

Media Release

for Langham Cultural Centre
Kaslo, BC

Once We Were Whole

Exhibition of new work by Deborah Thompson

The new work of "Once We Were Whole" continues the artist's interest in working on paper and in particular with hand cut paper shapes. The artist sees the cutting process as an "extension of her drawing practice. Distanced from the pencil as a tool, the shape changes, becoming more abstracted or rather distilled." In contrast to her painting practice, which is largely impulsive, Thompson says that she is "challenged by the slowness and attention to patience" that this new work demands.

The imagery in "Once We Were Whole" moves from soft graphite drawing to collaged paper reliefs. Thompson says, that some of the inspiration for this work came from her love of Michelangelo's unfinished frescos, where the sketch or cartoon of the piece is left exposed juxtaposed with the thicker paint application. This movement between the more ephemeral and the material, the abstract and representational is a tension she is interested in exploring in her work.

The themes explored in "Once We Were Whole" follow Thompson's interest in underworld mythology and the narrative potential of gesture in the human/animal form. A cave-like landscape appears in the work, Thompson sees this as a "primal" landscape. She draws on memories of spelunking and drawing petroglyphs and pictographs created by prehistoric peoples from various sites in Europe, North America and S. Africa. Research for the work included reading French Philosopher Luce Irigaray's feminist critique of Plato's "allegory of the cave" and the writing of poet, Clayton Eshelman on Upper Paleolithic imagination.

The title of the show, "Once We Were Whole" reflects Thompson's pondering on the idea of a universal ancestry beyond racism, identity and ethnic differences. To a primal state of wonder and awe that is the result of an intimate and conscious dependence on nature. She imagines a world more unified rather than divisive. Her work is deeply personal and a healing practice. She believes that art is the most meaningful way to

open conversations, spoken and unspoken around what it is to be human. Not in a political way but as individuals desiring to find and give meaning to the world they inhabit. In sharing it, she hopes that the work will inspire conversation and expand connections.

Bio

Deborah Thompson was born in Toronto, ON. Her visual art practice includes painting, drawing, collage and sculpture. She completed an Associates Degree in Fine Art at Ontario College of Art and Design (University) (1984), a B.A. in Cultural Studies at Prescott College, AZ (1988) and a M.F.A. in Visual Art at University of Montana in Missoula, MT (1997). She has taught as an adjunct faculty at the University of Montana, a faculty in Mixed Media and Core program at Kootenay School of Art and as an Instructor at the Oxygen Art Centre of which she is also a founding member (2002). She has worked as a curator at Touchstones Nelson and has regularly work as the exhibition and residency coordinator at the Oxygen Art Centre since 2012. She has exhibited around British Columbia and in several Western States. She has been awarded grants for both her curatorial and studio work. She lives in Nelson, BC.