



*REPETITION IS A KIND OF FALLING*

**JILLIAN GROENING**

# *I SAW THE WAY YOU SPEAK*

**EXHIBITION | 6 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY, 2023**

*I saw the way you speak* is a group exhibition that observes the visual language of patterns in lens-based practices. Through the work of Alexis Dirks, Katherine Frazer, Caroline Monnet and Suzie Smith, this exhibition brings together analog and digital approaches to image-making. Patterns – designs composed of repeated imagery – shape the world around us. Similar to nature, their arrangements are integral to our everyday lives. Using photogrammetric flower arrangements, digital textiles, printmaking and collage each artist uses personal motifs to create complex visual patterns.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Alexis Dirks** (1982) is an image based artist living and working in Winnipeg. Her work looks at how imagery found across history books, fashion editorials, and local landscapes can be collaged into new arrangements to acquire new contextual and narrative readings when their arrangements are flattened across the photographic plane.

Alexis Dirks holds an MFA from the Glasgow School of Art (2009) and a BFA from the University of Manitoba (2006). She has exhibited her work in Canada, Germany, and the UK. Exhibitions and projects include collaboration with UK based collective 'Charismatic Megafauna' on Womxn Stage (aceartinc and performance spaces in London, UK, 2018); History Works Itself In All Directions (Blinkers, Winnipeg 2018); The Inhabitants of Space (Open Studio, Toronto 2017); Botched Fabrications on the Foggy Landscape, (aceartinc, Winnipeg 2016); Yellow Font Forest Green (G44, Toronto 2014); New New Monuments (TRUCK Contemporary, Calgary 2014). She has received awards from the Hope Scott Trust (UK), Glasgow City Council, Northwest Territories Arts Council, Winnipeg Arts Council, Manitoba Arts Council, and Canada Council for the Arts.

**Katherine Frazer** subverts productivity applications such as Figma and Keynote (products she previously worked on as a software designer), as tools to create her digital paintings. Her IRL Ikebana (Japanese floral arrangement) practice inspires her source material: 3D scans and photos taken on her iPhone; allowing her to construct new digital flower arrangements and landscapes from captured snippets of the physical world.

Frazer's work has been included in Rhizome's Artbase and Museum of Crypto Art's collection, featured in Codame Art and Tech Festival, Dazed Digital, Nylon Mag, and PAPER Magazine, with commissions for NewHive and MTV. She was invited to be one of the first fifty artists on NFT platform Foundation.

She graduated with degrees in Communication Design and Human-Computer Interaction from Carnegie Mellon University. Frazer is based in Brooklyn, New York.

**Caroline Monnet** (Anishinaabe/French) is a multidisciplinary artist from Outaouais, Quebec. She studied Sociology and Communication at the University of Ottawa (Canada) and the University of Granada (Spain) before pursuing a career in visual arts and film.

Her work has been programmed internationally at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), Whitney Biennial (NYC), Toronto Biennale of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art (Montréal), Arsenal Contemporary (NYC), Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff), and the National Art Gallery (Ottawa); as well as film festivals such as TIFF, Sundance, Aesthetica (UK), Palm Springs and Cannes. In 2016, she was selected for the Cinéfondation residency in Paris. Her work is included in numerous collections including the Quebec Museum of Fine Arts, the National Art Gallery of Canada, RBC Royal Bank, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Montréal. Current exhibitions include the Schirn Kunsthalle (Frankfurt), the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, and a solo show at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Monnet is recipient of the 2021 Hopper Prize, 2020 Pierre-Ayot award, the 2020 Sobey Art Award, the REVEAL Indigenous Art Awards, as well as grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and from Conseil des arts de Montréal. She is based in Montreal and represented by Blouin Division Gallery.

**Suzie Smith** (she/her) is an artist of British and Mennonite descent who works with printmaking and design that expands into sculpture, installation and moving image. Her work often incorporates the deconstruction and transformation of objects and materials to create new or multiple meanings. Smith often creates systems and structures for her process that act as a tool to build, take apart and push against. Smith holds the position of Assistant Professor of Print Media at the University of Manitoba and is a founding member of Parameter Press.

