three and a half months, we visited at home, in hospital, and finally in hospice. We talked about our shared history, how she understood her life and how she was experiencing the letting go of it. We discussed the concept of the work, and she commented on sketches and progress photographs. I believe her thoughts and essence are found in the finished installation, and it showed me in a concrete way how multiple consciousnesses can meet within an intentional object. As Wiisaakodewinini / Métis artist and educator Dylan AT Miner asserts, visiting with my friend and witnessing with her, is the true purpose of the creative work:

I have made visiting a fundamental component of my practice. Visiting is what differentiates me—and us—from non-living and inanimate *aya'iin* // things. Employing knowledge from the *gichi-aya'aag* // elders, I think about the work we do as artists—or craftspeople or makers or whatever term you use to identify your practice... . We must be cautious to not focus on what is being made, but rather on the actual process of making and with whom we are doing this work. For me, employing and living the elders' teaching about visiting allowed me to intentionally shift how I see my practice—or work if you use this term—away from its general focus on *aya'iin* // things and instead see how being together and visiting does the work of creating and maintaining community.³⁴

The act of making and the material of the work was central to the visiting – and is now intrinsic to remembering. A gnarled cedar root is paired with a twisted tree limb, both gathered from waterfront sites along the routes where we ran and talked. Working with cedar and pine was a conscious decision, as these evergreen tree species are associated with eternal life in European theologies, and enduring peace in Haudenosaunee cosmology.³⁵ The cedar root is suspended, its amputated and gilded branches striving and exulting. It casts a deep, distinct shadow on the cyanotype suspended behind it, suggesting spirit and form occupying linked, parallel spaces.

34 Dylan AT Miner, "Mawadisidiwag Miinawaa Wiidanokiindiwag // They Visit and Work Together," in *Makers, Crafters, Educators Working for Cultural Change*, ed. Elizabeth Garber et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 133.

35 Herbert W. Schroeder, "The Tree of Peace: Symbolic and Spiritual Values of the White Pine," in *White Pine Symposium Proceedings: History, Ecology, Policy and Management*, ed. Robert A. Stine et al. (Duluth: University of Minnesota, 1992), 78.



Figures 16-17: *For Alice* – The memory of Alice Copley, née Hipgrave, and her child are restored to our family by elevating their story and reconnecting them to the Wonscotonach/Don river. Justine Woods reflects on the installation.

Storytelling Methodology

For Alice

Haraway discusses storytelling as a methodology that supports multiple strategies for creating meaning: “the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come,”³⁶ or for mending existing networks with stories as “a practice of caring and thinking... that allow[s] us to survive collaboratively in disturbance and contamination.”³⁷ She draws on Ursula LeGuin’s metaphor of the story as a vessel for gathering and preserving the substance of life: “The slight curve of the shell that holds just a little water, just a few seeds to give away and to receive, suggests stories of becoming-with, of reciprocal induction, of companion species whose job in living and dying is not to end the storying.”³⁸ The woven wire form that commemorates the story of my ancestor Alice Copley is a vessel, literally and metaphorically – a woven container for her story.

I first learned of her existence from my paternal grandmother, Beatrice McIntyre.³⁹ Her older sister, Alice Copley *née* Hipgrave, died in labour brought on prematurely by domestic assault. My grandmother, then a child herself, described seeing mother and newborn together in their casket. Alice’s husband spent nine months in the Don Jail,⁴⁰ receiving nine lashes at the beginning and at the end of his sentence. Recently, I researched this branch of my family and was able to trace documents registering Alice’s immigration to Canada, her marriage, and the birth of her first child. Her burial was registered at Prospect Cemetery where, coincidentally, my paternal family rests. Reflecting on this short and sad paper trail, I realised that I had heard this story when I was about the same age as Alice when she emigrated to Canada. My grandmother’s intention in telling it was clear: this was a cautionary tale about the dangers of men and of choosing a mate poorly. In this context, it is a story of two lives cut short and an irretrievable loss to her family.

However, through the influence of Indigenous teachings, I now realize that Alice and her child are still my family. Alice was aunt to my father, born 19 years after her death. Alice’s unborn child was my father’s (and my) cousin. She would have been 68 when I was born, and my cousin would have been 48; under other circumstances, we would have known them both. I will celebrate and remember them, as I remember my father, grandmother, and the other aunties and cousins whom I have been able to know.

36 Haraway, “Staying,” 31.

37 Haraway, “Staying,” 37.

38 Haraway, “Staying,” 40.

39 Family stories mentioned here are documented in an appendix to this thesis (Appendix B – Family Stories).

40 Formally called the Toronto Jail, but known by generations of Torontonians as the Don Jail.



Figure 18: *For Alice* – The partially gilded driftwood form of the child evokes life eternally in waiting, watching.

The woven wire form is a porous vessel, transparent and ethereal. Observing the maquette, my secondary advisor Mary Anne Barkhouse noted⁴¹ that the form reminded her of Indigenous fishing traps constructed of lashed twigs. That was an interesting observation, as I had intended to suggest a network of family relationships suspended in the current of a river of time and remembrance. The overlapping references come together as an attempt to capture or retrieve, as the river continues to sweep away. This vessel figure hovers in a recumbent position above a cyanotype print laid on the floor to evoke the water associated with pregnancy and labour, and the waters of the Wonscotonach/Don flowing past the site of her husband's punishment. Within the belly of the form floats an elliptical piece of driftwood gathered from the waterfront, to which I applied the brown-red pigment used as a ground for gold leaf in manuscript illumination. The ground suggests something about to be completed, about to kindle with life. The interior of the driftwood form is lined in gold leaf, suggesting the conscious child suspended between worlds and continuing to watch their family over the decades.

Practice-based Research

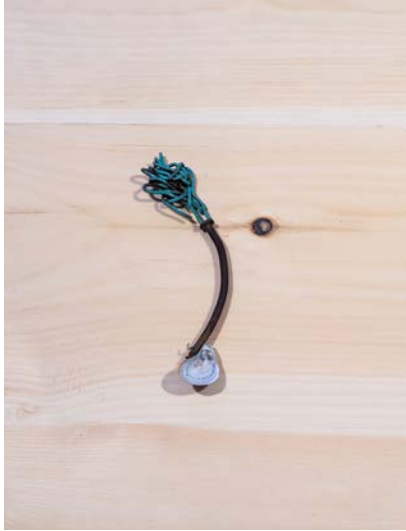
My advisor, Mary Anne Barkhouse has observed⁴² that her people, the Namgis First Nation, do not make distinctions between art and craft. By contrast, the colonial culture in which I was raised identifies “fine art” as the province of conceptual thinking and “craft” as a social practice framed in terms of ethnographic and anthropological research. Re-thinking the foundations of my creative work has meant engaging in practice-based research that interweaves the formal and the conceptual. I have integrated explorations of materials, techniques, and connections to land, guided by an intuitive sense of interwoven networks of natural- and object-based consciousness.

