



**Shifting Relational Dynamics:
Choreography and Vivid Imaginings for *Approaching Painting***

January 26 – March 23, 2019

collaborative curators: Angela Somerset + Denise Lawson

Installment I

PREPARATORY – envisioning the work

Approaching Painting presents multiple lenses through which relationships and dynamics between gallery / artist / viewer / participant / collaborator and art object / material practice / translation / creative narrative may be (re)considered.

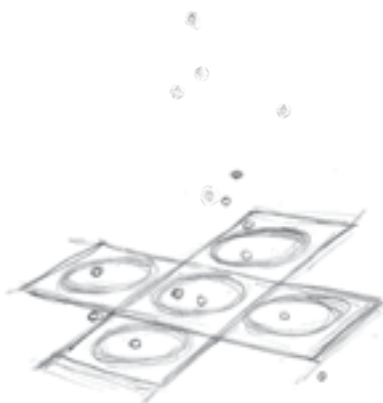
The thematic program is drafted in two parts: through a gathering of exhibiting artists with a focus on painting; and then by widening the conversation to include collaborations across the practices of live art, movement, audio, video, written word, personal and community observations and adaptations.

The exhibition brings five painters into conversation and relationship to share their diverse painting practices: Carole Thompson, Madeleine Wood, Nicole Crouch, Robert Moon and Scott Bertram.

Interpretive collaborators are invited into the program to respond through body-based and lens-based investigations: Cathy Coates (performer), Alun Macanulty (photographer) and Cedar Waslewski (community facilitator).

The architecture of presentation, reception and creative research is further expanded through artists undertaking PROJECT ROOM STUDIO research on site at CVAG to develop new work and interact with communities for the duration of the show.

The multiplicity of approaches shifts the role of the gallery from that of the white cube for the housing and presentation of artwork to a gathering place in which relational creative practice is at the centre.



SUBSTRATE – foundations for beginning

The gallery becomes substrate – a site containing fertile ground and the food for growing things. We wonder what mycelial possibilities lay dormant within our geographical region, germinating under the surface of things. What could be potentiated by bringing together a group of artists, living in close proximity, who do not know one another or each other's art practices, but share painting as their commonality?

We acknowledge and prepare the ground for the art exhibition as a multigenerational gathering of local painters at various stages of their careers, engaged in traditional and experimental practices residing and expanding from painting.

A curatorial intention is embedded in the substrate as a provocation for a reciprocal connection:

"An essential portion of any artist's labour is not creation so much as invocation. Part of the work cannot be made, it must be received; and we cannot have this gift except, perhaps, by supplication, by courting, by creating within ourselves that 'begging bowl' to which the gift is drawn." (Page 186) – Lewis Hyde. *The Gift, The Commerce of The Creative Spirit*. New York: Random House, 2007.

The words of Lewis Hyde, invited a shift in priorities – from the economies of art creation which are bound to production and consumptive presentation to a focus on multi-dimensional gifting that prioritizes the making of space, the receptive conditions for creative activation, the flow of experimental practice, sharing and collaboration.

UNDERPAINTING: words found at <http://arthives.org> affirm our instincts and guide our instincts that are circulating, but not yet fully realized

Conventional relational constructs between the gallery and the artist are dismantled as the gallery takes on the role of instigator for artist / audience interactions. The gallery becomes the atelier – a lab for experimentation that crosses disciplines and make space for research-led practices.

"[The] gallery becomes the hive – a gather place / a "welcome space / a 'public homeplace' for dialogue, skill sharing and art making between people of differing socio-economic backgrounds, ages, cultures and abilities." – <http://arthives.org/about.web>. January, 2019.

The gallery as the locus in which gestation, experimentation and relational cultural practices are nurtured become the spirit in which, the curators, artists, interpretive collaborators and community facilitators come together.