## Repetition is a kind of falling

*Repetition is a kind of falling.*

*I wash, I walk, I refresh, I repeat. I view grainy transfers of DANCE by Lucinda Childs on Youtube. Blurry bodies skip infinitesimal geometries across my laptop screen. Snow drifts down outside my window. Quotidian rhythms pull my body through time like a thread through linen, gathering folds in its wake.*

The group exhibition, *I saw the way you speak*, first embraces visitors through euphonic loops of recurrence. Warm plucking tone, stemming from *Work in Progress* (2022), a stop-motion animated film by Suzie Smith, arcs over white walls in a tumbling lullaby that soothes while providing a framework from which to look. Continuous yet fragmented, the circuitous sounds suggest a grid-like mode of repetition, un-fixed and extending into infinity.<sup>1</sup>

A virtual iteration of the grid provides a structure for Katherine Frazer's digital painting, *Moribana* (2022). Pink petals warp and propagate in a kinetic reutilization of software design tool that playfully subverts the productivity-focused program design while inviting an imaginative architecture for remapping systems through methods such as glitch, blur, and digital noise. The repetitions of swarming flower blossoms nod to the transience and proliferation of the digital copy, yet their kinetic alterities suggest that recurrence is also a form of change.

For Gilles Deleuze, every repetition brings something unique to occur.<sup>2</sup> It is what lies in the echoing space between repetitions which accounts for evolution, creativity, and imagination. Alexis Dirks traces reverberations in these spaces between echoes. Her works, six of which are included in the exhibition, suggest temporal mappings of the utterance, of something that has been spoken before yet each time is whispered anew. *Two Forms Revised* (2022) creates a 2D paper sculpture using scans of Barbara Hepworth's *Mother and Child* (1936). Through a repetitious process of photographing, printing, and cutting, Dirks traces the feedback loops between the image source and itinerant, like sound waves echolocating from bat to tree and back again; a muted topography that charts possibilities for repetition as a tool for orientation.

Sculptural curves continually re-surface across Dirks' works, even extending into the 3D to cascade over *Stone Wash* (2022), a hard-angled sculpture clad in printed dogwood denim. The choice to include *Stone Wash* and its attending tactility alongside a series of prints, all of which engage in a similar tonal and textural vernacular, invites the viewer into a heightened proprioceptive state. When standing before *Marble Bend*, one feels how the body might fold – sits bones to heels, belly to thighs, forehead to floor – and the memories of that comforting architecture might ripple through the mind. In *Poetics of*

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes Martin's grids are particularly what is envisioned here – the blue vast of prairie landscapes; however, the architectural eternal gradients found in Arakawa and Madeline Gins' Screen-Valves series also illustrate this thought ([reversibledestiny.org](http://reversibledestiny.org)). Krauss also provided insight into the spatial and temporal relevances of grids. Rosalind Krauss. "Grids." October, Vol. 9 (Summer, 1979), pp. 50-64.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (Columbia University Press: New York, 1994), 1.

*Relation* (1997), Édouard Glissant writes that repetition is an “acknowledged form of consciousness both here and elsewhere. Relentlessly resuming something you have already said.”<sup>3</sup> To repeat is to acknowledge the existence of what has been repeated while unsettling the very structure of the thing. It is to bring a quiver, a scratch, or a glitch into what might seem like hardened absolutes.

Glissant’s approach to repetition as an act of decolonization materializes in the two exhibited works by Caroline Monnet. One, titled *Kokum’s Comfort 02* (2022), features vibrant geometries embroidered onto the bubblegum pink squish of ComfortSeal foam. The kaleidoscopic configurations, inspired by traditional Anishinaabe patterns, exemplify how processes of reiteration might trace temporal lineages. Each stitch summons the “consciousness of here and elsewhere,”<sup>4</sup> reflecting on how gesture moves through hands and through families. The pivotal moments of difference located across momentums of repetition, those which open up avenues for critical rethinking and rebuilding, occur in the moments of return.<sup>5</sup>

The multiplicities instigated through processes of return are further animated by Smith’s *Work in Progress*. The short film plays on a loop and activates *Infinity System* (2020), an installation which exists on a series of hardboard panels. The panels, each silkscreened with four different sequences of lines, shuffle and switch places on a studio wall to form succinct formations involving chains, grids, and ovals. The ceaseless labyrinthian patterns reveal the possibilities which can be created despite seemingly limited or rigid systems.

The panels dance staccato choreographies which resemble balletic formations – a fragmented totality.

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*Blurry bodies skip infinitesimal geometries across my laptop screen.*

*I view grainy transfers of DANCE by Lucinda Childs on Youtube.*

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## **Jillian Groening**

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<sup>3</sup>Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2010), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2006), 69.

**Jillian Groening** is a dance artist, writer, and arts worker who is drawn to questions around embodiment, documentation, and the moving image. They are the Distribution Manager for the Winnipeg Film Group and Co-Director of Young Lungs Dance Exchange. Their written work has been published through The Dance Current, The Journal for Curatorial Studies, Martha Street Studio, and Blinkers Art and Project Space. Jillian holds a BA(Hons) in Dance from the School of Contemporary Dancers in affiliation with the University of Winnipeg and a Masters in Theatre and Performance Studies from York University, where their SSHRC-funded research considers performer autonomy through embodied processes of re-writing choreographic inscription.

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