

Ouroboros

September 22 – October 14, 2018

St. Anne's Anglican Church, Toronto

Ellen Bleiwas
Emily DiCarlo
Gunilla Josephson
Adrienne Trent
Marian Wihak

Known as the oldest allegorical symbol in alchemy, the *ouroboros* represented the concept of eternity and endless return. The symbol of a snake eating its own tail in a closed circle has been found in varied contexts and geographies. The artists in the exhibition *Ouroboros* at St. Anne's Anglican Church pose an inquiry into the cyclical themes of connectedness and continuity through each artwork.

Toronto artists Ellen Bleiwas, Emily DiCarlo, Gunilla Josephson, Adrienne Trent and Marian Wihak share a network of overlapping relationships. The arc of time, space and history, and the connective impacts and resonances activated are shared drivers of their practices. Each one shares a world view that includes the evanescent, the ephemeral and the past with the subsequent talismans, relics, and vestiges of these histories used as markers and reminders of a larger realm of consciousness.

Marian Wihak *Ovum Quadratum*, 2013.

Entering the splendid interior of St. Anne's Anglican Church in Toronto, the viewer is greeted by an expansive, swirling dance of translucent ovoid and square shapes swaying from the central chandelier. Animated shadows and reflected light are cast over the heads of the congregation and floor of the church in Marian Wihak's work *Ovum Quadratum*, causing us to look up, and in doing so delight our eyes and lift our spirits. Inspired by the history of gathering around the early pagan spring fertility festival of the Maypole, the installation embraces the communal, spiritual and civic spirit of that traditional event. The ovoid forms embody the fullness of creativity and suggests the enormity of the surrounding universe. The square shapes speak to the order of our daily lives, the cardinal directions, the elements, and the phases of our life on earth. The often hectic state of our daily lives is delightfully disrupted by the dangling translucent forms.

With its lively motion, *Ozum Quadratum* reveals the potential of the aesthetic to delight the eye, lift up the spirit and invigorate the energy of the congregation of St. Anne's. In church we are both alone and together, with congregants experiencing deep self-reflection and personal meditation on the sermon, as well as the strength created by the communal aspect of coming together to worship. The soft gestures of *Ozum Quadratum* serve as a means to connect us across the immense scope of time.

Ellen Bleiwas *Handhelds*, 2018

Lost in thought and meditation I spy a small object nestled in the rack on the back of the pew beside a prayer book. I pick up the supple vessel and am comforted by its buttery softness, the fragrance of beeswax. As I turn it in my hand I catch a glimpse of my face – the interior is mirrored! Closing my eyes I observe the shift in my mood created by my reflection. From interior meditation, I become cognizant of the weight of my body on the hard surface of the pew. How many people have sat here before me? How many sit here each Sunday?

Another object is in the rack in the next pew. Looking over my shoulder to the few bowed heads scattered in the church, I move up. In front of me is a small wrapped parcel; an offering. I feel the smooth surface of natural rubber in my hand. The laced object resembles the vamp of a child's boot. Soft and pliable as skin, it fits in my palm. Dipped in beeswax it gives off an olfactory hit of

candles. I hold my childhood self in my hand remembering cold feet in rubber boots kicking against the pew until my mother grabs my arm.

Adrienne Trent *Kind; Drawing Lines*, 2018

A site-responsive series of decorative “icons” are mounted on the wall behind the baptismal font. The plaque mounted images of wild and domestic animals are of the cherished domestic pets of friends. While many of the pets have died, they continue an ongoing spiritual presence in the hearts and minds of their owners. Trent's artwork evokes a combination of loss and gain. The owners gained a loving relationship with a once wild species, but how do they deal with the loss of their animals?

Human relationships with animals both wild and domesticated are complex. The pet is like family, with no other needs besides care and nourishment. While owners are drawn to the “wild” animal, the desire to tame pets makes the animal vulnerable through the creation of dependence. Is there a parallel in the relationship between humans and the church? Both pets and religion fill voids in our daily lives: the pet provides a loving, physical presence and comfort while religion offers us a spiritual purpose and ethical backbone.