Two Rows

Practice-based research is fundamental to craft practice, and involves thinking-through-making and materials-based experimentation. Through the works discussed above, I explore longing for (re)connection and a desire to repair; calling out to connect, and calling to account. I have incorporated the traditions of metalsmithing that are the foundation of my creative practice and the carpentry skills taught me by my father and grandfather. To these media, I have added explorations in large-scale cyanotype printmaking, pursued intuitively and in collaboration with the environment and the land.

41 Conversation at Mary Anne Barkhouse's studio on December 12, 2021.

42 Conversation with MAB, December 12, 2021.



Figures 19-27: *Two Rows* – Natural and industrial elements connected with copper, bronze and silver: craft creating new relationships between the natural and made worlds.

The interweaving of material and conceptual elements is visible in *Beaver Stick Spoon*, part of the *Two Rows* installation. The spoon comprises a twig stem and a formed copper bowl, riveted together with hand-made copper washers and bronze rivets. The twig bears the marks left as the beaver stripped away the nourishing bark. This rhythmic, intentional mark-making is echoed in the textures on the spoon's bowl, created as I planished⁴³ the copper sheet over a rusting trailer hitch scavenged from the Don Valley. Formally, the spoon can be read as the juxtaposition of natural and industrial materials to create a harmonious and functional object. Conceptually, the spoon is an exercise in sympoiesis, the metalsmith 'working with' the beaver, both in command of their respective environments and techniques. Further, the scavenged trailer hitch repurposed as a smithing stake remains, at its core, an element of the earth slowly returning to iron oxide; the texture it leaves on the copper reveals its essential nature.

The *Two Rows* implements use materials and techniques of my craft practice to unite the elements of the natural world and the manufactured world. The choice of copper, bronze, and silver for these connecting elements is deliberate, as each of these materials has formal and cultural significance in both Indigenous and European cultures. Copper is a significant ceremonial material in One Dish territory and, as my advisor has observed, imparts great authority among her people and the other nations of the West Coast.⁴⁴ Copper conducts electricity, and in this case is a metaphorical conductor of energy between cultures. Bronze is an alloy that retains copper's ductility, with zinc or tin added for greater resilience – ideal for withstanding stress. Silver is precious in both Indigenous and colonial cultures. The text of the Covenant Chain agreement relies on this mutual regard to suggest a deeper meaning, observing that relationships, like silver, must be tended to retain their shining character.⁴⁵ I drew on all these associations, situating these metals as literal and figurative connectors between the natural and post-industrial objects I collected from the water's edge, and between the non-human and human worlds.

Interdependence of the Works

The works depend upon one another to realize their full purpose. Read together, they delineate two paths for examining relationship: one encompassing and environmental, the other personal. I have, however, inverted the relationship between scope and scale to complicate the viewer's experience. The

43 Planishing is the refinement of a metal surface by striking it in repeated, overlapping blows with a polished hammer, while supported on a polished stake. The technique creates a slightly faceted surface that reflects light, and was widely used by metalsmiths during the Arts and Crafts period. The technique continues to be used for the same reason: to distinguish hand-made works from industrial production.

44 Phone conversation with Mary Anne Barkhouse, March 21, 2022.

45 Loft, "Remember," 19-20.

broader social/historical perspective is explored through the smaller works, which require the viewer to approach closely to engage them. The autobiographical perspective is contained in larger works, scaled to the human body and encouraging a more intimate identification between viewer and work.

WALK 3: THE DISTRIBUTED CONSCIOUSNESS OF INTENTIONAL OBJECTS

The Extended Mind

The experience of looking at a work of art...does not assume an essential division between the external object and the internal subjective mind of the viewer. Rather, one extends to the other, forming a continuum in which the mind reaches out to the work as much as the work reaches into the mind. In this way the mind, the work, and indeed the artist, become fused.⁴⁶

I first encountered this observation by artist and academic Robert Pepperell while researching the phenomenology of 'flow' – that elevated mental state of deep immersion in a task, of oneness with materials and tools, that is often compared to the spiritual state facilitated by ceremony and religious practice. Pepperell's argument is philosophical, not theological: he observes that, as a person is known by actions, emotional expressions, and other ways they impact the environment beyond the boundary of their body, so do artworks express and stimulate states of mind and emotions that link artist and viewer.⁴⁷ He draws on Arthur Gell's anthropological theory of visual arts, in which artifacts act as the embodiment of internal consciousnesses,⁴⁸ and extends this idea to suggest that the object can also embody the environment from which its materials were drawn, the culture and history from which it sprang, the spiritual and aesthetic principles it embodies. I was excited by the possibility of structural correspondence between the inner world of consciousness and the intentionally made object-world. I imagined an externalized cultural database, a distributed consciousness of makers existing in relation not only to contemporary observers but also to someone viewing, using, or appreciating the object over many generations. This was an exciting way to think about relations cultivated through creative work.

A Bridge Between Ways of Knowing and Being

Anthropologist Tim Ingold, who has written extensively on craft practice, has suggested an analogy between craft practice and weaving – the "textility of making" being a negotiated, generative process in

46 Robert Pepperell, "Art and Extensionism," in *Situated Aesthetics: Art Beyond the Skin*, ed. Riccardo Manzotti (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), 120.

47 Pepperell, "Art," 117.

48 Pepperell, "Art," 111.

which mind and form are united in a constant act of becoming.⁴⁹ Pepperell's conception of the material world as an embodied network of cultural objects and practices harmonizes with Ingold's characterization of the world of objects as active agents with which the artist collaborates:

The way of the craftsman...is to allow knowledge to grow from the crucible of our practical and observational engagements ...what I would like to call an art of inquiry. ... In the art of inquiry, the conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, the fluxes and flows of the material with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them.⁵⁰

Without suggesting that Indigenous understandings of existence and ways of knowing are analogous to the phenomenological relationships defined by Pepperell and Ingold, it occurred to me that both these ways of knowing respond to intuitively and empirically understood connections of the material and mental, of external and internal realities. As I considered what my re-formed relationship to place would look like, I thought about how craft traditions might form a bridge: a European idea about a network of 'intentionally made objects'⁵¹ embodied with the consciousness of makers and users/observers, and the interwoven, mutually dependent networks of human and non-human worlds described by Indigenous scholars and artists.

The Ceremony of Making

Wiradjuri scholar and educator Norman Sheehan explains the roots of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in Aboriginal cosmology. The world consists of intelligent, related natural networks, and IK employs visual narrative as a key methodology for research that reinforces "life affirming patterns embedded in our "being-with" the natural systems of which we are a part."⁵² Sheehan observes that "[t]hrough visual philosophy, design is apprehended as an external mind that depicts the mobile and evolving shared consciousness of a collective. In this view, design is not just a process that produces new objects, changed situations, or enabled futures; it is the connective process that constitutes externalized cognition."⁵³ His thinking suggested a way to remove the stink of ethnography from my consideration of

49 Tim Ingold, "The textility of making," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34 (2010): 91.

50 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 6.