LAYERING: the process of curating as regenerative

In their essay, 'Introduction to Rethinking Curating', Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook define current ideas of " 'distributed curating' as tending more toward the shape of networks as described by computing culture – where curator might be a 'node' and what is distributed is not just the art, but the process of curating itself." – (Page 158) Graham, Beryl and Cook, Sarah. *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010.

approaching painting

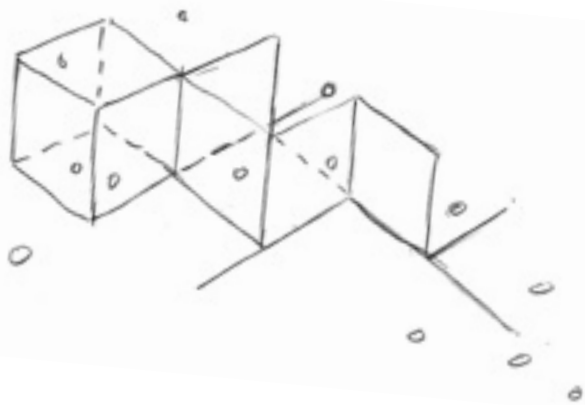
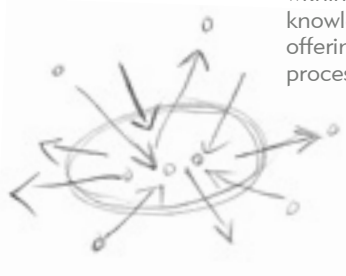
The thematic program is expanded beyond exhibition. Activations between artists, participants and audiences are enfolded through project room studios, community all-ages make art project workshops, and thematic workshops bridging movement practices and visual arts.

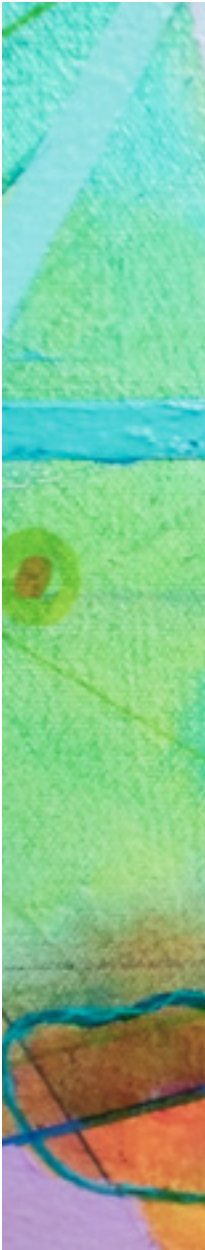


As we work with the moving parts of this convergent program, relationships between the presenters, artist/participants and audiences deepen at the intersections of creative practice, encounter and engagement.

As curators we see our function as symbiotic nodes interspersed within the roots of the thematic program, nurturing process, sharing knowledge, contributing to exploration and experimentation, and offering hospitable soil for dialogue to flourish and the creative process to grow.

– Denise + Angela





CAROLE THOMPSON

I make paintings as an inner directed reply to my interests and experiences. It is a process of evolving self-definition. My work is a response to my interests in the interplay between nature, science, spirituality and the cosmos. It is about my relationship with geology (crystalline structures) the land, geometry, colour theory and metaphysical experiences. I am aware of the particular energetic geologic resonance that is in the land and spirit of the Comox Valley, my home for 21 years and now my home again. I sense this resonance once again, it infiltrates into my paintings.

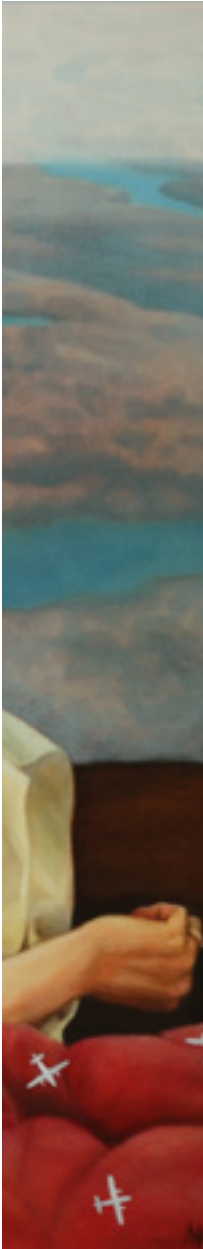
As I approach painting, I think about composition and how to break free of the conventional format. I am currently exploring multi-panelled shaped wall paintings, allowing the whole wall to act as the "field" engaging viewers on a physical level. It is concerned with the Quantum Physics idea that nothing is still in the universe...all is in some form of motion.

