

PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHIES

Jessica Rachel Cook, OCT, graduated from the University of Windsor with an Honours Bachelor of Fine Art and a Bachelor of Education and is presently working towards her Master of Education at the University of Windsor. Jessica is a multi-media/computer graphic artist who works in combination with traditional fine arts, photography and contemporary mediums to create promotional and marketing materials for online, print, film & television. She has worked on projects with such companies as The University of Windsor, Kickstand Entertainment, Mach2Films, NAFTC Studio, Peerless Productions, The Dot Film Company and Magic Door Films.

Elizabeth Chitty's work explores what it means to be in a body, a place, with others. She makes primarily video and sound installations, as well as performances, video, artist's gardens and other work. She has worked with community-based strategies and within walking practice. Her work is place-based and much of her recent work has focused on water, especially in north Niagara where she lives.

Patrick Mahon is an artist, curator and teacher/academic. His work includes print-based projects that engage with historical and contemporary aspects of printmaking, and involves responding to gallery and museum collections, as well as establishing community-based art initiatives. Mahon's artwork has been exhibited widely in Canada, at Museum London, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery and Kamloops Art Gallery, and internationally, including at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing, China (2005) and in Barthète (Toulouse), France (2011). The SSHRC-funded project Art and Cold Cash, which involved artists from southern Canada and Baker Lake, Nunavut, was produced and exhibited between 2004 and 2010 at MOCCA in Toronto; MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie; Platform in Winnipeg; Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina; and a book was published by Toronto's YYZ in 2010. Recent water-related exhibitions include McMaster Museum of Art (2013); Robert Langen Art Gallery at Wilfred Laurier University (2013); and Gallery 1C03 at the University of Winnipeg (2014), and Katzman Contemporary, Toronto (2015). The catalogue Water Structures, with an interview by Robert Enright, was released in 2014.

Colin Miner was born in Halifax, N.S., and currently lives and works in Toronto. He completed his PhD at the University of Western Ontario (2014) and holds a Master of Fine Arts degree (2007), as well as a Bachelor of Fine Arts, from the University of British Columbia (2002). Alongside his art practice, Miner works on writing, facilitating exhibitions and the artist project Moire. Recent solo exhibition projects include Album Gallery in Toronto (2015) and the McIntosh Gallery in London, Ontario (2013). Selected group exhibitions include, most recently, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton (2016); Gallery 44 in Toronto (2015); the Beijing Center for the Arts in Beijing (2009); Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver (2007); and Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Germany (2001). Miner is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the Barbara Spohr Memorial Award (2014), the Toronto Arts Council (2014) and, most recently, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, both in 2015.

Troy David Ouellette, is an artist/researcher specializing in post-anthropocentric Assemblage theory. His practice has developed the concept of 'particlism' focusing on the behaviour of materials at varying scales by exploring, non-human creativity. His visual work and writings describe how perception, insofar as it is an adaptive state of matter, plays-out in human and non-human creative acts.

Stuart Reid is an award-winning writer and curator of contemporary art with over 25 years of experience in Canada's public art galleries. From 2012 to 2016, he was Director and Curator of Rodman Hall Art Centre/Brock University in St. Catharines. He has also served as Executive Director of the Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, and was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Regina, from 2009 to 2012. From 2001 to 2009, he was Director of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound. In 2016, Reid joined the community philanthropy movement as the Executive Director of Community Foundation Grey Bruce in Owen Sound.

Lee Rodney is Associate Professor of Media Art Histories and Visual Culture at the University of Windsor where she is currently Co-Director of the IN/Terminus Research Group. She has published on contemporary art and visual culture in a range of publications recently including The Informal Market Worlds Atlas, Cartographies of Place, and Future Anterior. Curatorial projects include the Border Bookmobile and the Frontier Files (frontierfiles.org). Her book, Looking Beyond Borderlines: North America's Frontier Imagination was published by Routledge this year.