*Both Adrienne's grandmother and mother were married in St. Anne's Anglican Church.

Emily DiCarlo *Same Time, Always Behind: Toronto/Eindhoven (I)*, 2015

Planet Earth moves around the sun in a 24 hour cycle. A sunset has already happened before – somewhere else and earlier, and will happen again – later. Emily DiCarlo

collaborates with artists at least one time zone away to witness and document a sunset “together.” Here, DiCarlo partners with Dutch artist Hanneke Wetzer to capture sunsets in Toronto and Eindhoven, Holland. The congregation and visitors view the “individual” experiences of the same sunset – six hours apart – together.

DiCarlo refers to her work as “romantic conceptualism,” stemming from a desire to bring poetic elements through framing and gesture to the art movement, which is generally considered analytical and sometimes cold. The video recordings result in a post-constructed “compounding of time” with viewers experiencing two sunsets at once, six hours apart. In Eindhoven, Wetzer’s sun is a golden stretch across the sky, turning to rose and a rise of purple cloud that is the low, flat horizon of Holland. On the corner of Bloor and Bathurst, DiCarlo focuses on the sun setting in the west beyond the beloved landmark discount store Honest Ed’s, in its last days before demolition. Pedestrians wait for the lights to change to cross. A blushing glow lingers in the west. The bright, midway signage of the store lends a carnivalesque presence to that corner. “There is no place on earth like this, any place.”

Gunilla Josephson / *I Love You*, 2016.

Music and voices beckon from the rotunda of St. Anne’s. Faint voices mingle with a familiar French song. A projection of a boy and a girl appear on the thick linen cloth hanging from the altar, disembodied, floating, rotating.

Their freshly scrubbed faces look out at me, as if of another time, a not too distant past of fresh air and green fields. Digitally fused at their chests, their hearts and veins are “tattooed” in a delicate red pattern, like traditional Swedish lace. Their illuminated faces spin and speak at the top of the rotation.

“I miss you. I am happy.” [boy] and “Vous me manquez. Je suis heureuse.” [girl]. The sentences are odd. Altered. Reversed. The children communicate in the cryptic language of dreams; deliver a consolation message from beyond. Hair thin gold threads in the cloth glitter in the light of the projection. The varied textures and colours of sounds: the plaintive song of a lost dear one, the whispered messages and the spinning children, hypnotize. Far removed from the cheap commercial sentiment of Valentine’s cards, the love of which the children speak gives voice to the primal longing for the original love of our parents, when they leave us, and for our children when we leave them.

Jennifer Rudder has worked in the visual arts in Canada for thirty years. Her exhibitions have shown across Canada and her critical essays and art reviews have been published in books, catalogues, anthologies and periodicals. Recently Rudder curated *Le rêve aux loups*, a solo survey exhibition of works by Mary Anne Barkhouse.

Ellen Bleiwas

Ellen Bleiwas' sculptural investigations take particular interest in space, the body, slowness, and sensory perception. She has recently exhibited at Angell Gallery (Toronto), Art Mûr (Montreal), and Kunstraum Tapir (Berlin). Bleiwas holds an MFA from York University (2017), and a Master of Architecture from McGill University (2010). She is the 2017-18 recipient of the 401 Richmond Career Launcher Prize.

Handhelds, 2018.

Natural latex, pure gum rubber, beeswax, cotton string, copper, steel, aluminum, mirror
180 editioned sculptures
(18 multiples, 10 editions of each)



Dozens of tactile sculptures are subtly integrated into the church pews, sliding into wooden pockets alongside prayer books. Made of latex, beeswax, wire, and mirror, these works are conceived of as handheld sculptures; offerings that can be picked up and held in the intimacy of a pew for a prolonged duration of time. They offer a nod to ritual objects – their tunnel-like enclosures evoking a sense of passage, inviting one to delve into a tiny other-world in the palm of their hand.

