

# a stick in the spokes

jennifer ireland  
hannamari jalovaara  
karin mcginn  
mehran modarres-sadeghi  
joni taylor  
maria tratt

emily carr university of art + design | charles h. scott gallery  
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Contemporary use of the idiom to *put a stick in the spokes* means to take action to impede another's progress. The origin of the expression came from the 16th century. Individuals who transported goods in carts would put a stick into the spoke of a wheel as a way to brake when descending. The spoke was a useful tool, enabling both cart and driver to arrive at their destination intact. It is correct to state that the gesture impeded the progress of the cart, but it wasn't an outright act of sabotage, as the current use of the dictum implies. *A Stick in the Spokes*, the 2017 Low Residency Master of Fine Arts cohort exhibition at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, uses the idiom in both ways, as a tool for understanding and also as an act of sabotage, disrupting our senses and perceptions.

The work in this exhibition generates new precepts for understanding marginalization, cultural difference, personal identity, memory, repetition and trace evidence. All six exhibiting artists highlight many forms of societal sabotage and the impediment of personal and collective progress within a variety of contexts. The work found in *A Stick in the Spokes* also presents visitors with an aesthetic and conceptual toolkit.

In exploring the work, one can engage with a variety of spokes and spanners. Through this interaction, it will become apparent how these tools can be used to overturn preconceived ideas. This exhibition is a societal survival guide, have your sticks at the ready.

Introductory essay and critical responses by Sunshine Frère.  
Frère is an artist, writer and curator who lives and works in Vancouver.  
[sunshinefrere.com](http://sunshinefrere.com)

Three interconnected works by Jennifer Ireland explore light, space and story-sharing. The first work is a quartet of silent video loops, each one featuring sunlight projected onto a different plant at a certain point in its life-cycle. Enacting the seasonal and cyclic nature of the world through subtle and almost imperceptible shifts in colour, these concurrently running videos are mesmerizing to watch.

Similar circadian concepts are reiterated in Ireland's *Slow Spin* sculpture installed nearby. A family of spider plants outgrow their current habitat in which they are nested, a scattered grouping of handmade clay bowls. Also containing a speaker, *Slow Spin* projects an effervescent musical offering to plants and humans alike; Mort Garson's 1976 album *Mother Earth's Plantasia*, adds a spellbinding dimension to both sculpture and video installation.

Ireland's final work, *Places We've Been* focuses on interpersonal relations. The artist invites visitors to join her in a cozy blanket and pillow, setting adjacent to her sculpture and video. It is here where stories about place, wilderness and belonging will be shared. These three works become soft-spoken agents of action, cultivating knowledge, observation and mindfulness, in relation to our natural world.

## bio

**Jennifer Ireland** is a conceptually driven multidisciplinary artist working in video, photography, installation and drawing. In recent research, Ireland seeks to integrate ways of looking and knowing with an environmental sensibility, in efforts to explore connections between nature, land and place.

Ireland studied at Alberta College of Art + Design, holds a BA in Philosophy from the University of Calgary and is currently an MFA candidate at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

[jennyandthepines.com](http://jennyandthepines.com)

Progress, more often than not, is a long, arduous process. Hannamari Jalovaara's Godlings video series exemplifies these sentiments in more ways than one. Each of the five videos in this body of work is a culmination of multiple laborious techniques and media such as stop-motion animation, collage, and printmaking.

The Godlings have come into being through repetitive gestures enacted across multiple types of digital and analog space. From print, to collage, to video, each transformation between media and signal is an investigation into what is lost, gained or changed. The same can be said for each repeated gesture in this process. As a result, these hybrid creatures exist as both originals and multiples. Jalovaara states that the filmic premise is to reflect a "pantheon of nascent gods who are in the early stages of exploring their omnipotence." Dissected further, the videos reveal but a fractional framework of this skill-learning process.

Jalovaara does not show growth or improvement, the Godlings are trapped in a loop, forever repeating jejune gestures. One grows empathetic towards these anthropomorphic creatures; their bumbling movements remind us that excessive recurrence is critical for development.

## **bio**

**Hannamari Jalovaara** is a visual artist living and working in Vancouver, BC. She holds a double Master's degree in Aesthetics and Art Education and a degree in Art Therapy. She is currently pursuing an MFA at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Her print media works have been exhibited internationally in numerous juried and touring shows, and are included in both public and private collections.

Reality bites in Mis(s)representations, a collage and gouache on paper series. Artist Karin McGinn fuses surrealist scenarios with realistic portrayals of the female figure. At the same time, she exposes a selection of acts and gestures connected to womanhood that are typically meant to be concealed as, culturally, they are often deemed grotesque.