51 I have chosen this phrase to describe objects made through individual creative effort (deliberately not distinguishing between "art" and "craft"), distinct from the products of manufacture and "industrial design." In the latter case the consciousness of the individual designer is alienated from the process of making and the sheer quantity of items produced diffuses entirely the presence of the artist within the work.

52 Norman W. Sheehan, "Indigenous Knowledge and Respectful Design: An Evidence-Based Approach," *Design Issues* 27, no. 4 (October 2011): 69.

53 Sheehan, "Indigenous Knowledge," 71.

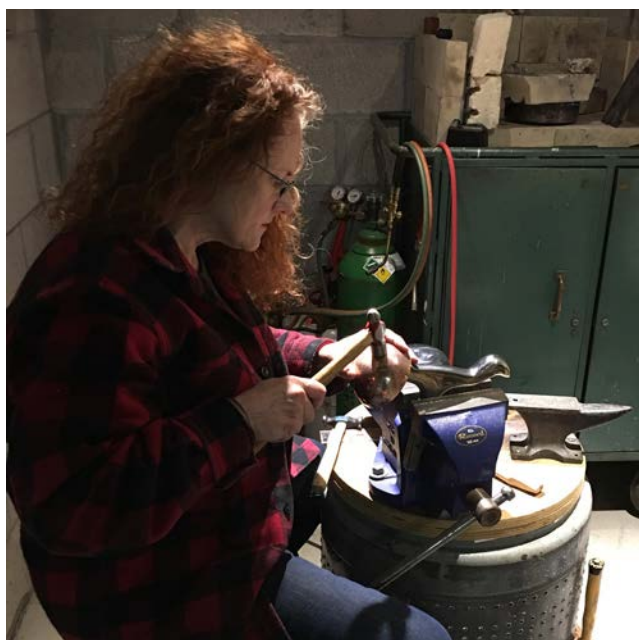


Figure 28 – My metal community: Mary Anne Barkhouse, Kye-Yeon Soon, Beth Alber, Chantal Gilbert, and Anne Barros.

Figure 29 – Planishing a bowl in my studio.

Figure 30 - The hands of our *doyenne*, Lois Betteridge, filing a ring for an exhibition in 2019.

an intentional, conscious relationship between my practice as a smith and more extensive human and non-human networks.

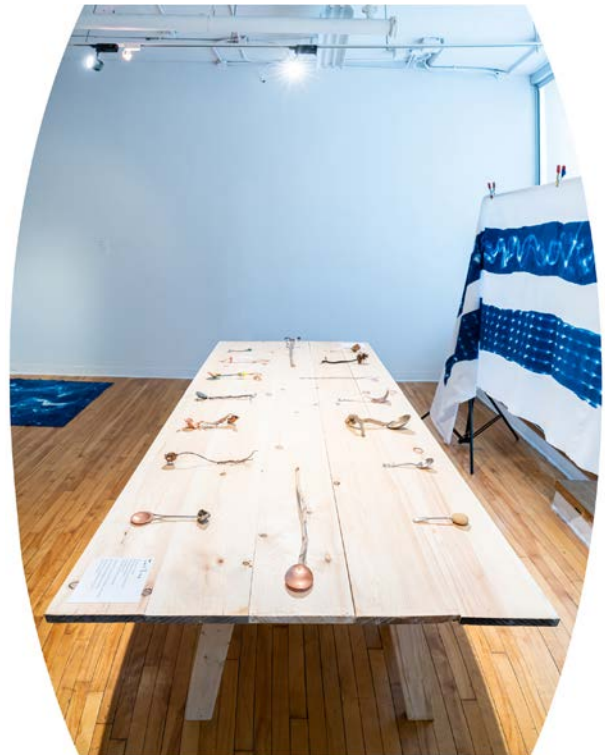
Shawn Wilson observes that participants in ceremony must be “ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness. You could say that the specific rituals that make up the ceremony are designed to get the participants into a state of mind that will allow the extraordinary to take place. ...It is fitting that we view research in the same way—as a means of raising our consciousness.”⁵⁴ From this perspective, my act of making, my practice-based research, is ceremony. Every time I sit down at my jeweller’s bench or stand before a silversmithing stake with a hammer in my hand, I am conscious of this. As I settle into the work and my hands perform well-accustomed tasks, I feel my mind clear and I open myself to other voices. I converse with my *doyenne* Lois Betteridge, hearing her sharp tones again as we discuss the work I am making and how to improve it. I talk to my grandfather Willie, the shipyard welder, and my great-uncle Eugene, the bridge builder; are they still surprised to see me wielding an acetylene torch? I thank my husband’s Uncle Alan, whose children gave me his jewellers’ pliers and watchmaking punches. I remember his gentle encouragement as we talked over a wedding ring design I was trying to figure out. As I have developed my thesis work, I have had many conversations with my deceased friend, who was so supportive, curious, and respectful about my practice. I speak to living folks, too, hearing the exuberant laughter of my fellow smith Brigitte and the wry commentary of my friend and advisor Mary Anne. These relationships are real and present to me, alive in the ceremonial space woven by mind, hand, eye, tools, and materials, and infused into the work itself. Also present in the ceremony are the places where I have gathered the materials I am working with – the textures, forms, and immanent life of the land and water’s edge where I encounter them.

Breathing Exercise

I am interested in the ways that both Indigenous and European thought allow for the reality of intelligence embedded in the object world. Miner distinguishes work that is inanimate / *aawan* from that which is animate / *aawi*. The former is a product created within the colonial equation of time plus productivity equals money. The latter is alive, animated by process and the collective energy of makers working and visiting together.⁵⁵ Pepperell evokes a “continuum in which the mind reaches out to the work as much as the work

54 Wilson, “Research,” 69.

55 Miner, “Mawadisidiwag,” 133.



Figures 31- 32: Two Rows – creating a provisional space that evokes rituals of a shared meal, or negotiated treaty.

reaches into the mind”⁵⁶ and asserts that this dynamic of collective/distributed consciousness survives over time. The point of connection between the Indigenous and European ideas is the assertion that the work is alive, and because it is alive, it operates outside the constraints of time-based existence. This idea was, for me, powerfully inspiring. As I conceived and made *Breathing Exercise*, I was convinced that some spark of my consciousness was imbued in my work. I wondered if an element of its subject could be similarly embodied, especially when, as Miner has suggested, my friend was a party to the work’s conception. Could some part of my friend reside in the work that memorializes her? It was moving to consider that my creative practice could break the temporal barrier that separates her from her kin, her friends, and me.

Two Rows

In *Two Rows*, I explored this timelessness by creating a temporary space delineated with pine planks supported on sawhorses, and a cyanotype scrim suspended behind the makeshift table. The deliberately artificial, almost theatrical installation is a portal to the provisional spaces where treaties were negotiated between colonial and Indigenous nations. The laying of the table invokes another ritual as well: that of the shared meal. Here, hooks’ love ethic comes into play: the act of eating together, of setting down weapons and making a space to talk and share food, is a form of sacred practice, of ceremony, that requires us to be present and to put others’ needs ahead of our own. The eating implements, framed within the ritual of dinner, enact the reciprocity that informs the Dish With One Spoon treaty – directly in the case of the functional spoons, and by implication in the absence of care represented by the non-functional implements.

