



MACKENZIE ART GALLERY
MUSÉE D'ART MACKENZIE

RADICAL STITCH

CURATED BY

SHERRY FARRELL RACETTE, MICHELLE LAVALLEE, CATHY MATTES

ORGANIZED & CIRCULATED BY

THE MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

AVAILABLE TO TOUR

2023 – 2025



Jean Marshall, (Left to Right) *Anishinaabe mijim: Wabooz (rabbit), Muskiki (medicine), Moose (moose)*, 2022, hand-tanned moose hide, beads. Collection of the Artist.



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Beading is political, whether it's simply the personal contribution to an age-old continuum or consciously reworking loaded imagery. I really do see beading as an act of silent resistance.

— NADIA MYRE, ALGONQUIN ARTIST, 2002

Radical Stitch looks at the contemporary and transformative context of beading through the aesthetic innovations of artists and the tactile beauty of beads. Beading materials and techniques are rooted in both culturally informed traditions and cultural adaptation, and function as a place of encounter, knowledge transfer, and acts of resistance. Connecting to a tradition of making, exercised over thousands of years, this skill-based practice ties one artist to another, past to present and beyond. The exhibition includes a range of work from the customary to the contemporary, with a variety of approaches, concepts, and purposes. Gathering together top artists from across North America/ Turtle Island, the selected pieces exemplify current and future directions of some of the most exciting and impressive practices. The works in *Radical Stitch* invite viewers to immerse themselves in the political, creative, and aesthetic dimensions of beadwork.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Radical Stitch will be the most significant exhibition of contemporary Indigenous beading across North America ever presented. Beading is one of the defining mediums of contemporary Indigenous art on this continent, and this landmark exhibition will bring much needed critical attention to the breadth and impact of this practice. Since the early 19th century beads have been an important art material to Indigenous peoples across North America. Historically, beadwork was mostly done by women who adorned clothing, baby carriers, horses, and footwear with beautifully beaded mappings of the land, cosmos, and their kinship ties. They wrapped their loved ones in beaded prayers, and provided for their families and communities by creating for trade and sale. More recently, many Indigenous people have been learning to bead as a way to culturally connect, and as an act of resistance to the colonial impositions that disrupted this important art practice as cultural continuance. Beadwork artists sew us into relation with one another, and reflect upon the world, community, family, and life through beading. Beading provides cultural grounding and creates space for artistic action and resistance to occur. Artists reflect on personal and communal existence, create new meaning, and redefine representation and cultural determinism.



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The MacKenzie Art Gallery is one of the first public art galleries in Canada to hire Indigenous curators in full-time, permanent positions, and has a unique history of exhibitions and partnerships with Indigenous artists and organizations. This contemporary beadwork exhibition, first conceptualized in 2016, complements and joins what is becoming a series of exhibitions over recent years highlighting the widespread and evolving practices of beaders. Organized by a loose affiliation of Indigenous bead artists and Indigenous curators, the first exhibit, *Beads, they're sewn so tight* was curated by Lisa Myers for the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto (2019). The second was a series of three smaller exhibitions across multiple venues in Winnipeg (2020) coordinated by Franchesca Hebert-Spence, accompanied by the Ziigimineshin symposium: “*Endurance . . . Patience*” curated by Daina Warren, *Community Beading Table Group Show* curated by Niahm Dooley, and *May the Land Remember You as You Walk Upon Its Surface* curated by Franchesca Hebert-Spence. *Radical Stitch* joins these as the third in what will hopefully be an ongoing series, with the collective goal to challenge both beadwork artists and art audiences to see the unlimited potential and beauty of beads.

Each exhibition has included a seminar with learning and sharing opportunities for bead artists. *Radical Stitch* will be the largest contemporary beadwork exhibition to date, the first to include artists outside of Canada, and the first to tour internationally. The exhibition will be complemented by a symposium/seminar, catalogue, robust education resources, and an enriched cultural and community driven program. Three esteemed Canadian artists have been commissioned to create new works for the exhibition.

¹ James Martin, “Nadia Myre’s art project is already at the McCord,” *Concordia’s Thursday Report*, June 6, 2002.

² During the “Culture Ban” (1885-1961) in Canada, the Indian Act outlawed ceremonies, dancing, and associated activities, such as the creation of regalia. Although beading itself was not outlawed, traditional arts were discouraged and only low-level souvenir production was supported.