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Gunilla Josephson

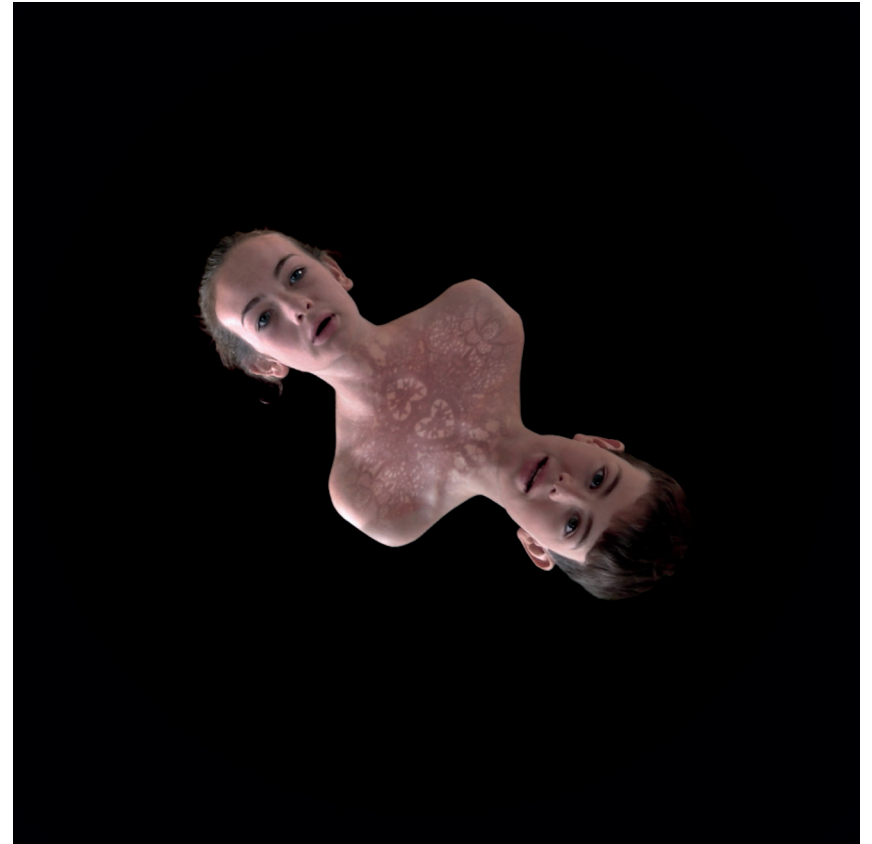
Gunilla Josephson is a Swedish artist with a BA in Social Science and an MFA from Stockholm University. She lives and works in Toronto and exhibits in Canada and Europe. Josephson's videos have been described as fictional documentary installations that paint the filmic in video. Her installations are witty investigations of the myths and symbols that structure our culture and its history. Josephson's video work is informed by the language of the kind of cinema, theatre and literature that is rooted in the problematical, always political domestic sphere played out on a chaotic arena. Her early wax works, her fictional documentaries and performance-based videos raise questions about the formation and transformation of identity. Despite their playful appearances and their theatrical mise-en-scène the characters in Josephson's films spiral into complex psychological states of consciousness and behavior confusing the consensus and our points of reference of the established order.

Koffler Centre of the Arts (2019); Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art (solo), Ryerson Image Centre; Rodman Hall Art Centre St Catharines (solo); Toronto Images Festival; Winnipeg Art Gallery; MEETINGS Video/Performance Festival, Jutland, Denmark; Canadian Cultural Centre Paris; Musée d'Art Contemporain Montreal; South London Art Gallery; LUX Cinema London; Short Film Festival Oberhausen [Festival Prize]; Moderna Museet, Stockholm.



Herta and Viola, 1947/2010.
Part 1, Textile: flax-fibre/linen, 1947
Part 2, Painting: wax and pigment
on wood, 2010

A 'conscious act of transference' is the artist's words for her replicating of her ancestor's weave, on display with the original textile.



I Love You, 2016.
Video installation. Children: Rose
and William; Singer: Maria Lundin;
Editing: Jenn Norton; Sound
Recording: Eve Egoyan;
Sound Design: Isabelle Noel.