My paintings are a form of liquid, fluid thoughts, multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Using a personal pictorial language, I interconnect my interests in a topical, open-ended and intuitive process. It involves exploring the independent life of paint in the wet in the wet technique, transparent layering of colour and form and spontaneous linear mark making. I explore ambiguous pictorial space, depicting shifts from two to three dimensional space. My process involves many rearrangements of the various painting panels creating new possibilities and alternative layouts. Eventually a sense of overall cohesion emerges. This layout could also shift again.... impermanence prevails.

I also, metaphorically, explore contrasts – the dichotomy of contemporary life, the issues of order/chaos, connection/separation, density/transparency. In the dialogue between elements of form and line the work emerges from the ethers into the field, the grid/ground. It is revealed that all can simultaneously co-exist. It is my intention that my work operates outside of dimensional confinement, engaging viewers in an expansive and unique experience of reality.

I am a contemporary painter, raised in Vancouver and living in Courtenay in the Comox Valley. I graduated from VSA (ECUAA) with honours in painting and have received two Canada Council Awards. My preferred medium is acrylic on canvas. My painting centres on Abstraction and includes shaped works and paintings in large wall scale formats.

Themes I explore deal with encounters and experiences in the physical, spirit and metaphysical realms. Travel has had a deep impact on my work and life. Particularly visits to ancient sites in Egypt and Australia. Emotional responses collected, recollected and translated become the basis of my practice.



Studies have deepened interests in geology, geography, physics and ancient cultures. My next series is focused on the mineral foundation of Vancouver Island...the crystal and stone formations found here and their associative qualities.

MADELEINE WOOD

My approach to painting often begins with a resonating idea or theme that anchors a body of work. Months engaged in research and the labour of attentive painting allow me to explore and deepen my subject and its purposes – not always evident at the start. The plasticity of paint allows its freedoms, but for painters daunted by myriad possibilities, self-imposed constraints can actually liberate.

Dream On

Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream?
– Edgar Allan Poe

A collection of images await my attention. The closely cropped body fragments I'd been painting are no longer enough; larger stories beckon. Tentatively I begin to paint portraits in pleasing ratios of skin to fabric, responding to canvas proportions and figure ground relationships. Then I project a detail of an abstract painting over a portrait and narratives emerge. I begin sourcing patterns for more figures and explore layering in different ways: over, against, around and behind bodies, feeling my vision expand, my grip on realism loosen. I layer textiles, blossoms, gardens, landscapes and clouds, completing with the height of mountains, an ancient realm of fear. The notion of dreaming frames this new collection, suggesting unlimited realms, fertile ground for the mind. The poem, 'The Dream Keeper' by Langston Hughes inspires their titles.

I was born and raised in BC with an aptitude for drawing that developed into a fierce desire to become a painter. My formal education began at Emily Carr College of Art in two stints, during a time when painting was declared dead. Determined, I went on to complete my MFA at Concordia University in 1996 and established my studio practice in Vancouver. I've exhibited my work over the past 25 years in both commercial galleries (currently Madrona in Victoria and Elevation in Canmore) and public galleries, and occasionally teach out of my studio. My partner and I moved to Ships Point in 2010 to rebuild and make a home together. By some grace, I have bought time and space to lose myself, and find myself again.
www.madeleinewood.com / www.instagram.com/madeleinewood.art/



NICOLE CROUCH

The beautiful landscape is a place where the body can dream of utopic symmetry and wholeness.

My paintings tell stories about me and my loved ones, and the spaces around and between us.

This series represents eighteen months of pleine air painting in and around the Comox Valley, and elsewhere. Cycling through layers of love residues and encounters over time, spending time making art in these places has been a way of grounding and deepening my relationship with my home, and connecting with a shared source of beauty and presence in our commons.