ABOUT THE CURATORS

Sherry Farrell Racette (Métis/Algonquin/Irish) was born in Manitoba and is a member of Timiskaming First Nation in Quebec (unceded Algonquin territory). She is an interdisciplinary scholar with an active arts and curatorial practice. Recent projects include *An Eloquence of Women* (2017), *From Here: Story Gatherings from the Qu'Appelle Valley* (2015), and *We Are Not Birds* (2014) for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Her work as a cultural historian is grounded in extensive work in archives and museum collections with an emphasis on Métis history, Indigenous women, and recovering aesthetic knowledge. She was the inaugural Ann Ray Fellow at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico (2009-2010), and the Distinguished Visiting Indigenous Faculty Fellow at the Jackman Humanities Institute (2016-2017). She is currently teaching in the Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Media, Art and Performance at the University of Regina.

Michelle LaVallee (Anishinaabe) is Director of Indigenous Ways and Decolonization at the National Gallery of Canada. Previously, she held the position of Director of the Indigenous Art Centre at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2017-2022) and Curator at the MacKenzie Art Gallery (2007–2017). Her curatorial work has explored the colonial relations that have shaped historical and contemporary culture through exhibitions including: *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* (2015); *13 Coyotes: Edward Poitras* (2012); *Blow Your House In: Vernon Ah Kee* (2009); and *Miss Chief: Shadow Catcher—Kent Monkman* (2008). LaVallee organized the historical and nationally touring exhibition *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.* (2013–2016) and award-winning book contextualizing their influential role in contemporary Canadian art history. She has been a chosen participant for a number of Canadian Indigenous Curators Delegations sent to Australia, New Zealand and Venice, and her curatorial work has been recognized by three Saskatchewan Book Awards, and the City of Regina Mayor's Arts and Business Awards.



ABOUT THE CURATORS

Cathy Mattes is a Michif curator, writer, and art history professor based in Sprucewoods Manitoba. Her curation, research and writing centers on dialogic and Indigenous knowledge-centered curatorial practice as strategies for care. Several examples of curatorial projects are: *Kwaata-nihtaawakihk – A Hard Birth* (Co-curated with Sherry Farrell Racette, opening February 2022 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery), *Inheritance: Amy Malbeuf* (2017, Kelowna Art Gallery), and *Frontrunners* (2011, Urban Shaman Gallery and Plug-In ICA). Mattes has contributed writings to the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, The Winnipeg Art Gallery, and the National Museum of the American Indian, to name a few. As well she has presented lectures nationally and internationally. Mattes was the curator at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba between 2003 and 2005, and has been a consultant for various government agencies and arts organizations. Mattes taught art history at Brandon University in the Department of Visual Arts, and will soon be joining the art history program at the University of Winnipeg as an Associate Professor in Art History. She has a PhD in Indigenous Studies from the University of Manitoba, and has been beading since she was 20 years old.



COMMISSIONED ARTISTS

Ruth Cuthand (Plains Cree and Scottish) is an award-winning Saskatoon-based, mixed media artist, whose work offers powerful commentary on the destructive impact of contagious viruses on Indigenous peoples since contact, and brings awareness to mental health issues by beading images of brain scans. A leading figure of contemporary Indigenous art, she has received the Governor General's Award in Visual Media Arts (2020), and the Lieutenant Governor's Arts Award (2013), two of the most prestigious awards in Canada.

Bev Koski (Anishinaabe) is a Vancouver-based beadwork, sculpture, and photo-based artist. Her eclectic beaded conceptual works are poignant, humorous, and have been included in many group exhibitions including at Harbourfront Centre (Toronto), Carleton University Art Gallery (Ottawa), Textile Museum of Canada, Thunder Bay Art Gallery. Her work has been acquired by several public art collections such as the Canadian Museum of History and the Indigenous Art Collection at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Jean Marshall (Anishinaabe/English) currently lives along the shore of Lake Superior on Animikii-Wajiw/Thunder Mountain also known as Fort William First Nation. Surrounded by the beadwork of her aunties as a child, absorbing colour, design, and patterns, the value of craftsmanship and the importance of using her hands was instilled at a young age. This lasting admiration grew into her current practice. She works with beads and porcupine quills reimagining Anishinaabe florals and traditional forms. Her work focuses on land, identity, community, and language.

