



Not Yet Earth
Madeline Mackay

EXHIBITION: JUNE 01 - July 20, 2018
OPENING RECEPTION : June 08, 2018, 7:00PM - 9:00PM



Alberta Printmakers Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

Not Yet Earth

Essay by Shaun Crawford

The body is often viewed as nothing more than a vessel for some higher identity – a concept that Madeline Mackay discards and reframes, immediately differentiating her work conceptually from what has come before. She presents flesh as an entity in itself, exploring its journey from animate to inanimate. From the body to the earth. Whatever lines are crossed or edges leapt from in that evolution are impossible to determine. Instead, in the exhibit Not Yet Earth, Mackay implores substances like flesh and mud to pose questions about the space between these states, what they echo from either side, and what they can tell us about what Mackay calls, “the relationship between the bodily self and the sense of an autonomous identity.”

While the themes explored in Not Yet Earth are accessible to any audience, they come from a personal place for Scottish visual artist and printmaker Madeline Mackay who shares in her artist statement that in the summer of 2016 she was diagnosed with a disorder that caused her immune system to attack the platelets in her blood – drawing her attention to both her own mortality and her flesh as an entity independent from herself. After a BA (hons) at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, showing her work in exhibitions throughout the UK and Canada, and now completing her MFA in Printmaking at the University of Alberta, Mackay has brought her personal experience and skills as a visual artist together to create this unique and powerful show.

Through a combination of drawings, photographic screenprints, a series of soap ground etchings, and a haunting video piece, Not Yet Earth is sure to illicit deep consideration of the journey of the flesh. Each medium presents its own window into the transition from corporeal to incorporeal. At first glance, Mackay’s grid of 35 etchings may recall something closer

to ripples on a pond or a skeletal fossil of some pre-historic presence, like some creature simply laid down and ceased to be. Given that the base set of materials is comprised of flesh, mud and water, the superficial forms are closer to the truth than usual. But through the etchings, Mackay presents, “some metaphysical space between flesh and mud, neither lifeless nor alive,” and this space between life and lifelessness permeates everything in the exhibit.

In the transcendence of the conceptual themes, there is something almost cosmic, and as the title of the show suggests, something almost earthly too – as if the image is going to come alive and compose itself into some kind of pastoral landscape. Even Mackay’s drawings resemble a bouquet of flowers, a vibrant testimonial of life, and yet these knots of meat are intentionally placed within the scale of the image to reference vital centres of the body – twisted and manipulated, inducing an unavoidable conflict between the self and the flesh.

It is tempting to say that life – or the margins of life – seem to be an intuitive motif throughout the exhibition. Meat Knot, a video of Mackay manipulating discarded scraps of meat entices to enforce this idea yet again. After all, water has always held a special place within the realm of liminal life-inducing symbols, and here it serves as the cradle for the creation of her own design. But to focus on the margins of life is an incomplete acceptance of her work. While viewing these pieces as almost alive feels more comfortable, the direction that Mackay presents suggests that they are more accurately described as being nearly dead, carrying with them a history of life. Regardless of the direction the beholder chooses, they are clearly on a significant journey. One that cannot be named. Which is often the perfect place for great visual art to hold sway.



WRITER BIOGRAPHY

Shaun Crawford is a Calgary-based screenwriter and filmmaker. He studied screenwriting at the Vancouver Film School and holds a Bachelors of Education from the University of Alberta. His films have been screened in festivals and distributed around the world. He is a passionate supporter of dreamchasers and believes in the capacity of the arts to explore the human experience.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Biography

Madeline Mackay is a Scottish visual artist and printmaker. She recently gained her MFA in printmaking at the University of Alberta, Canada and received her BA (hons) in Fine Art from DJCAD, Dundee, in 2012. She has exhibited in juried, group and solo exhibitions at galleries and artist-run centres in the UK and Canada. Madeline has taught drawing and printmaking both at the University of Alberta and in Sambaa K'e, a community in Canada's Northwest Territories where she was artist-in-residence in 2014.

<http://www.madelinemackay.com/>

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Through its gallery space and fully equipped print studio, A/P strives to cultivate an inclusive and collaborative environment to learn about printmaking, to create and exhibit contemporary print based media and to pursue exciting artistic opportunities for print artists within the broader community.

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.



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