56 Pepperell, “Art,” 120.



Figure 33: The water's edge near the mouth of Cobecheonok/the Humber River.

WALK 4: STANDING ON THE SHORE / CONCLUSION

Creating this thesis work has required reflection on relations between me and the networks of which I'm part – networks of land and water, of kinship, of creative family. I've pondered how a position of ethical love is unstable in the best sense: unsettled (the authentic position for a settler on this territory) and open to reinterpretation and repurposing. I want to contribute a new node to the network of intentionally made objects, one that complicates these webs – that enlarges and enriches conventional craft practice with Indigenous understandings of the liveliness and agency of the land.

Creating this thesis work has been a journey, one where I have reflected on what my relationship should be to human and non-human networks in the territory I stand on, but which I do not control. The work that I've created is vulnerable in a way that I hope is helpful to other makers who are freeing their practices of colonial structures, and which creates opportunities for ethical interactions with Indigenous friends and colleagues. That sense of being of this land and not of it – Victoria Freeman's double vision of the unfamiliar-familiar place – is an exciting and fertile space to inhabit.

Answering Questions

What is respectful, responsible artistic practice for a settler on these territories? How do I respect the sovereignty of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies while re-forming my practice?

The language of the Guswentha and the Dish with One Spoon Treaty make clear that sharing territory does not infringe on the sovereignty of individual parties to the treaty. Rather, it ensures peaceful coexistence by making clear that each party is responsible for maintaining the health of the treaty relationship and the lands to which it applies.⁵⁷ These principles guide me as I work to re-form my practice. As I make work from materials gathered from the water's edge and ravines, I take care not to damage these sites; for example, rinsing the cyanotype prints in water that is guided into the city's treatment system so that the chemicals used for cyanotype printing, ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide, are not washed directly into the watershed. At an ethical and theoretical level, the work references the land but does not claim it: I observe what has transpired here, but only what I can speak to from personal experience or family storytelling.

⁵⁷ Leanne Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 2 (2008): 37.

How can my land-based work, reflecting personal memory and family narrative, offer opportunities for respect, learning and relationship-building – the love ethic in action?

Trying to address this research question, I've realized that by claiming less I allow others to claim more. Using an autobiographical methodology, I have explored highly personal connections to this land in a way that does not over-claim; that does not try to draw specific, appropriative connections between my story and this place, but instead opens a dialogue by saying, "this is a thing that happened here" and allowing the viewer to make whatever connection to that work they wish. I integrate materials and techniques taught by my creative and genetic families: creating the table and sawhorses for *Two Rows* using the carpentry skills taught by my grandfather and father, and the smithing and knifemaking skills taught by my creative community. The goal is to allow other people to read this work, bring their history and experiences to it, and say what it means for them. The work listens as well as speaks, and allows a conversation to develop. In that way, I believe it embodies hooks' love ethic.

Can I draw on the ethical and intellectual structures of both craft and Indigenous cultures to (re)inform the work of 'opening' my practice?

The concepts and language of treaty guide my work; this is appropriate, as I have inherited one side of these agreements. My primary advisor, Jay Irizawa, has observed that treaties are *enacted* into being, or they remain only a metaphor.⁵⁸ By acting on what I've learned, I reform my practice. That said, I have to base my work on the specifics of my practice and community to avoid overstepping or overgeneralizing similarities I've sensed between craft and Indigenous principles of knowledge keeping and knowledge sharing.

My practice is embedded in a network of relationships, centred on the smith who trained me and my fellow creative kin, stretching back to our teachers and forward to those we teach. This kinship is supported by an ethic of caring for one another, preserving knowledge, and passing it to the next generation. Our pedagogy is hands-on: relational, empirical, and materially engaged. I'm inspired by Dylan AT Miner's observation that "the doing and being and making is far more important than what is actually being made," committing to the process of learning "from, with, and alongside."⁵⁹ As I continue this journey, I will continue to find opportunities to work alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends and classmates, teachers and advisors, fellow artists, and community members. Together, we will

⁵⁸ Online meeting with JI, March 11, 2020.

⁵⁹ Miner, "Mawadisidiwag," 134.

create meaning in this complicated city space; within the complex, problematic network of relations defined by colonial structures, and woven by diverse populations of newcomer, settler, and Indigenous people.⁶⁰

Can the practice and demonstration of the love ethic in my work offer opportunities to other non-Indigenous artists?

The works created for this thesis are the beginning of a series of new conversations and growing relationships, the generation of new networks woven in respect and reciprocity. I'm inspired by and grateful for the ways that this thesis project has enabled me to evolve and deepen my relationship with my secondary advisor, Mary Anne Barkhouse, who is a member of the Metal Collective of smiths created by Lois Betteridge, and a friend of more than 25 years. Engaging her in serious conversation – not just about the work but also about her lived reality as an Indigenous artist, has been the most profound experience of the past year. My goal will be to pay this forward by demonstrating my practice and work as a model for other non-Indigenous makers and by representing this perspective in my role in the craft communities of which I'm part.

The importance of relationship as a vessel for knowledge, rooted in the relations of people and land, is well-expressed by Shawn Wilson, who states that “knowledge, theories and ideas are only knots in the strands of relationality that are not physically visible but are nonetheless real.” He observes that the sanctity of these relationships, and the drawing-closer that occurs in ceremony, are key to Indigenous spirituality and to the sanctity of the research process: “By reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationship that they share. And this bringing things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is about. This is why research itself is a sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space.”⁶¹

I am now showing this work to my niece, a young jeweller who has begun her own family far away from where we were both raised. Through current and future work, I will pass on our family stories and introduce her to the members of her family she's never met, like Alice, Gordon, Willie, and Eugene. She has not heard their stories, and these family members passed before she could know them. I want to make sure that their memory does not pass as well – both for their significance as her kin and for what their stories tell us about our place on this land.

60 Sandra Styres, Celia Haigh-Brown and Melissa Blimkie, “Toward a Pedagogy of Land: The Urban Context,” *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 36, no. 2 (2013): 42-43.

61 Wilson, “Research,” 87.

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APPENDIX A – LOVE LETTER

“Love Letter” was an assignment for “Indigenous and Decolonial Methodologies, a course offered by OCAD University in Summer 2021. It marked the beginning of the work undertaken in my thesis.

Calling out to all the people

As an artist in this place I call out to the people around me; the people who came before me; the people who will arrive when I have been dispersed to the soil and ether. I am a student, a teacher, a wife, a sister, a daughter, an auntie, a friend – these relations are fundamental to me and the way I work. As I try to understand my place on this land, I have to ask: what can I give? What can I learn? What can I teach? Like the plantain – the ‘white man’s footprint’ – can I leave a helpful trace? Can my work open dialogue, preserve story and memory, leave a path to relationship for others?