Other Participating Artists Include:

Barry Ace, Judy Anderson, Kristen Auger, Kaylyn Baker, Christi Belcourt, Catherine Blackburn, Katherine Boyer, Marcia Chickeness, Hannah Claus, Jon Michael Corbett, Marcy Friesen, Teri Greeves, Joyce Growing Thunder, Justine Gustafson, Babe & Carla Hemlock, Jennine Krauchi, Mindy Laureen Magyar, Amy Malbeuf, Audie Murray, Nadia Myre, Margaret Nazon, Candace Neumann, Shelley Niro, Elias Not Afraid, Jamie Okuma, Taqralik Partridge, Summer Peters, Memory Poni-Cappo, Alesia & Farlan Quetawki, Skawennati, Samuel Thomas, Olivia Whetung, Dyani White Hawk, Kenneth Williams Jr., Nico Williams, and Will Wilson.



EXHIBITION THEMES

Rather than approach the project with a prescribed thematic format, the curatorial team's research began with identifying works considered canonical in beadwork's shift from 'craft', to community-based resurgence, and finally into contemporary art galleries. We sought to identify important emergent trends and innovative artists. The overarching criteria is technical excellence. While not a survey exhibition, we seek representational balance in terms of geography, diversity, and regional styles.

We wish to acknowledge cross-border influences and recognize long established traditions in Indigenous visual arts across the continent that push against dominant patriarchal structures. This includes materials and processes used in projects that strategically center Indigenous experience and knowledge. Inspired by utilitarian, spiritual and political traditions, artists manipulate and transpose beads in ways that are customary and conceptual to address a range of concerns and concepts.

THEMATIC STRANDS:

- wearable art (regalia, jewelry, etc.)
- portraiture
- food sovereignty
- difficult histories and complex identities
- political and critical issues (eg. disease, natural resources)
- children / youth appeal (dolls, pop culture)
- knowledge reclamation
- familial relations / intergenerational practices
- Indigenous futurism (digital beadwork, new media, video)



PRESS COVERAGE:

Globe and Mail

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/article-at-reginas-mackenzie-art-gallery-one-of-the-largest-ever-exhibitions/>

Global News

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8805999/largest-beadwork-exhibition-radical-stitch-regina-radical-stitch/>

CBC News

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/radical-stitch-indigenous-beading-art-exhibit-1.6437197>

AGO

<https://ago.ca/agoinsider/one-bead-time>

The Leader Post

<https://leaderpost.com/news/landmark-collection-of-indigenous-beadwork-opens-at-mackenzie-art>

Eagle Feather News

<https://www.eaglefeathernews.com/arts/the-mackenzie-art-gallery-celebrates-indigenous-beading>



Radical Stitch, one of the largest ever exhibitions of Indigenous beadwork, opens in Regina"



Radical Stitch, a contemporary beadwork exhibition, is currently on display at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. Curators describe it as "A feast for one's eyes."



Co-curator Michelle LaVallee said beads have long been an important art material for Indigenous people across the continent."



The tactile quality and labour involved make for a particularly unique medium. For Indigenous peoples, beading holds power."



Rather, the collection is a deep dive into the intricacies of beadwork as an art, with an emphasis on the medium's impact and role in political, creative and cultural storytelling."



We have a real range in the exhibition. We are covering art from 1978 to 2022. The two oldest pieces in the exhibition are two Inuit amautis with beaded parkas."



SPECIFICATIONS

Radical Stitch

Location(s): MacKenzie Art Gallery: Kenderdine and Sim Galleries

Exhibition and Programming Highlights:

- Approximately 45 participating artists
- The third iteration of a national beading symposium;
- Beading workshops for various levels of learners;
- A robust educational program including online resources available for tour partners;
- A dedicated gathering space alongside the exhibition for beading and dialogue with knowledge sharers.

SPACE CONSIDERATION

6,000 - 7,000 square feet (Touring checklist may be edited according to available space and loan conditions.)

EXHIBITION FEE

38,000 CAD, inclusive of artist fees. Exclusive of local production, program delivery, and curatorial travel and loan fees.

SHIPPING

Borrowing institutions are responsible for pro-rated one-way shipping via a fine art transporter and related brokerage fees. This fee is contingent on the MacKenzie Art Gallery receiving tour funding that offsets crating and other tour expenses.

PUBLICATION

The MacKenzie Art Gallery will produce an illustrated exhibition publication featuring curatorial texts. Hosting venues will have the opportunity to financially contribute to this publication for an additional amount to be determined. Anticipated publication date in 2024. Terms and conditions of contribution are negotiable.

EXHIBITION DATES AND AVAILABILITY

MacKenzie Art Gallery: 30 April 2022 – 28 August 2022 (subject to extension)

Available to tour from February 2023 – December 2025 (subject to approved loan extensions)



SAMPLE IMAGES
FURTHER INFORMATION AND IMAGES
ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.