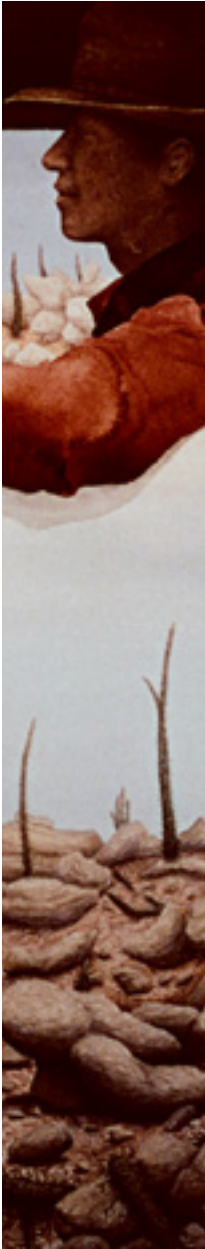
Comments On Approaching Painting

A common-source amplifier is an electronic device that increases the power of a signal. *The Common-source Ampsite* is a place where people can gather to witness the signals of watercolour amplified onto an intimate screen. A question that a technician might ask regarding these devices is what is the flow of the current? And what is the drain? Where does the signal enter? Where does it leave? The beautiful landscape is a common source of energy. When the vital signals are present, the amplifier affects the tone and feeling of the experience. To keep in mind when working with such things: one measures the amount of amplification by its gain. The waves connect us.

I am a painter and an art therapist from the Comox Valley, living in Merville. I have worked in community and professional arts for over ten years, running projects with the Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue and POP Montreal International Music Festival, with a focus on arts-based community development. I have worked for the past ten years with local and Montreal-based experimental puppetry artist Clea Minaker, and am currently running art studios and classes at the Views at St Joseph's and at the Eureka Support Society.

ROBERT MOON

My art is deeply personal and cannot withstand a great deal of exposure and all the attention from the galleries and students seemed to erode my concentration and diluted my creativity. I decided to withdraw from the gallery scene and become the world's most famous unknown artist. I stopped trying to sell my art and decided to become an experimental artist un-tethered to the economics of selling art. This allowed me to branch out and try new



things without the demands that the gallery scene imposes on artists. While it was a thrill to have my work purchased, the excitement pales in comparison to the immense pleasure that comes from the making of the art. I have opted to the ancient Chinese model where, as I understand it, the artist is allowed to do art when he has made a successful contribution to his community and has amassed enough wealth to be free of all restrictions and influences and is able to devote his time exclusively to his art.

I believe that my truck doors are a product of my creative approach and it makes them unique. When asked to describe my work, I often draw blank stares when I say I paint on truck doors. I don't mind for I know that the blank stare denotes a certain kind of openness the Zen Buddhists describe as an approach to enlightenment. I am saying to the viewer that a painting can be more and say more than a simple flat rectangle on the wall. I want my viewer to take a trip with me and what better vehicle (pun intended) than in my trusty pick-up truck. So just open the door and slide in next to me for a little tour of my world. I hope you like it.

I had a strong feeling for art at a very early age, as most of us do, but my life as an artist truly began when I passed through the Spanish portico of the San Francisco Art Institute in the fall of 1964. I was a country bumpkin just discharged from the army without a clue about the art world. I thought the flower children and the hippy artists were just the normal characters you find in every art school. It took many years before I realized I had walked in to a cultural revolution and by then it was nearly over. Brief as it was, it was starting to wind down by 1970, when I graduated with an MFA in painting and printmaking, it had an incredible effect on my life as an artist. It is only looking back that I realize just how formative those years were and how much of what I learned has stayed with me and gave me the confidence to be an artist. Most importantly, something Fred Martin the president of the college said at my graduation stuck with me all these years and it is what I base my success on today. He asked the rhetorical question "what is a successful artist?" and then answered it for us ...for I suspect none of us knew the answer. He said that "if your are old and gray and you are still searching for beauty and making art then you are a successful artist." I was very fortunate in that my early work gained some attention in the printmaking part of my career with my inclusion in the permanent collection of the New York Museum of Modern Art and the San Francisco Museum of Art. This exposure attracted the attention of several colleges and the University of California Berkley where I taught for a short time.



SCOTT BERTRAM

My work is an attempt to find form where it didn't previously exist, to create paintings that I haven't seen before, paintings that surprise me with their strangeness.

I begin my paintings by using a variety of tools and processes that I don't have complete control over in order to discover spatial cues or figural presence that is not preconceived. I might make some strokes, scrape them out, do something else to it, and eventually I can find reference and spatial depth in what these interactions produced.