I will de-centre myself: create new relations with non-human societies and explore a curriculum of Indigenous knowledge and experience, the written and unwritten histories of all the peoples who live and have lived here. In doing so, I will re-centre my self and my work. Both are broken, and will only be whole when I undertake the work of connection and repair. This decolonizing practice activates the love dynamic described by bell hooks and Kim Tallbear, the work of refusing separation and alienation in favour of a web of relations (193) and restoration.

Connection and Repair

The past few months have been a journey. Reading and thinking about decolonial practice, I have encountered Indigenous concepts of knowledge keeping and knowledge sharing that resonate with the traditions of my craft, with memories of those who taught me and whose lessons I have passed on. Dylan AT Miner proposes an embrace of fluid, non-linear Indigenous ontologies as a way of contesting the capitalist structures of the art world (132). The relationship he proposes echoes Tim Ingold on the transcendent practice of the maker: “to join with and follow the forces and flows of material that bring the form of the work into being” (97). Miner reminds me that work embedded in relationships is alive, infused by spirit and embedded in process. It is the antithesis of the inert works and sterile transactional relationships of colonialism and capitalism. It is profoundly satisfying to hear him describe shifting the focus of his creative practice “away from its general focus on *aya’iin* // things and instead... [to] being together and visiting”, to creating and maintaining community (Miner: 133). This connection of spirit and process reminds me of Robert Pepperell’s interconnection of maker, object, and viewer/user: “one extends to the other, forming a continuum in which the mind reaches out to the work as much as the work reaches into the mind. In this way the mind, the work, and indeed the artist, become fused (120).

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is helping me to understand that walking and gathering in the ravines is not walking through, but visiting with a world of non-human societies. As Kim Tallbear asserts (161), to decolonize my work I must engage these relationships, tend them, and thereby dissolve the distance between myself and these other societies. bell hooks observes that this dissolution can be painful; opening myself to connection means relinquishing the “structures of domination” that have lulled me with stability and material comfort (93). To be aware requires me to look hard at my actions; to “give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn” (hooks: 94). The humility inherent in hooks’ description of the love dynamic – undermining self to connect with the other – must sit at the core of anything I do as a naturalized person in this place. Good decolonial practice means understanding that I am responsible for maintaining the connections made through art. Speaking to the debate around claims to Indigenous identity by individuals not connected to a specific community, Wab Kinew made a significant observation: “To put it simply, you have to keep showing up in order for those relationships to be valid” (The Current). As a settler/naturalized artist seeking advice or looking to collaborate with Indigenous artists and community members, I have to “keep showing up.” I must honour and nourish those relationships, reciprocally and over time.

Storytelling and Calling Out

Colonialism and the instruments of capital have created a rift between the world and the heart, native and naturalized. I am processing the interlacing narratives of human and non-human families through other non-native authors that critique the capitalist/colonial narrative. Like Miner, the feminist/futurist Donna Haraway has also observed how modernity and capitalism have wounded life on earth. She describes the power of stories as “a practice of caring and thinking... that allow[s] us to survive collaboratively in disturbance and contamination” (37). Disputing settler narratives of nature and native cultures ‘in decline’, Haraway’s declaration is an opportunity to create new stories from the brokenness in and around me; to collaborate with new relations in “cultivating conditions for ongoingness” (38).

The anthropologist and author Ursula LeGuin, called stories: “capacious bags for collecting, carrying and telling the stuff of living.” Haraway muses,

“The slight curve of the shell that holds just a little water, just a few seeds to give away and to receive, suggests stories of becoming-with, of reciprocal induction, of companion species whose job in living and dying is not to end the storying.... There is only the relentlessly contingent sf worlding of living and dying, of becoming-with and unbecoming-with, of sympoiesis, and so, just possibly, of multispecies flourishing on earth” (40).

It takes a true love commitment to take yourself out of the centre of the story. Maybe it can’t be done when young, when caught up in the ego-rapture of beginning one’s ‘hero quest.’ I won’t contribute bodily to the next generation. Instead, I will leave objects that speak – have my life in them, the lives of my elders and ancestors whose stories I embody, ways of thinking that others can carry forward.

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APPENDIX B – FAMILY STORIES

The following text documents several family stories told to me by members of my family, which are connected to our tenure on these lands.

Memory 1 - Mother's side

My mother's first experience of the Toronto Waterfront as a new immigrant was being driven along the Lake Shore and weeping at how ugly it was. It was a grey day in December, just after Christmas 1947. The sky was grey, the lake was grey, all the concrete was grey on the industrial Waterfront. As they drove up Dawes Road to the apartment where they would be staying, my mother saw the evergreen wreaths on nearly every door and wept again, thinking there had been a terrible pandemic. In Scotland, the only time you saw evergreen boughs on the door of a house was if someone in the home had died.

Memory 2 - Father's Mother's side

The Toronto Jail is located east of the Don River, north of the bridge crossing the Don at Gerrard Street East. When I was a teenager, my grandmother told me that her elder sister Alice had been beaten so badly by her husband that both she and the baby died. My grandmother was a child of nine and remembered seeing her sister in her coffin, the baby in her arms. Her brother-in-law was sentenced to nine months in the Toronto Jail and, she told me, received nine lashes at the start of his sentence and nine lashes at the end. She saw him only once again, on a city streetcar some 30 years later. She said, with great satisfaction, that he looked "down and out" (1930s parlance for a homeless person).

Memory 3 - Father's side

Water shows up in my family's narrative in multiple ways, sometimes within the same story. My great-uncle Eugene was an ironworker, and family stories say that he was one of the workers who built the Prince Edward Viaduct over the Don River in 1915. Eugene died in his early twenties from the effects of diabetes. Sugar in his urine, sweet water; a secondary connection that I have only just made.

Memory 4 - Father's side

My father was born in 1929. He and his friends were working class children in the 1930s and 40s, and there was no question of paying to get into Sunnyside or any other public pool. They would take the Bloor or Dundas streetcar over to the Don Valley, then walk down through the ravine past hobo encampments to the sandbars from which they could swim. They would watch for the rafts of refuse that would float by, dumped in the river by the tanneries and other industries upstream – cow bones and offal, trailing long streaks of bright leather dye. One of these rafts of refuse would float by, then they would jump into a clear patch of water.

Memory 5 - Father's side

Sometime in the early 2000s, I had lunch with my mother and my father's sister, also named Beatrice. They remained close friends all their lives, even after my parents split. As an example of our family dysfunction, Bea described a conversation she'd had many years prior with her uncle, one of my grandfather's elder brothers. He told her about the weekend he'd just spent on one of the passenger ships that plied the Great Lakes, for business and pleasure. The most famous of these craft was the SS Noronic, which burned off Pier 9 in the Toronto Harbour in 1949; the service was stopped shortly thereafter. In any case, my great-uncle had spent the weekend partying with a young girl, describing her attributes and their activities in enough detail that my aunt – at that point a teenager herself – was forced to exclaim, "For Christ sake! That's our cousin!". She concluded the story by explaining that her Aunt Mae, sister to her father and uncle, had been a procurer for her daughter from the time she was a teenager until her eventual marriage.