McGinn's series, both mirthful and sardonic in sentiment, forms an impressive dam against the tsunami of expectations and ideals that corrupt millions of female minds. Menstruation, body hair and objectification are presented in a raw and cheeky manner.

Each piece in the series is a stick in the dam. Each series scenario acts as a lens through which the examination of taboo subjects and double standards break-down the unattainable. McGinn redirects the obsessive-compulsive drive for perfection in society towards a more comprehensive understanding of reality and self-identity.

## **bio**

**Karin McGinn** is an emerging visual artist based in Calgary, AB. Working in a variety of mediums, her work explores embodiment and affective undoing as a way to counter socioeconomic myths relating to female bodies, sexuality and the roles of women.

In 2016 McGinn presented her first solo exhibition *In(her) Space* at the Marion Nicoll Gallery. McGinn holds a BFA in Fiber from the Alberta College of Art + Design (2015).

[karinmcginn.com](http://karinmcginn.com)

Soghat (The Souvenir), is a collection of six sculptures; collected objects that have been shrouded in layers of thick black string. Artist Mehran Modarres-Sadeghi purposefully selected items that can be found in either Canadian or Iranian cultures. Impetus for this project came from the artist's interest in the intergenerational preservation, or decline, of culture in Iranian immigrants.

The individual titles of the works, as well as their obfuscation, serve as symbolic gestures intended to bring to light the complexities of personal and collective identity when different cultures co-habit. Modarres-Sadeghi's souvenirs were originally ascribing to a particular cultural vernacular, through this enveloping process, these everyday objects transform into mysterious and alienated artifacts.

Soghat (The Souvenir) disrupts modes of perception, imposing interpretive constraints, it also exposes the dubious process of translation and the problematic points where critical information can be lost.

## bio

**Mehran Modarres-Sadeghi** is a visual artist and educator living and working in Vancouver, BC. Originally from Isfahan, Iran, she immigrated to Vancouver, Canada, where she received her BFA and BEd in Visual Arts from the University of British Columbia and is currently pursuing an MFA at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Modarres-Sadeghi's work has been exhibited in several juried exhibitions in Vancouver. Her recent work, *Ma Miaeem va Miravim (We Come and Go)*, 2016, was exhibited at Centre A in 2017.

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Joni Taylor employs the genres of comedy and comic illustration in her work entitled Vase For Sale by Lady Slightly Cracked. Taylor's series playfully addresses the invisibility and voicelessness of ageing women.

Three large-scale portraits of elderly women, drawn onto plywood sheets, are suspended by wire, their faces come in and out of focus as they swivel around. The backside of each portrait is painted white so as to blend (disappear) within the gallery space.

Playing with scale, movement, texture, high-contrast and exaggerated line, Taylor makes the invisible, conspicuous, and unavoidable, the women are larger than life. These women have a genuineness about them, one easily projects familiar aspects of someone they know onto each series character. In shifting the serious constructs of this routinely marginalized issue towards a relatable and more playful context, Taylor's work demonstrates how individuals develop genuine concern for the topic at hand, by humanizing it.

## bio

**Joni Taylor** is an artist/illustrator living and working in Vancouver, BC. Her work is concerned with the idea of comic arts as a potent medium to disseminate a feminist message through humour and hyperbole. To this end, Taylor has published numerous zines, comics and anthologies while exploring 2D sculptural forms.

Taylor holds a BFA in illustration and is an MFA candidate at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She teaches comic arts and digital architecture to a group of very sweet children at Arts Umbrella in Vancouver.

Maria Tratt's gouache series entitled Return is apparitional in both strategy and presentation. Human figures are skillfully rendered in high-detail, with the exception of their faces that are empty voids that reflect the same ivory paper background upon which their articulate bodies hover. Landscape and context are mostly missing in these compositions.

Peppered in and amongst each work, one can find phantom-like pencil sketches of animals. Their placement sometimes seemingly random, like an afterthought, and at other times, they form an integral part of the narrative with their human counterparts.

These painted and sketched realities extracted from past family photographs provoke pangs of curiosity and yearning in the viewer. The Return series summons the plethora of qualities that memory possesses. From vivid, intimate and unforgettable, to fleeting, vague and distant, Tratt modulates all frequencies of memory. Viewers are expected to run the gamut.

## bio

**Maria Tratt** is a visual artist born in Montreal. She holds a diploma in General Fine Arts from John Abbott College (1989), a BA with distinction in Journalism and Communications from Concordia University (1996) and a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design (2011). She is currently pursuing an MFA at Emily Carr University (2017).

Tratt has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Vancouver, where she lives and works as a scenic artist in theatre.