Additional forms are imposed upon this ground, partially to complicate its spatial reference, and partially to obscure its reading as "abstract painting". My aim is that the tensions created between these disparate elements, combined with their interconnectedness will open up deep associative possibilities. I attempt to be present at every stage of the process, always coming to the painting without expectations or preconceptions, and asking "what does this painting want?" In the end I am striving to keep the work open, to not provide closure or clarity through recognizable forms, and to ask the question "does seeking out resemblance and reference in ambiguous forms keep one momentarily attentive to the present?"

I am an abstract painter and I have been based in the Comox Valley with my wife and daughter since 2014. Prior to moving to the Comox Valley I had been pursuing my art practice in various places across Canada (Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Winnipeg) though I did spend the majority of my formative years in BC. In my current artistic practise I have been interested in ambiguous shapes and their ability to spark open association, create playful spatial relationships, and provide strange compositional possibilities. As well as being a visual artist, I also have a deep relationship with music and am interested in the parallels between the two, perhaps most notably their unique abilities to bring attention and awareness to the present moment. I have shown my paintings in solo and group exhibitions across Canada, as well as internationally, and I have also taught at many institutions across the country.

More info can be found at www.scottbertram.ca

I would like to acknowledge the support of the BC Arts Council in allowing me to produce the work for this exhibition.



CATHY COATES

Coming into this project completely open-minded, my experience with the art has varied. I have played with several perspectives during the arrangement of *Approaching Painting*. Consciously being a neutral observer, I have felt both disconnected and connected, allowing for my freedom of expression. Some pieces evoke a consistent reaction while others are bringing forth impulsive interactions. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to be included in this project and look forward to others having as much fun with the exhibition as I have been.

Born and raised in Victoria, I have been a performer at heart from a very young age. I began art modelling in 1998 and working with the North Island College Art Department in 2005. My passion for movement has covered a wide range of performances including aerials, acro, physical comedy, improv, authentic movement, rhythmic, contemporary and everything in between. This has provided involvement in circus acts, festivals, dance troupes, exhibition openings and solo dance. My love for kids and play has inspired the evolution of my children's program 'Artistic Movement'. Every creative experience I am involved in paves the path to another exciting opportunity.