Memory 6 – My birth

My mother says that my birth was announced from the dock of a fishing lodge on Lake Kashwakamak, part of the Ottawa River watershed in North Frontenac. This is the lake on which our family bought and cleared a parcel of former Crown land, and built a cottage in 1970-72. My four grandparents were staying together at the lodge, which was run by my paternal grandmother's best friend. My two grandfathers went out every morning to fish. They had just pulled away from the dock when a man ran out from the lodge to tell them that my father had called to say I had been born. They turned the boat around, packed, and made the five-hour drive back to Toronto.

Memory 7 – My family

My mother told me that her father used to walk with me along Lake Shore Boulevard West down to the water's edge at the foot of Lake Crescent in Mimico. She said it reminded him of walking with his five daughters on Sundays after church, when they would walk up into the hills behind Greenock and look out over the Firth of Clyde. My grandfather and I would walk down to the water to look for the big freighters that had come down the St. Lawrence Seaway to unload at the slips of Toronto's Central Waterfront. In the early 1960s, Toronto was still a working waterfront from which rail lines fanned out to take the ship contents across the country. I didn't know any of that, and don't remember the things that my grandfather said to me – I was six years old when he died. But I do remember the sound of his voice, heavily accented and gravelly after a lifetime of smoking, and working in shipyards and on loud factory floors. And I remember his hands – calloused and hard, yet holding my hands so gently.

Memory 8 - My family

As a boy, our grandfather had had scarlet fever, and as a young man he had worked in a machine shop. Between those two experiences he had lost much of his hearing. At family gatherings he was often very quiet, as it was difficult for him to separate individual voices from the din of a large dinner table. But out in his 15-foot Springbok, in quiet early mornings and at dusk, my brothers and I could make ourselves understood to him, and he to us. He taught us these were the two best times to go fishing. He explained that if we wanted to catch sunfish or pike we should stay in the little bays that were weedy and still; those were the places that these fish liked. If we wanted walleyes or bass, it was best to go out to the middle of the lake where the water was deep and free-flowing. For pickerel, we should head about 30 minutes up the lake to a granite cliff face that sprang out of the water, 75 feet straight up. My grandfather told us that the rock face went as far down as it did up; in the deep, cold, dark water next to the cliff, that was the place where we would find pickerel. After, we would bring home the fish that everyone would eat for breakfast or supper. We would clean the fish at the end of the dock. The head, the tail, the skin, and the organs would all go into the lake where they would feed the turtles and other animals that could make use of them.

This time alone with our grandfather was important; having serious conversations with us and explaining what we should know to be good fishers. He taught us pride in bringing home food for the whole family. He taught us how to read the lake; not just to look at it, but to understand its surface and what lay beneath. I learned how to use tools competently: rods and reels; the lures that attracted specific fish; the very sharp filleting knife, which my brothers and I could each wield by the age of 10. My grandfather gave me my first lessons in being competent, my first inkling that I had a place in a world much larger and much older than me.

APPENDIX C – PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Cyanotypes



Figures 34-36: Shores of the East Don scoured after a November storm; the Don is a mirror to the industrial and natural changes of the past 150 years; interpreting the turbulence of the river with materials gathered from its banks.



Figure 37: Interacting with the print mid-development, adding leaves, soil and water from the site; wood boards used to weigh down the cloth were removed early in the process, and the light areas were not discernable by the end of the 30-minute development period.



Figures 38-39: Painting cloth with cyanotype solution for the *Two Rows* print, and the cloth laid out for development.



Figures 40-41: Rinsing the *Two Rows* print three times, then a tremendous amount of ironing.

APPENDIX C – PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Two Rows: Spoons



Figures 42-44: Planning the rivetting pattern for the *Beaver Paw Spoon*, attaching the birch bark scoop to the fork 'paw', and the final result.



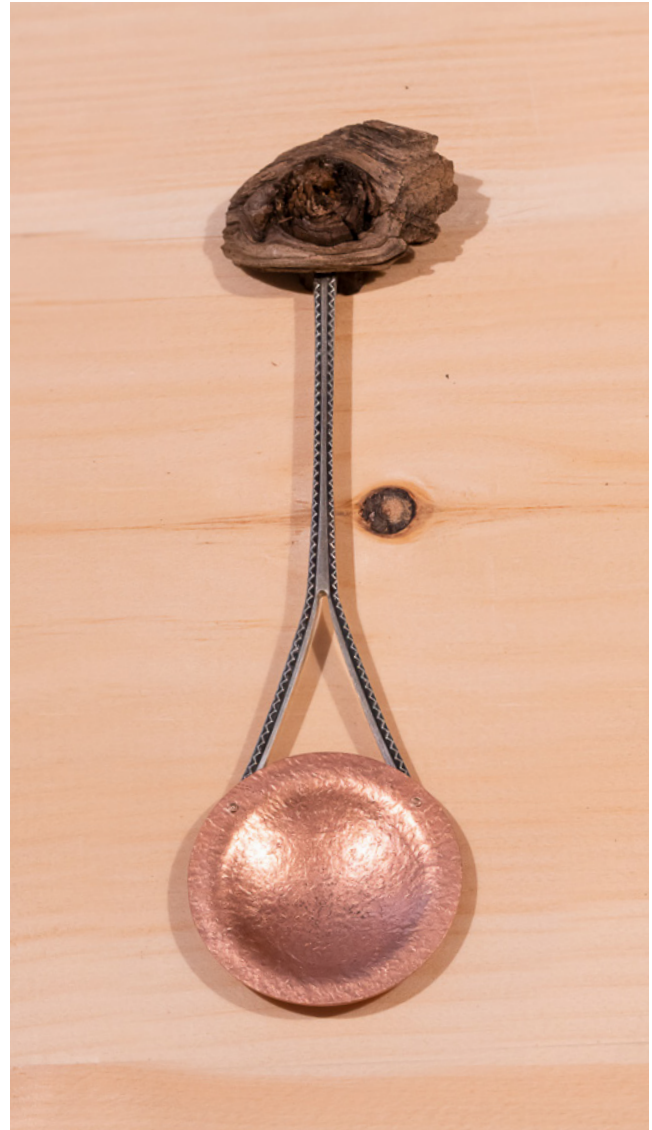
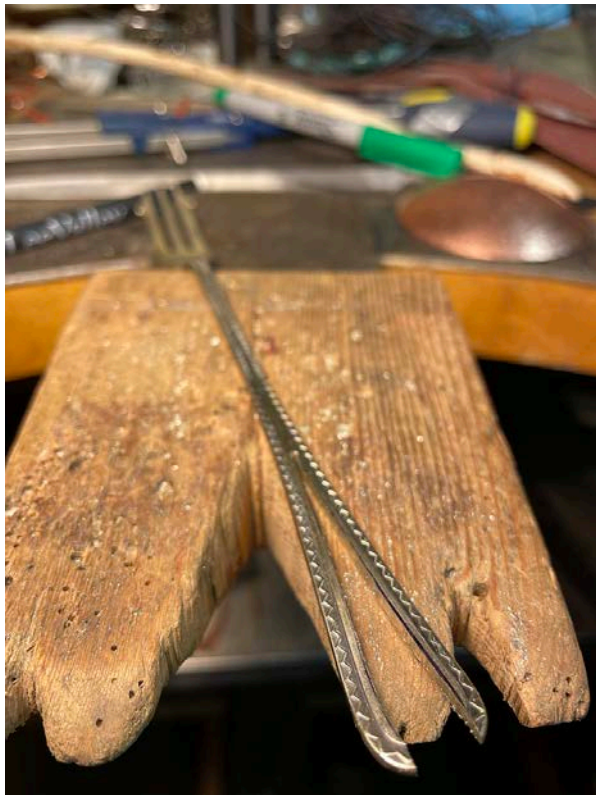
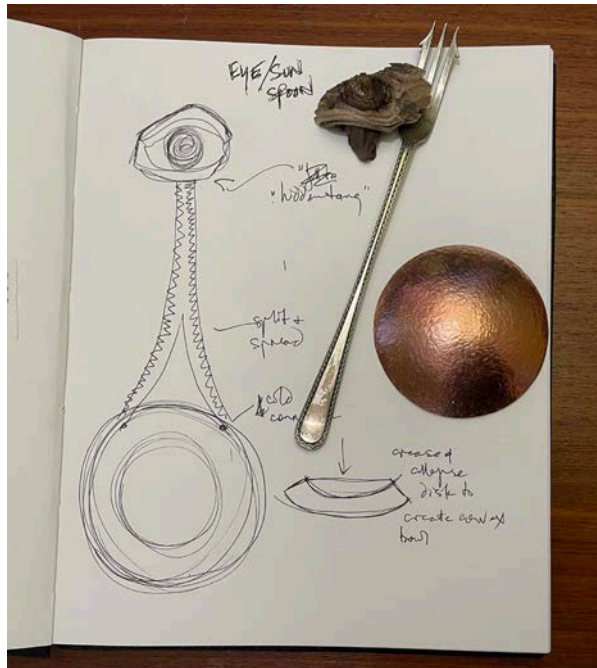


