



Detail of "Hogweed Forest," 2017

**Laura Peturson**  
***Wasteland / Wanderland***

Exhibition: September 14 - October 12, 2018

Opening Reception: September 14, 2018, 7:00PM - 9:00PM



Alberta Printmakers Main Space Gallery  
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

# Wasteland/Wonderland

Laura Peturson

Essay by Shaun Crawford

---

Any soul born from childhood will connect with the universal experience of growing up, a sensation that Laura Peturson implores with apparent effortlessness - and capitalizes on as a space to draw attention to the world that today's children are destined to inherit. Within large scale murals, Peturson immerses her audience in a fantasy land that at first glance seems separate from the adult world. And yet, there is something looming in the margins. Some hunch that two realms are in a quiet conflict with each other. The innocence of children, so enchanting in the ease of their wonderment, is being invaded by the greater, corruptible, ever more complicated context that cradles them. The world we live in now.

Laura Peturson is based just outside of North Bay, Northern Ontario, a place known as "the gateway" between North and South. And so it is no accident that Peturson's work also serves as a gateway, a journey between two worlds. Her own journey included a B.F.A from York University in Toronto in 2001, followed by an M.F.A. from New York Academy of Art in 2005. And for the last decade, Peturson has given her time as Associate Professor of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Nipissing University in North Bay Ontario. She has shared a myriad of exhibitions along the Eastern artistic hubs of Canada and the U.S., including numerous shows throughout both Ontario and New York. Those shows have featured Peturson's printmaking with a focus on relief, screenprint, and papercut processes. Though, like any artist, describing her simply by her academic history and preferred mediums falls drastically short of capturing her body of work - a narrative-based exploration of the defining experience of childhood and how its imprint and resulting identity interacts and resonates with place. And like many of her themes, the notion of "place" represents an interconnected series of manifestations, including geography, internal space, familial environments, a globalized planet, and no doubt much more than that. For Peturson is an artist that doesn't seem too concerned with operating inside constraints.

Her work is likewise ungoverned by arbitrary rules or constrained by boundaries, be they artistic or imposed - most importantly those often self-imposed. And yet, as much as her work exists in a boundless world, it also lives on a razor thin edge, that place that Peturson herself describes as, "the line between peril and safety," a notion echoed in the title of her exhibition, Wasteland/Wonderland. And "wander" itself is a word that never lives alone, but immediately urges a reader or viewer to ponder and define the difference between "wander" and "wonder," and in doing so blurs the line between each. And wonder most certainly has a place in this exhibition as well. Be prepared to be immersed in an uncanny world, an experience carrying with it both the familiar and the deliberately unknown. This Wasteland/Wonderland, most definitely evoking a forest as a totem that immediately conjures a sense of both danger and whimsy, borrows well from the history of children's stories. Should anyone have had the good fortune to come across the original images from The Wizard of Oz or Alice in Wonderland there will be a familiarity in the artistic style of Peturson's work, clearly influenced by earlier print images in children's books. Within these woods, overgrown, dead, or dying, there is an instant sense of both nostalgia and fear. Nostalgia for the uninhibited and explorative experience of childhood - and fear in the wisdom that burdens adulthood, the recognition of peril and decay. But the dread that seeps out of every chasm and fissure in every root and every tree, is still so easy to ignore, even as it threatens to overtake the children that recall such a sense of enchantment.

Children have been called the world's most valuable natural resource, and the irony of that claim is apparent in Peturson's work, intended or not. This precious resource, incumbent with inheritance, children are unwilling participants in the chapter-book of our collective worlds. Just as we all were once. And now, in a space where we're allowed to stand on the edge between that penultimate innocence and the gravitas knowledge we now possess, what will it mean to each of us? What will we walk away with? What will we leave behind? Because in the answers to those questions, may be the world that we entrust to the children.

## Writer Biography

Shaun Crawford is an award winner writer and filmmaker based out of Calgary, Alberta. He studied screenwriting at the Vancouver Film School and holds a Bachelors of Education from the University of Alberta. His work has aired on CBC, HBO, The Movie Network, has been distributed worldwide by Sony, and has screened at festivals in Canada and the US. Shaun has most recently worked as an augmented reality and virtual reality content creator. He is a passionate supporter of dreamchasers and believes in the capacity of the arts to explore the human experience.

## Artist Biography

Laura Peturson is a printmaker based in Northern Ontario. Her work uses narrative to explore themes of childhood, gender, and place. She is interested in the ways the domestic spaces we inhabit as children form our identity and a conception of our place in relation to family, geography, and nature. Peturson's recent work has been exhibited at Flowers Gallery (New York, NY), The Thunder Bay Art Gallery (Thunder Bay, ON), White Water Gallery (North Bay, ON), and Idea Exchange (Cambridge, ON). In January 2017, she installed a 9 x 16 ft printmaking mural at the Gladstone Hotel as part of Come Up to My Room, an exhibit in the Toronto Design Offsite Festival. Her recent curatorial projects include a national artist residency for the creation of site-specific installations in North Bay entitled You are Here: Visualizing Place at the Gateway to the North. Peturson teaches printmaking, painting, and drawing at Nipissing University.

---

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization's goals are to increase public awareness of print media, to engage a diverse audience, to provide resources for the artistic community and production facilities for printmaking.

A/P has an open membership, and is governed by a board of directors. Management and administration of A/P's activities are the responsibilities of its Directors, who reach out to volunteers in accomplishing A/P's goals. A/P also hosts residency and summer student programs.

---

A/P thanks its funders:



Alberta  
Foundation  
for the Arts



calgaryarts  
development



albertaprintmakers.com  
403.287.1056