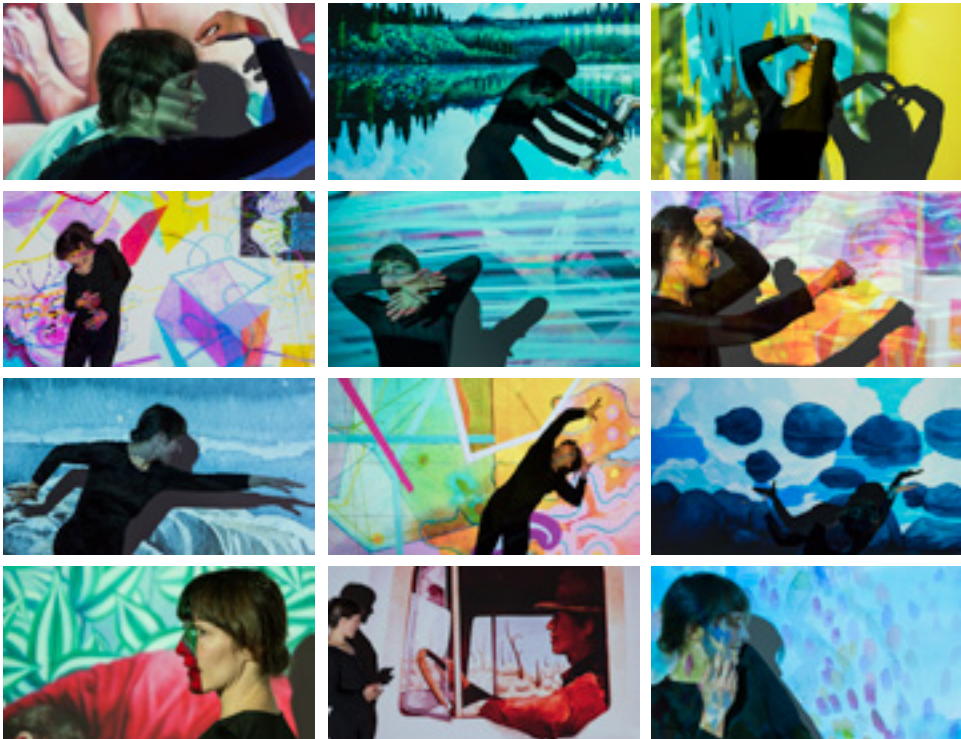
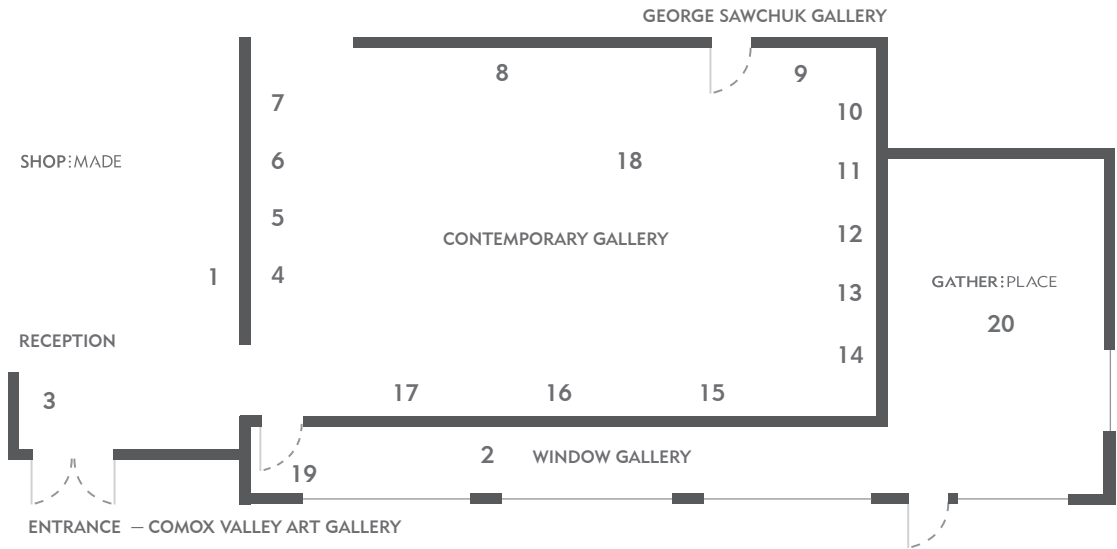
CEDAR WASLEWSKI

During this exhibition, *Approaching Painting*, I will be holding space for and facilitating opportunities to enter into a living dialogue with the Paintings and with our own bodies. Exploring how we approach our relationships to art, we may expand our concepts of what art is and can be. With a focus on movement and somatic experiencing, I am excited to explore the liminal spaces we can create together.

I am an interdisciplinary healer, visionary and movement guide. My work includes Craniosacral Therapy, Aquatic Body work, Contakids, Contact Improv Dance, Tai Chi~ Qi Gong, Chi Nei Tsang, Transformational Coaching and Manual Neurological Trauma Release Techniques.

I have been privileged to study and facilitate in more than two dozen countries over the past 20 years, and have recently returned to my longtime home in the Comox Valley to open Integration Studio, where I draw on a breadth of lived experience to nourish individual and community spirit.

approaching painting



photographs of interpretive performances by Alun Macanulty in collaboration with Cathy Coates, artwork provided by artists in exhibition. 2019.

EXHIBITION KEY

CATHY COATES

+ CVAG CURATORIAL PRODUCTION

1. *Approaching Painting* (interpretive performances by Cathy Coates), installation performance – HD video loop (0:20:06), interactions with stills of artwork provided by artists in exhibition. December 10+19, 2018, January 18, 2019, dimensions: variable

CATHY COATES + ALUN MACANULTY

+ CVAG CURATORIAL PRODUCTION

2. *Approaching Painting* (photography of interpretive performances by Alun Macanulty in collaboration with Cathy Coates), series of twelve full colour photographs. 2019. 24 x 13.5" each

ROBERT MOON (acrylic on truck doors)

3. *Boojum*, 2019. 42 x 54"
4. *Boswell Goes For A Ride*, 2016. 42 x 54"
5. *Sunny Goes For A Ride*, 2017. 42 x 54"
6. *Baja*, 1972. 42 x 54"
7. *Riding With Papa*, 2018. 42 x 54"