Figure 45-47: Sketching the *Sun Disk Spoon*, cutting the fork used to create the stem, and the finished spoon.



Figures 48-50: Hand-drawing tubing for the *Fish Bobber Spoon*, applying cupric nitrate patina, and the final result.

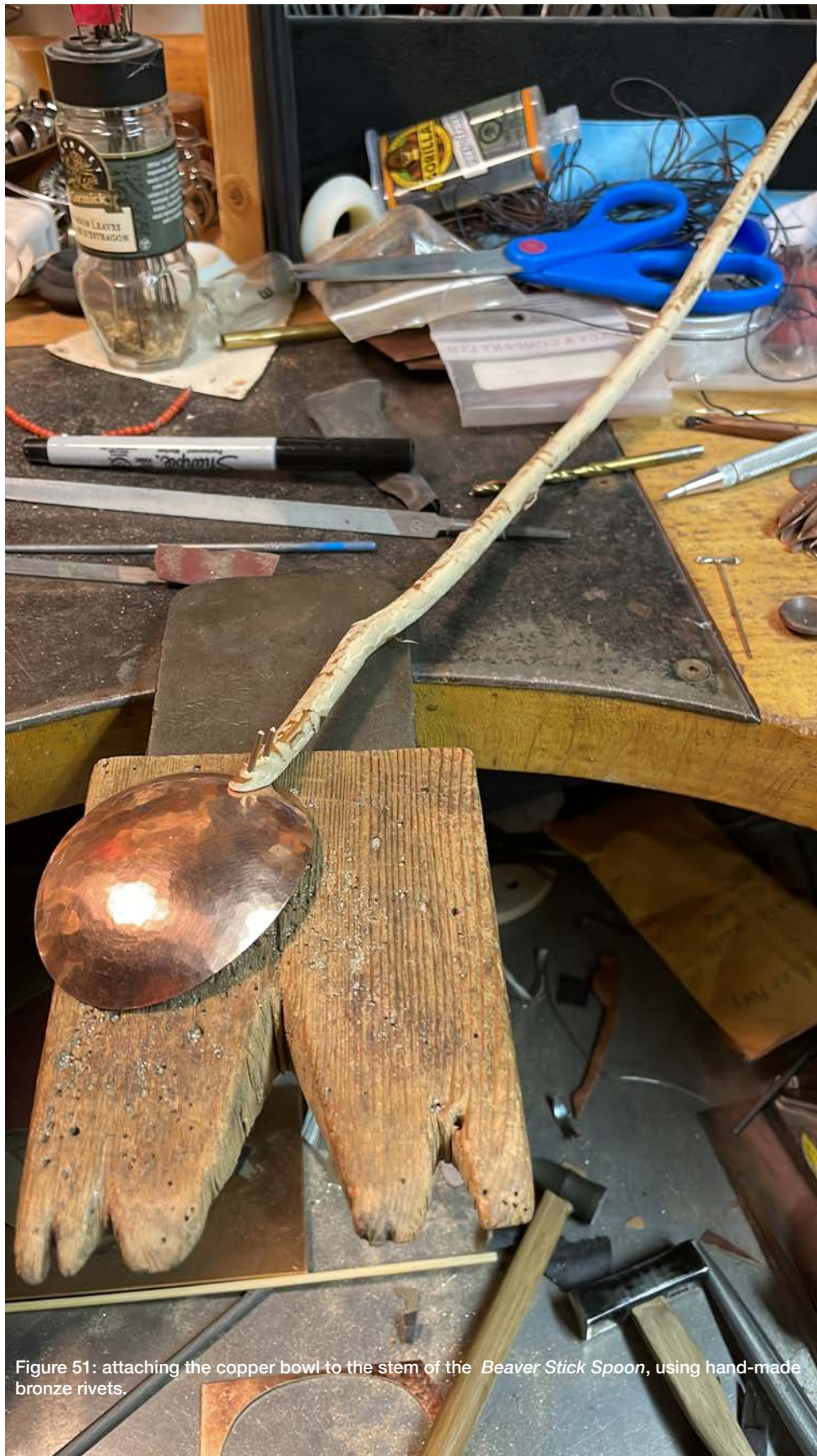
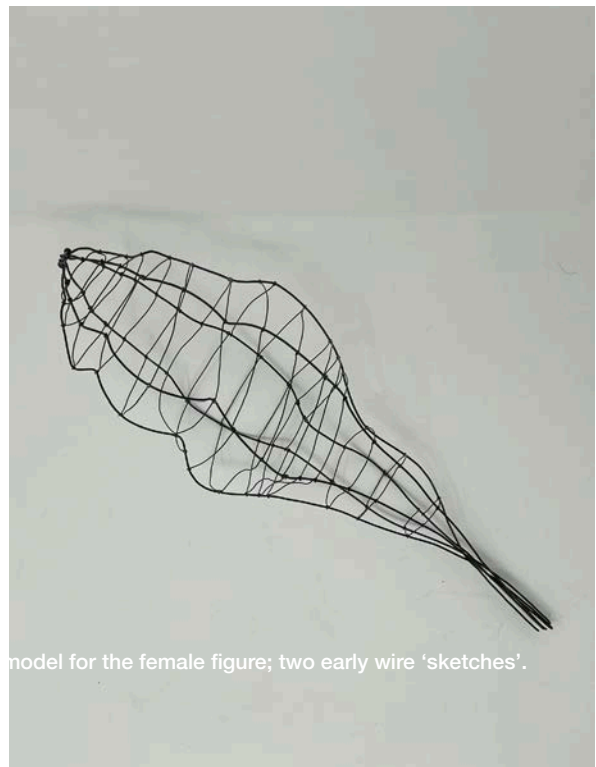
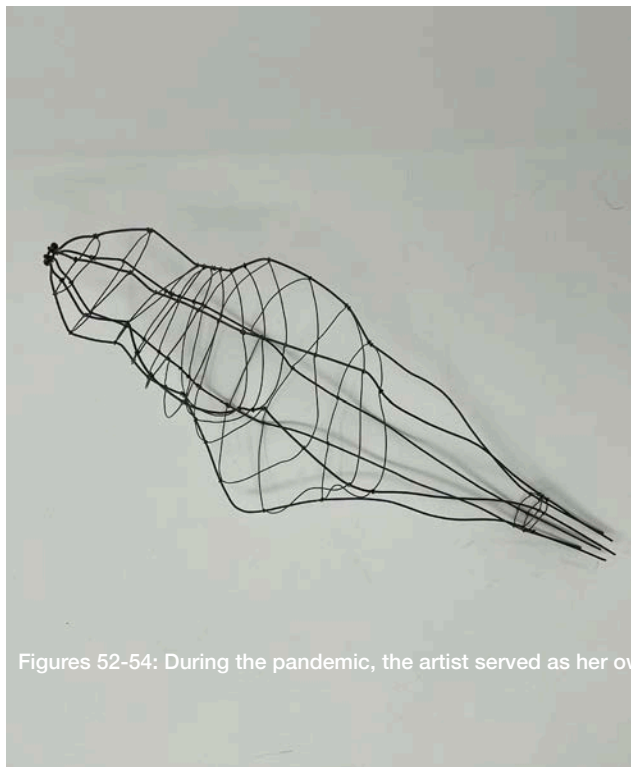


