

Presented by Latcham Art Centre



40  
YEARS

*Shaping time*

Natalie Hunter

Lois Schklar

Xiaojing Yan

July 10 - August 24, 2019





## **40 Years! What a reason to celebrate!**

*Recently I spent time with long-time Latcham Art Centre volunteer Sharon Maude, pouring through scrapbooks, photographs and yellowed newspaper articles detailing the art centre's 40-year history. We reminisced about the evolution of Stouffville's art gallery and the herculean effort of so many people over the years that have resulted in the celebration of this important milestone.*

*The anniversary marks 40 years since a group of artists and local visionaries saw the need for a public art gallery in Whitchurch-Stouffville to showcase contemporary visual art. As the population grew, so did the gallery, which now boasts a full schedule of exhibitions, events, art classes and camps, 4 staff and over 80 volunteers.*

*There are so many reasons to celebrate our longevity: the connection between artist and viewer in the gallery space, the smiling faces in the studio, the child who ran into the gallery one day and yelled "I love this place!"*

*The Latcham Gallery, now Latcham Art Centre, has hosted over 350 exhibitions in all media since 1979 and has expanded the art studio education programs to include over 175 sessions a year. It is a vibrant place bursting with art and culture, ideas, conversations and creativity.*

*We salute those people who had the vision to start The Latcham Gallery, those who helped it grow, those who shared their art and their ideas, those who promoted and supported it.*

*We salute those who saved it, those who resurrected it, those who helped it survive despite the odds.*

*We salute those who volunteered and those who visited, those who worked here, those who learned here, those who made art and those who taught art. We salute those who cared about it, fought for it and those who continue to do so.*

*Congratulations to everyone and thank you.*

Roz Pritchard, Director

# Shaping Time

Natalie Hunter

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The theme of memory has been an important thread throughout our 2019 exhibition programing, presenting the variety of ways artists address the past, present and future as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Latcham Art Centre. To mark this significant milestone, the exhibition *Shaping Time* brings together three artists whose works are deeply rooted in the exploration of memory and time. This exhibition also purposefully represents artists at different stages of their careers, pairing an emerging artist with two established artists who have exhibited with the gallery in past, showcasing the role a public art gallery plays in helping to support the growth and development of professional artists. Natalie Hunter, Lois Schklar, and Xiaojing Yan each push the boundaries of their chosen media, finding unique and compelling ways to reflect on the passage of time and explore the lingering memories that remain. There is something so satisfying when we witness an artist transform familiar materials or objects into something with new meaning, and even more so when they defy our expectations. This is certainly the case in *Shaping Time* as photo-based sculptures by Hunter, mixed media and collected objects by Schklar, and elements from nature by Yan are reimagined and redeployed as sculptural installations where light and shadow add a fourth dimension to the experience of each work.

The use of light to capture the ephemeral quality of memory and the passage of time is most prevalent in the photo-based sculptures by Natalie Hunter. Working in her childhood home, Hunter photographs selected windows that frame both interior and exterior spaces. Complete with the vintage lace window dressings,



Natalie Hunter, *The sky seemed to fold in ribbons of palest sunlight*, 2017  
Archival pigment prints on transparent film, poplar, light

these familiar spaces and intimate moments are transformed through colour filters and multiple exposures over various durations. In certain works such as, *The sky seemed to fold in ribbons of palest sunlight* and *Songs of May*, the images are printed on transparent film where, like the window, light can pass through. The resulting images are draped and pinned in place, extending beyond the two dimensional plane with coloured shadows cast on the walls. The light reveals the photographed spaces in a new form and as Hunter explains, “attempts to unravel our memories of the spaces we know intimately through time and lived experience”.

A similar process of colour filters was used in the two part work, *Dappled*, where Hunter photographs a beloved maple tree that has been on her family property for three generations. The images are captured looking up at the sun through the leaves of the tree, but presented on a horizontal plane so that viewer is now looking down at the sky. These photographs ripple like waves over the floor stands that prop them off the ground and away from the wall, collapsing time and space to explore the memories of lying on the grass, looking at the tree and sky in tandem.

A different set of materials to investigate memory and time are employed in the mixed media installations by Lois Schklar. Pulling from her extensive collection of objects accumulated over the years and integrating them together with suspended elastic cords, nails and metal rods, Schklar builds sculptural installations that explore memories through the personal associations she has with each object and the shadows these three-dimensional works cast on the wall.