Ogichidaakwe **Mona Stonefish**, (Potawatomi of the Three Fires Confederacy and Mohawk of the Haudenosaunee), Doctor of Traditional Medicine, Wisdom Keeper, Spiritual Advisor, Educator, Activist, Environmentalist, Philanthropist, Actor, Model, and 2013 Recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Royal Jubilee Medal.

Rod Strickland has exhibited collaborative art, curatorial and community projects throughout North America. Themes address the tenuous balances in our ever-changing connections with technological development and natural environment. Most recently, projects have been focused on the remote community of Pelee Island Ontario, working with local arts and culture organizations to develop creative activities and community events aimed at building a stronger creative culture in this rural community with economic opportunities local-residents.

AGW
Art Gallery of Windsor

The Living River Project: Art, Water and Possible Worlds

A Symposium on Water
Saturday, March 4, 2017



Elizabeth Chitty, Confluence Field Trip #1- September 12, 2016; digital photo

AGW
Art Gallery of Windsor

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM – The Question of Water

The Art Gallery of Windsor is steps from the edge of the Detroit River; this one-day symposium aims to probe timely issues around water as investigated and expressed in contemporary art. The river, connecting Lake St. Clair with Lake Erie, is one of the world's busiest waterways and border crossing points, and has the distinction of having dual heritage designation from Canada and America. The river's shores embrace the largest metropolitan area on any international border. It is also one of the first International Wildlife Refuges, known for being a large habitat for many ecosystems and species. The Windsor-Detroit area has a fascinating history in relation to the river. Indigenous peoples have been recorded on the shores from as early as 400 A.D. Settlement by Europeans took place around 1650, with trade, culture and industrialization spurred by the river and its resources. The Detroit River defines an important international border and was also an integral part of the Underground Railway, a crossing point for slaves escaping to freedom. The river is mythic, steeped in history—a lifeline for people that live on its shore.

The Living River Project symposium will be an open-ended conversation involving presentations by regional artists engaged with water issues, including University of Windsor scholars, Dr. Lee Rodney and Rod Strickland. The local context of the river and water related to treaties and First Nations history will be provided by Indigenous elder, Mona Stonefish, and by Jessica Cook. New media and performance artist, Elizabeth Chitty, will talk on her recent body of work on the Niagara watershed and will lead a guided walk along the Detroit River. A simultaneous intervention conducted by photo-based artist Colin Miner will record the proceedings of the day. Finally, a “process intervention” involving the symposium participants will be led by artists Patrick Mahon and Troy Ouellette. In a set of linked activities, Mahon and Ouellette will further “the question(s) of water” and relate these spatially to an examination of local water geography and its complexity.

The symposium is one stage in the development of a forthcoming exhibition to be mounted in winter 2018. Co-curators Patrick Mahon and Stuart Reid will build upon previous iterations as they convene a new survey exhibition for the Art Gallery of Windsor that will consider the significance of water issues in the context of the Windsor region, culturally, historically, and environmentally.

Reid and Mahon began the conversation about water in 2012 through an artist research group called *Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds* that held two residencies, at Niagara Falls and the Banff Centre for the Arts, which engaged water as culture and resource. Those encounters resulted in a major exhibition titled *The Source: Rethinking Water through Contemporary Art* mounted at Rodman Hall Art Centre/Brock University in 2014 in which artists from a multitude of cultural backgrounds, working in a diversity of media, considered changing concepts of water and associated cultural, political and aesthetic implications. The publication for *The Source*, including writings by Reid, Mahon and renown water-specialist Robert Sandford, will be released this spring.