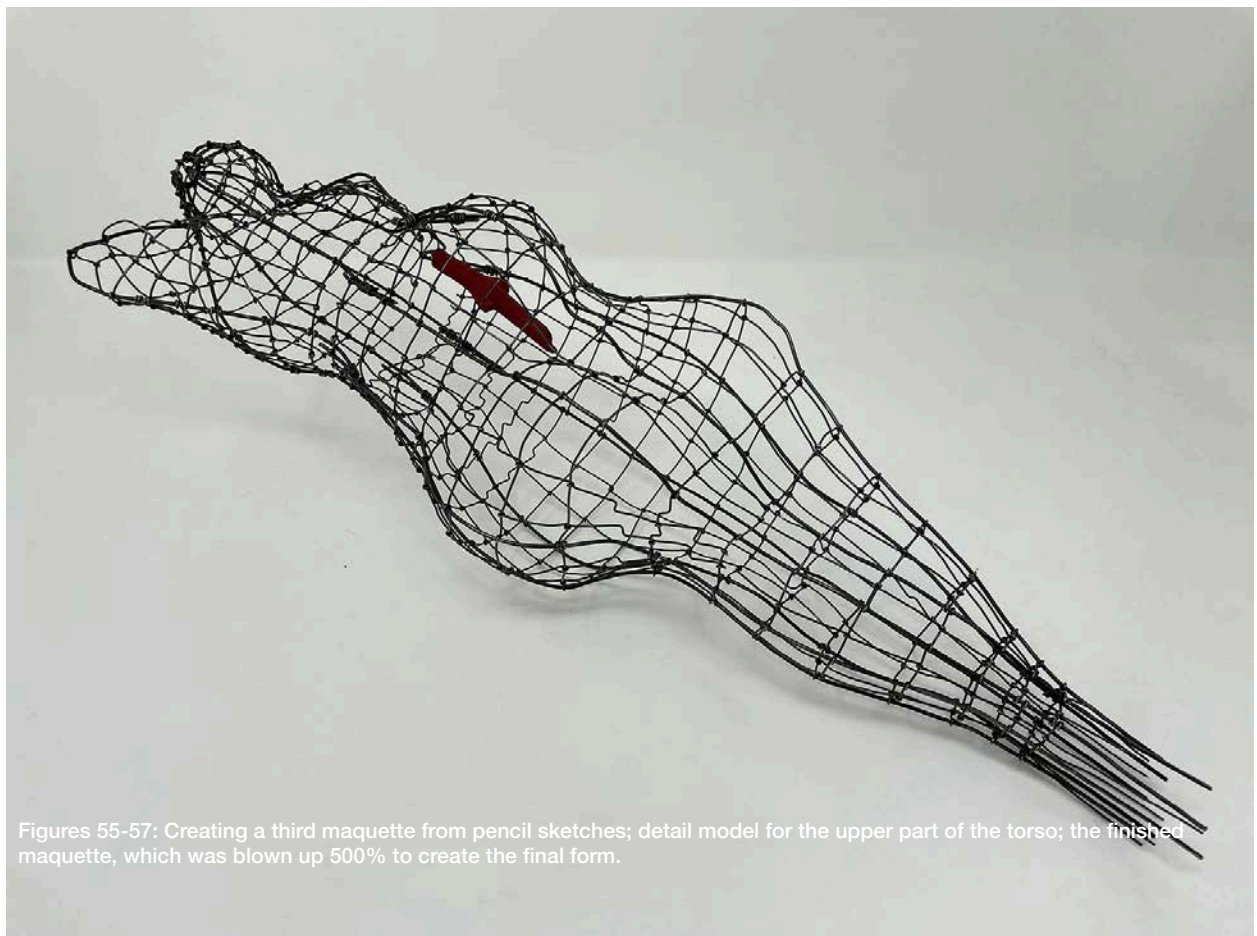
Figure 51: attaching the copper bowl to the stem of the *Beaver Stick Spoon*, using hand-made bronze rivets.

APPENDIX C – PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

For Alice



Figures 52-54: During the pandemic, the artist served as her own model for the female figure; two early wire 'sketches'.



Figures 55-57: Creating a third maquette from pencil sketches; detail model for the upper part of the torso; the finished maquette, which was blown up 500% to create the final form.



Figure 58: Working at the final scale on the For Alice form, created in 12- and 16-gauge mild steel wire on a hand-made dowelling and plywood jig.



Figures 59-60: The driftwood 'child' gathered from the waterfront in December 2021; detail of the form painted and gilded, resting atop a study for the cyanotype print that lies beneath the wire form.