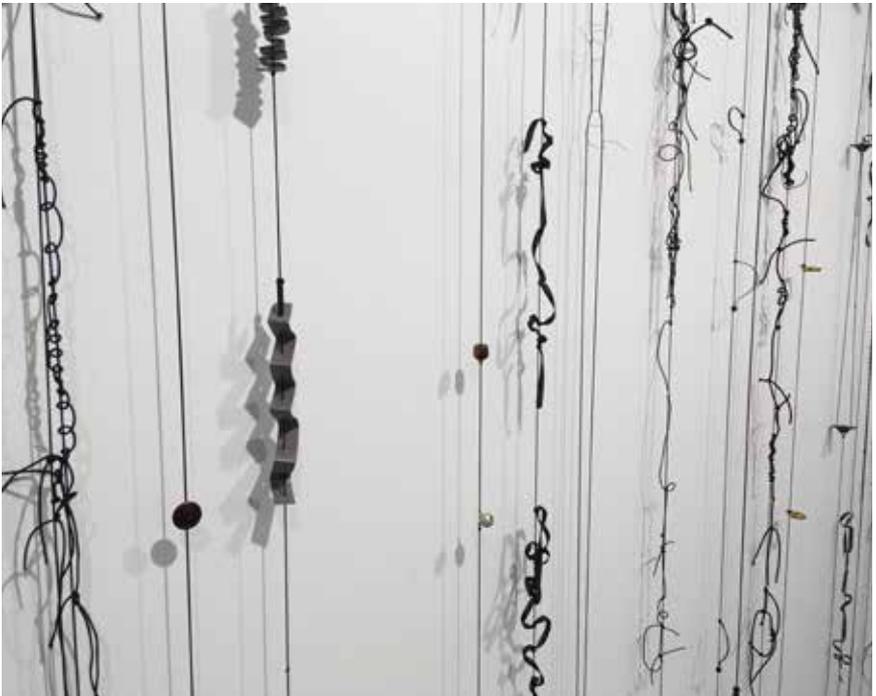
In the interactive work *Specimens*, Schklar offers a selection of objects arranged in a perfect grid on the wall. Each object is held by a magnet on a nail, displayed away from the wall and its placement informed by how it aesthetically relates to the surrounding objects. This collection of objects, like a specimens display one would find in a natural history museum with information and details about each item, acts as an alternative timeline for the artist, connecting the past to the present. There is a corresponding chart that lists information the artist can recall about where and when the object was collected. The audience is invited to intervene with the installation by purchasing an object of their choosing. The visual narrative changes as they remove their purchased object and fill the empty space with one of the



Lois Schklar, *Specimens*, 2018 - 19, Mixed media

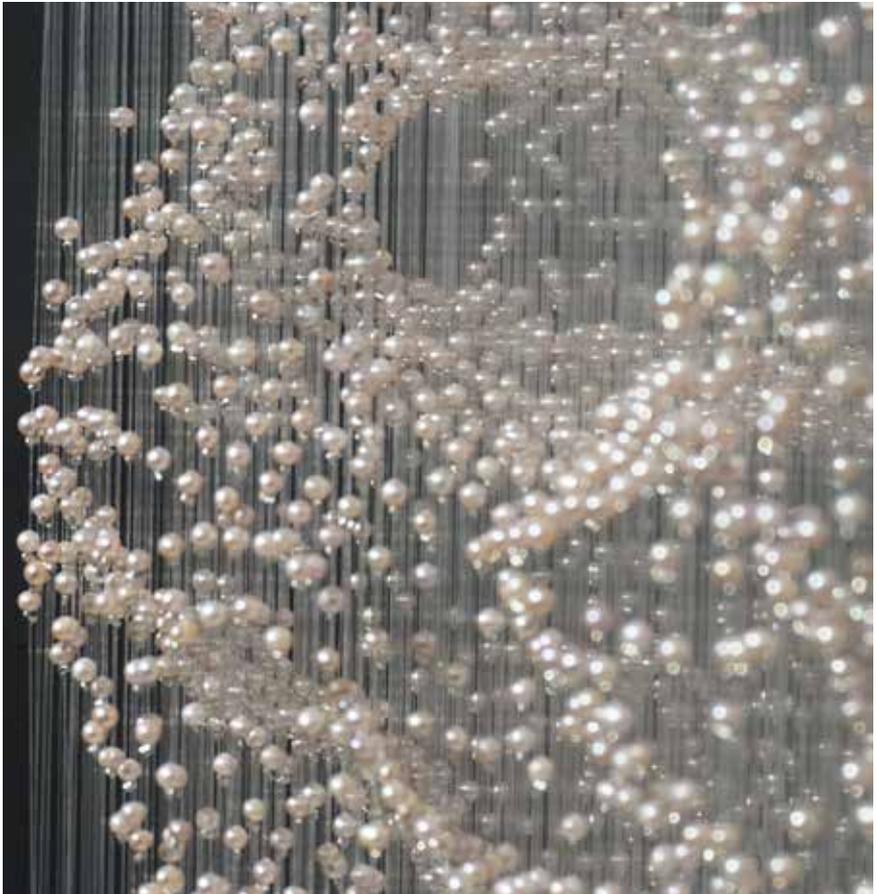
replacement objects. The interaction is completed once the purchaser shares what informed their choice of object in a corresponding chart. This process creates a system to help Schklar part with these objects and also provides a means to contemplate the value we associate with them and how they can function as containers for our memories. Schklar acknowledges that at some point her collection of objects will be dispersed along with the memories they contain. This assemblage of individual found and collected sculptures are extended by the shadows they cast when lit from above. These ephemeral traces are another element that speaks to the metaphor of how objects hold memory and can act as an extension of an individual.