In today's jargons of media, advertising, entertainment industry and politics, words are at risk of losing their impact. The two children say the rather common phrases "I miss you. I am happy." and in French "Vous me manquez. Je suis

heureuse". When you hear their gentle voices (recorded and reversed twice) the words are intelligible, but estranged. This prompts the alerted viewer briefly away from the irony of the 'urban wallpaper' of advertising, constant noise and media, to listen to and reflect upon these common words in a more profound way. The work resists interpretation and decoding and eludes a symbolic reading, skirting reality. It is a one-way message, these child messengers are their own reality.

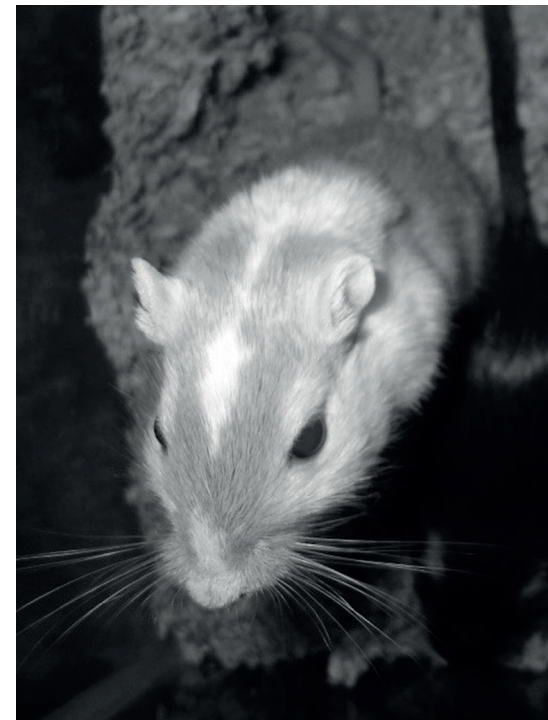
Adrienne Trent

Adrienne Trent is a Toronto-based visual artist and a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design. She has exhibited her work both locally and abroad including, but not limited to: Mercer Union (Toronto), La Centale (Montreal), and SAW Gallery (Ottawa). Her work can also be found in the collections of CBC and The Art Gallery of Ontario.



Kind; Drawing Lines, 2018.
30 image series on wood, acrylic,
enamel and photo transfer.
Variable dimensions.

Presenting a body of work composed of 30 “icons” of cherished domestic pets owned by people Trent is acquainted with, many of these animals have passed away but still retain a place of reverence in the hearts of the owners. The politics of speciesism is currently a hotly debated issue, particularly by residents of urban communities. Human relationships with nonhuman animals are complex. In the context of a house of worship, Trent attempts to examine parallels in the human and religious sphere.



Marian Wihak

An award-winning film designer with an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art, Media and Design, Marian Wihak integrates her design and visual art practices to develop immersive and experiential environments. Thematic interests explore overlapping perceptive and phenomenological aspects of chaos, the sublime and duration, and interconnectivity inherent within the evolutionary process.

Ovum Quadratum II, 2018.
Fiberglass and monofilament.
8' diameter x 20' h.

Ovum Quadratum II draws upon the history of spiritual, communal and civic celebrations conjoined with the iconic and metaphoric symbols engendered by the oval and the square. The ovoid form embodies the fullness of creativity and offers the spatial metaphor of non-Euclidian space and the encompassing universe, while the 4-pointed square references the Euclidian constructs by which we organize our daily lives, the cardinal directions, the elements, and the phases of our life on earth.

Excavation II, 2018.
Balsa wood, river stones, sand.
5' x 8' x 10" h.

The original iteration of *Excavation* was created in response to poet Lisa Richter's compelling work, which embraces themes of interconnectedness across epochs of multiplicitous events. *Excavation* evokes an archeological dig, wherein the obliquely narrative space explores the tension and the connections between order and confusion, construction and flow. In this new iteration, timeworn river stones populate the labyrinth suggesting a parallel metaphoric play between the ovoid and square, used in my companion piece, *Ovum Quadratum II*.





St. Anne's Anglican Church

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