Colin Miner, *blue eye*, 2014 (photo by Danny Custodio)

Program of the Symposium*

1:00 – Welcome Remarks (J. Meloche)

1:15 – Introduction of *Mona Stonefish* by Jessica Cook

1:20 – 1:40 *Mona Stonefish*

1:40 -- 2:10 – Reviewing “The Source” (Stuart Reid and Patrick Mahon)

Our era, marked by rapid climate change, destructive hydro-climatic weather events, loss of polar ice, and rising global sea levels, is witness to shifting shorelines, borders, migration patterns, and lines of economic and cultural exchange. In this exhibition, artists consider changing concepts of water and associated cultural, political, and aesthetic implications. By bringing together Canadian representing Indigenous and settling cultures, both French- and English-speaking, alongside international artists with roots in countries around the globe, *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art* contemplates water from a nationless, borderless perspective that is profoundly more human.

2:10 – 3:00 – Elizabeth Chitty – Talk and Walk

Elizabeth Chitty: We will walk along the river from the gallery to the riverfront retention basin, Windsor's solution to sewer runoff, and return the same route. Before we leave, the artist will speak briefly about the sewers that lie beneath us and invite us to walk in awareness of the river and the infrastructure that affects it and supports urban life. A handheld audio recorder will be passed around and participants can record their thoughts if they choose. If time allows, Elizabeth will speak back at the gallery about the walking project, website, installation and multiple, *Confluence Field Trips*.

3:00 – 3:45 – Refreshments and Talks by Dr. Lee Rodney and Rod Strickland

Lee Rodney: “The Water Communication” was a descriptive phrase used in the 1873 Treaty of Paris to describe the Great Lakes as a central conduit between American and British territorial possessions. This early description of the international boundary between Canada and the US, one that runs through Great Lakes, suggests a more open and fluid interpretation of this colonial territorial boundary than is currently permitted through the 21st century security complex that has emerged on the Great Lakes. With Justin Langlois, I am currently developing a participatory mapping project that seeks to capture a range of historical and cultural perspectives on the Great Lakes, focusing specifically on histories of human migration through this region, from Indigenous cultures through the 19th and early 20th centuries, prior to the establishment of the Border Patrol Sectors in the U.S. in the 1920s. Through a experimental project called *The Float School*, we are interested in developing critical pedagogies for various trans-boundary waterways that trouble or disturb western territorial concepts of ownership. The Detroit-Windsor iteration will focus on ideas around alternative ideas of citizenship.

Rod Strickland: Creative Partnerships in the Middle of the Lake

The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth, containing 21% of the world's surface fresh water by volume. Pelee Island is a remote rural community of 175 full time residents in the western basin of Lake Erie, geographically located in the middle of the Great Lakes Megalopolis Region with a population of 59 million people.

My current activities engage the island population aiding in the growth of the creative community. Helping to develop an awareness of the arts on many levels, working with existing groups and creating new possibilities on an island of limited recourses.

3:45 – 4:25 – Process Intervention (Patrick Mahon and Troy Ouellette)

Troy David Ouelette: For much of my childhood I grew up at my grand parents home on the shores of Lake Erie, and like so many “greatlakers,” water has played a significant role as a source of rejuvenation. More recently I have been tracing ancestral roots and came across some documentation that suggested that my relatives settled on the banks of the Detroit River on one of the first siniorial system farms during the 17th century - not far from where the AGW itself stands today. The only remaining vestiges of this system are the long narrow roads dividing up the city. My ancestors lived alongside the Ottawa, Pottawatomi, Huron and Chippewa first nations, who were resettled in the area and understood the importance of living with such an immense shared resource. In these early settlements, the reliance on the stable supply of water for irrigation, and flourmill technologies, was paramount. The Detroit River and the surrounding great lakes continue to shape the land, nurturing its inhabitants in all their diversity. As an artist, my interest in water has shown up in depictions of weather, condensation and rain. As someone who is interested in technologies, systems esthetics has played an important role in my practice. It has also enhanced my understanding of how electronics and mechanisms can play a vital role in the ways we interact with water as a resource. It is through this lens that I intend to examine and discuss water systems culturally, socially, politically and geologically—showing how these topics intertwine.

4:25 – Closing Remarks and Thanks (S. Reid)

*** Throughout the Symposium, Colin Miner will be engaging in a Documentary Process/Intervention**