In *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, selected objects are again used, but now suspended on elastic cords, raised away from the wall in 32 vertical sections. The individual sculptural gestures create a metaphorical timeline where objects are embedded alongside knots and stitches that read like a visual poem. Schklar uses her material in non-traditional ways, creating an additional vocabulary for mark making and challenges the viewer to read these objects in a new way.



Lois Schklar, Detail of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 2019, Mixed media

As a first generation Chinese-Canadian, Xiaojing Yan's artistic practice explores the complexities of her bi-cultural identity. Like her counterparts in this exhibition, Yan is connecting the past to the present and using her chosen materials in unexpected ways. Working with elements found in nature such as freshwater pearls and dried pine needles, Yan reconsiders dominant themes and ideas from traditional Chinese art and culture and reinterprets them through a contemporary lens. In her *Cloud Cell* series, Yan suspends hundreds of freshwater pearls along clear filaments. These individual elements create a three-dimensional image that hovers within the display case. Yan explains, "This curvilinear form is inspired by Chinese garden stones, or the scholar's stone, an object of reverence in China. Formed by the slow erosion of water, the scholar's stone is seen as a site for contemplation and a symbol



Xiaojing Yan, Detail of *Cloud Cell*, 2019, Freshwater pearls, monofilaments



Xiaojing Yan, *Detail of Mountain of Pines*, 2017 - 18, Pine needles, silk organza, shadows

of wisdom. However, the form also resembles a mushroom cloud, the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. Here a duality is presented and free-floating. The ghost-like sentiment of the work is intentional. While the form is based in nostalgia, there appears to be a looming sense of alarm and dangerous beauty.”

The exploration of duality continues in the work *Mountain of Pines*, which speaks to the symbol of longevity and transcendence. Four panels of silk organza fabric are suspended from the ceiling and float just above the ground. Hundreds of dried pine needles are individually threaded through the silk, creating multiple mountain ranges that traverse the white background of the fabric. As the light passes through these newly imagined landscape images, the peaks of the mountains are cast onto the wall behind, offering a liminal space for the visitor to experience. This meditative and contemplative sensibility is shared among all the works in this exhibition, where objects give shape to memory and time.

Elisa Coish, Curator

## About the Artists

**Natalie Hunter** holds an MFA from the University of Waterloo, and a Bachelor of Art in Visual Art with a Concentration in Curatorial Studies from Brock University. She is the recipient of several awards including an Ontario Arts Council Visual Artists Creation Project Grant for Emerging Artists, a Canada Council for the Arts Research and Creation Grant and a President's Graduate Scholarship from the University of Waterloo. Her work has been exhibited in Canada and the United States including the Art Gallery of Hamilton, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Rodman Hall Arts Centre, Mississauga Living Arts Centre, Hopkins Centre For the Arts at Dartmouth College, the Art Gallery of Windsor, Centre 3 for Print and Media Arts, Ryerson Image Centre, and Museum London.

**Lois Schklar** attended the Washington University School of Art and graduated with a BFA from The Atlanta College of Art. Her work has been shown throughout Canada and the United States including her 1991 solo exhibition *Collective Memories* at The Latcham Gallery. Her sculptures are included in the Bronfman Collection, Claridge Investments, Cambridge Art Gallery and the Key Corporation. Schklar has been the recipient of several grants over the course of her career including the Toronto Arts Council Grant to Individuals, Ontario Arts Council Project Grants, Exhibitions Assistance Grants and Canada Council Grants.

**Xiaojing Yan** was born and raised in Nanjing, China and is now based in Markham, ON. Yan holds a MFA in Sculpture from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA and a BFA from Nanjing Arts Institute, China. She has exhibited in Canada and internationally, including her 2015 solo exhibition *Hybrid Vigour* at The Latcham Gallery. Yan is currently developing an installation commissioned by Hermes for their Shanghai Maison where a solo exhibition will also be held.

# **latcham** 40 ART CENTRE YEARS

Latcham Art Centre inspires the community to engage with visual art through exhibitions of contemporary art and education programs including classes, workshops, artist talks and tours. It is funded by donations, sponsorships, membership and fundraising events as well as annual grants from the municipality of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Ontario Arts Council.

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