CAROLE THOMPSON (acrylic on canvas)

8. *Expand 2*, 2016–18. 7 x 12'

MADELEINE WOOD (oil on canvas)

9. *Remembering Flight*, 2018. 24 x 30"
10. *As Through a Veil*, 2018. 30 x 24"
11. *Wandering Wings*, 2018. 30 x 24"
12. *A Remoter World*, 2018. 30 x 40"
13. *Life Drops that Pass*, 2018. 30 x 24"
14. *I Dream of Guinea*, 2018. 24 x 48"

SCOTT BERTRAM (acrylic on canvas)

15. *1814*, 2018. 98 x 76"
16. *1810*, 2018. 88 x 112"
17. *1811*, 2018. 96 x 76"

NICOLE CROUCH

18. *Common-source Ampsite*, installation – HD video loop (0:9:00), painted sculptural box (14 x 24 x 18"), projection panel, series of watercolour paintings on paper (various sizes, 2017–18), led strip lighting. 2019. dimensions: variable
19. *Approaching Painting Wavescape*, MP3 audio loop (0:03:27). 2019. Composition: Nicole Crouch. Sounds by: Painters – Scott Bertram, Carol Thompson, Madeleine Wood, Robert Moon, Nicole Crouch; Town Choir – Nicole, Melisa, Jay, Maurita, Krista, Marusha, Antonia, Jessie, Leigh

20. GATHER:PLACE PROJECT ROOM STUDIO EVENTS

Feb 2 – 8:
Nicole Crouch

Feb 15 + Feb 18:
Cedar Waslewski Workshops

Feb 23 – Mar 1:
Robert Moon

Mar 2 – 8:
Carole Thompson

Mar 9 – 15:
Scott Bertram

Mar 16 – 23:
Madeleine Wood

Alun Macanulty has been contributing to the gallery for many years. His lens-based witness practice and his beautiful aesthetic sensibility are tremendous gifts to the gallery, the artists and the communities we work with. For this thematic program Alun photographed Cathy Coates during her many performance iterations in response to the painters' work. These images are featured in the CVAG's Window Gallery and serves to welcome the community to this program and to the gallery as a whole.

approaching painting / JANUARY 26 – MARCH 23, 2018

(painters) **CAROLE THOMPSON · MADELEINE WOOD · NICOLE CROUCH
ROBERT MOON · SCOTT BERTRAM**

(performer) **CATHY COATES** (photographer) **ALUN MACANULTY**
(community facilitator) **CEDAR WASLEWSKI**
(co-curators) **ANGELA SOMERSET + DENISE LAWSON**

CONVERGENT EVENTS

JAN 26 / 1 PM
PUBLIC RECEPTION · PERFORMANCE · ARTIST TALK

JAN 26 / 11 AM – 1:00 PM
COMMUNITY MAKE ART PROJECT: EXPLORING TOOLS, GESTURE + INTENTION
facilitated by Nicole Crouch + Scott Bertram

FEB 15 / 8:30 – 11 AM and 11 – 1:30 PM
MAKE ART PROJECT WORKSHOP: ROOTS OF SISTERHOOD
facilitated by Cedar Waslewski

FEB 18 / 12 – 4 PM
MAKE ART PROJECT WORKSHOP: MOVING THROUGH THE WORLD
facilitated by Cedar Waslewski

MAR 23 / 11 AM – 1 PM
COMMUNITY MAKE ART PROJECT: APPROACH / RESPONSE
facilitated by Carole Thompson + Madeleine Wood

GATHER:PLACE – PROJECT ROOM STUDIO EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2 – 8 / **Nicole Crouch** / creative research
FEBRUARY 15 + 18 / **Cedar Waslewski** / workshops
FEBRUARY 23 – MARCH 1 / **Robert Moon** / creative research
MARCH 2 – 8 / **Carole Thompson** / creative research
MARCH 9 – 15 / **Scott Bertram** / creative research
MARCH 16 – 23 / **Madeleine Wood** / creative research



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The Comox Valley Art Gallery is located on unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. Photographs courtesy of Alun Macanulty