Barry Ace, Anishinaabe

Mino-bimaadziwin (The Way of Good Life), 2017
mixed media

Courtesy of the Heffel Fine Art
Auction House



Catherine Blackburn, Dene

The Ties that Bind, 2016
hide, glass beads, otter fur, linen

SK Arts Permanent Collection
2016-033

National Gallery of Canada



SAMPLE IMAGES
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Ruth Cuthand, Plains Cree/Scottish Ancestry

"Anxiety", 2020

glass beads, thread, backing

Indigenous Art Collection, Crown-Indigenous
Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
501151



Teri Greeves, Kiowa

ndn Girlz/Rez Girls, 2009

hightop tennis shoes, beads,
Swarovski crystals

AIPP New Mexico Arts



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Jennine Krauchi, Métis

Coat, fire bag muff, and hat, 2022
fabric, fur, beads

Collection of the Artist



Mindy Laureen Magyar, Mi'kmaq

Mi'kmaq Chair, 2012
Eames shell chair, canvas, rubber, cotton,
and rayon thread

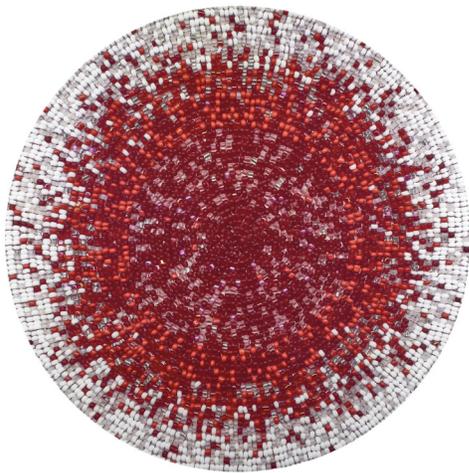
Collection of the Artist



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Jean Marshall, Anishinaabekwe
Anishinaabe mijjim: Wabooz (rabbit), Muskiki (medicine), Moose (moose), 2022
hand-tanned moose hide, beads
Collection of the Artist



Nadia Myre, Algonquian - Kitigan Zibi
Meditations on Red 2, 2013
digital print on plexiglass
Indigenous Art Collection, Crown-Indigenous
Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
500344



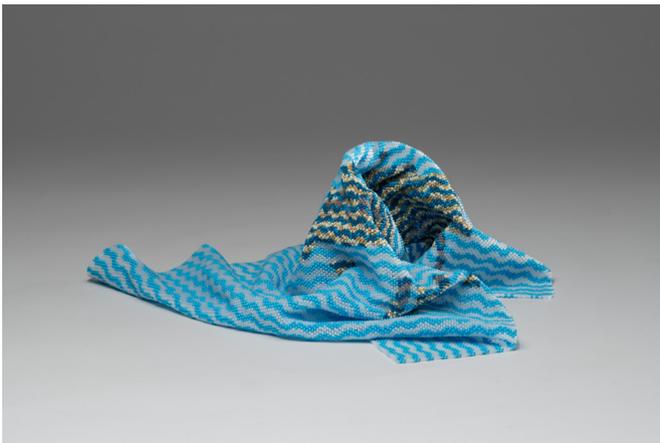
Shelley Niro, Mohawk
1779, 2017
mixed media sculpture with video, velvet,
beads, stiletto heels
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the
Women's Art Association of Hamilton, 2018
2018.20



SAMPLE IMAGES
FURTHER INFORMATION AND IMAGES
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Jamie Okuma, Luiseno/Shosone-Bannock
Elk Beaded Boots, 2017
antique glass, steel, brass and aluminum on
reappropriated Commercial Boots by
Giuseppe Zanotti
Collection of Ellen and Bill Taubman



Nico Williams, Anishinaabe and Member of
Aamhiwnaang First Nation Community
JCloth, 2022
glass beads
Courtesy, Forge Project, NY



MACKENZIE TEAM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

John G. Hampton

Executive Director and CEO
jhampton@mackenzie.art
W 306 584 4250 EXT. 4277

Crystal Mowry

Director of Programs
cmowry@mackenzie.art
W 306 584 4250 EXT. 4265

Kendra Ainsworth

Tour Coordinator
kainsworth@mackenzie.art

Tak Pham

Associate Curator
tpham@mackenzie.art
W 306 584 4250 EXT. 4254

Anastasia Ferguson

Curatorial Assistant
aferguson@mackenzie.art
W 306 584 4250 EXT. 4292

Marie Olinik

Registrar
molinik@mackenzie.art
W 306 584 4250 EXT. 4281